

The Road Less Travelled...



Five months ago we stood at a momentous crossroads, probably the most historic ever for the delivery of services to children and families. As two roads diverged we took 'the one less travelled by'. Teams, both in frontline and in corporate services, are working hard to put the structures in place which will give our chosen direction a fair chance at success. Our voluntary and community partners continue to offer us their support and willing participation as we develop our Service Delivery Framework.

Through challenging times, it is important that we remain focused and do not lose sight of our overarching aim – better outcomes for children and young people. Although it may not be visible to all, much work is taking place at all levels throughout our organisation to achieve this goal. Each of our service strands is working towards fulfilling the outcomes set out in our 2014 Business Plan. We continue to deliver on the key elements of a modernised Service Delivery Framework - aligning family support, education welfare and social work activity. Consistency is being improved through the development of service delivery processes, which includes a new case management system and great work is also taking place at organisational level to develop our support structures around Finance, IT, HR, Legal Services and Communications.

It is the staff of the Agency who are leading this change and reform and for that I thank you all.

As an Agency we have promised to be inclusive and responsive to those to whom we provide a service and to our staff. The recent consultation process around our draft Purpose Statement represented such an opportunity. The Child and Family Agency's first Corporate Plan will be a unique opportunity for our Board and Executive, along with all our stakeholders, to inform our vision and our future strategy.

It will chart our course on the road chosen and will ensure that it is the road that will

'make all the difference'.

This open dialogue between our staff and partners, on whose collective wisdom the strength of Tusla lies, will continue in earnest. We will find ways to continue to harness your knowledge and ensure that you are listened to, responded to and that your expertise is used to shape our future path

The energy, dedication and professionalism that have gone into establishing Ireland's first Child and Family Agency have been impressive. Thank you. Your commitment does you great credit. Your patience, forbearance and resilience in difficult circumstances are highly commendable.

Any start-up organisation is going to be challenging. To introduce radical reform at a term of austerity may still seem foolhardy to many but the alternative, failure to reform, would have been unconscionable. We know that Ireland's children deserve the best our services can offer but we also know that our start-up has been particularly challenging in the face of recruitment restrictions and financial restraint. I wish to acknowledge the very real challenges faced by many of you on a daily basis as you attempt to deliver the very best in challenging circumstances.

The strength of the Child and Family Agency will be the collective wisdom of our staff. The glass is half full. The Agency has been established and 2014 will be about ensuring it is placed on a sustainable basis, worthy of the support which you have shown. I look forward to hearing from you as we set up structures for shared dialogue on our collective journey as the Child and Family Agency.

Gordon Jeyes

Chief Executive

Children First Bill

On 14 April, the former Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald T.D., published long awaited legislation that will place *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011* on a statutory footing. This legislation will be the cornerstone of child protection in Ireland and will affect every organisation, group or individual working with children.

Once the legislation is enacted, it will place a legal obligation on a range of individuals and organisation to protect children from harm. Certain professionals and people working with children, known as 'Mandated persons', will be obliged to report suspected abuse to the Child and Family Agency. While organisations or persons working with or running activities for children will be obliged to prepare a Child Safeguarding Statement.

The Bill also provides a statutory underpinning for the Children First Interdepartmental Implementation Group. This Group will include a representative of all Government Departments and will be required to keep under review the implementation of the legislation and to report on an annual basis to the Minister for Children. The full text of the Bill can be accessed on the Department of Children and Youth Affairs website – www.dcyva.gov.ie.

Placing Children First on a statutory footing makes child protection a concern for everyone in society. The Bill formalises cooperation between Child and Family Agency services and Gardaí, GPs, clergy, sporting organisations, teachers and other individuals and organisations working with children to allow for early identification and intervention where a child is at risk and to prevent harm.

The legislation has not come into force yet, but the Child and Family Agency website - www.tusla.ie - is a resource for every organisation or individual as they prepare to become Children First compliant.

Let's Work Differently!

Castleblaney Wellbeing Centre



Pictured above are Child Wellbeing leaders in Castleblaney who attended a recent Management and Leadership session

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency has established a Child Wellbeing Centre in Castleblaney, Co Monaghan. The centre has begun providing a range of community services for children including early intervention and prevention, intensive family support, outdoor pursuits for young people and services for children in Tusla care and Aftercare. Advocacy and Children's Rights are at the foundation of the Wellbeing centre

The Child Wellbeing Centre represents the reconfiguration of the former Rath na nOg high support residential service to a community based service which focusses on:

- Community Rights, Advocacy and Participation
- Intensive Family Support (to prevent children being admitted into care and to help them return home.)
- Early Intervention and Family Support Services

- Services for Children in Foster Care and Foster Carers
- Services for Adolescents both at a crisis intervention and preventative level
- Supervised Access Services

According to Gerry Lowry, Area Manager: "The Child Wellbeing centre provides an opportunity for staff and the community to act, at all times, in the best interests of children and young people. The concept asks us to think differently and key to this is building trusting relationships with the children and families we serve. Staff will strive to find a way that works for every child, even where this means challenging existing ways of thinking.

"Child Wellbeing it is not about our immediate case overload, it's not about our policies, procedures or professional silos. It is about outcomes for children. It is about how we imagine and build relationships with children, families, parents and communities. It is about working better and differently", he added.

Meath Children's Services Website



Meath Children's Services Committee launched a new resource to support children and families in the form of the new website www.familysupportmeath.ie last month. The website provides people with the contact details of relevant services based on the needs of the child, as well as a calendar of events including news and training opportunities for young people, parents, voluntary leaders and community workers that are occurring across the county.

Pictured (from L to R) Chief Superintendent Aiden Glacken An Garda Síochána, Sé Fulham, Manager, Navan Springboard Family Support Services, Angela Crowcock, Principal, Beaufort College, Gordon Jeyes, CEO, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Ken Flynn, Deputy Principal, Beaufort College, Jim McGuigan, Acting Area Manager, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Louth/Meath, Leonard Callaghan, Tusla/Meath CSC.

Minister for Children

On the 8th May 2014, Frances Fitzgerald T.D., Minister for Children and Youth was appointed Minister for Justice and Equality. It was also announced that Deputy Charlie Flanagan would succeed her as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Congratulating Minister Frances Fitzgerald TD on her new appointment, Norah Gibbons, Chair of Tusla, Child and Family Agency, said:

"Minister Fitzgerald has been a true champion for the rights and welfare of children. We are grateful for her commitment and hard work in fulfilling the promises made by Government to protect children. On behalf of the Board, I would like to offer her our best wishes in her new role.

"We are confident that Minister Fitzgerald will be ably succeeded by Deputy Charlie Flanagan. While spokesperson for children, Deputy Flanagan has demonstrated his commitment to and understanding of child protection and we look forward to working with him."

Gordon Jeyes, Chief Executive of the Child and Family Agency, said:

"It has been a privilege to work with Minister Fitzgerald during the establishment and first months of the Child and Family Agency. I would like to thank her personally for her vision and leadership in reforming child protection and welfare in Ireland.

"Minister Fitzgerald should be proud of the considerable progress she has achieved in a short period. We have just begun on a long journey to improve the welfare of every child and family in the State, and the Minister leaves us in a strong position with new tools in the form of the Children First Guidance, the Children First Bill and the constitutional amendment on the rights of the child. I look forward to continuing the work started by Minister Fitzgerald with her successor, Minister Flanagan."

Aftercare Legislation

Aftercare Services are a key priority for the Child and Family Agency. The Child and Family Agency recently met with a Joint Oireachtas Committee to discuss the Aftercare Bill 2014. The Agency advised the committee that it is committed to further improving and developing Aftercare Services and building on the commitments of the National Leaving and Aftercare Policy which was issued in 2011.

The aim of this programme is to standardise the delivery of Leaving and Aftercare Services across the country so that every young person who is eligible will be provided with a service to meet their assessed and identified needs. In order to achieve this, the work will be underpinned by inter-agency co-operation in the following areas: -

- Standardisation and equity of service in accordance with assessed need;
- Workforce development ;
- Outcomes for young care leavers;
- Timely and accessible information. This will ensure sure that resources are deployed to maximum effect and that a consistent service is provided in partnership with other statutory and non statutory agencies.

A number of areas of action have been prioritised:

- Development of a dedicated Aftercare Services in each of the 17 functional areas of the Child and Family Agency
- Standardisation of a range of financial packages to care leavers and the care providers: for example foster carers;

- Introduction of Aftercare Steering Committee at local level;
- The further development of the Child and Family Agency website to include a section dedicated to the provision of information on aftercare services in Ireland.

The Child and Family Agency also advised the committee that it welcomed the Agency's enhanced responsibilities as outlined in the Aftercare Bill which will place a statutory duty on the Child and Family Agency to prepare and aftercare plan for young people leaving care.

The introduction of such legislation will play an important role in increasing the numbers of young people who receive support and assistance on leaving the care system. The Child and Family Agency is committed to developing the highest possible standards in the provision of these services, work which has already commenced.

The focus is on ensuring that young people are prepared to be supported in transitioning to adult life through further educational attainment, suitable secure accommodation and the provision of timely therapeutic services by specialist services when required.

Corporate Plan

The Agency published its initial statement of purpose entitled **Ireland's Child and Family Agency, Towards a Shared Purpose** on its official launch date of 30th January 2014. The aim of this document is to enable a wide ranging consultation / debate regarding the priorities and key objectives for the Agency in the preparation of its first three year corporate plan in accordance with the legislation.

Consultation

Approximately 300 copies of the purpose document, along with a consultation questionnaire, were distributed to staff and partners at the official launch



of the Agency in January. Recipients of the purpose document were asked to consider the Purpose; Values; Vision and Key Purpose Statements as outlined in the document and decide whether the priorities identified to date reflect their views.

Staff and partners were also invited to submit views through various print articles and through a number of targeted mail outs.

In addition, a series of consultation workshops were held between staff and partners.

The findings of the consultation process are currently being analysed and will inform the development of the Agency's three year corporate plan.



Online Payslips Coming soon....

We are pleased to inform you that the Child and Family Agency are introducing a new service which will allow you to access your payslips online at your convenience. The service is already widely available to employees in the public and private sectors and has been very positively received since it was first introduced. Payslips will be made available online during June and we will provide details in relation to the registration process in the coming weeks.

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures

On the 14th April 2014, the former Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald, T.D. and An Taoiseach Enda Kenny T.D. launched 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 -2020'.

'Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures' sets-out transformation goals and outcomes for children and young people and new structures for reporting to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy.

It is the first overarching national policy framework for children and young people aged from birth to 24 years and will be implemented by the Department of Children and Young Affairs in collaboration with all Government departments and key State agencies.

The aim of the Framework is to work towards achieving five Outcomes identified as most important for children and young people in Ireland. The Government has committed to working towards these through a series of actions, described as key transformational goals. These goals will underpin the implementation of the Framework and will be a key element of its success.

The Framework includes over 160 commitments including

- focusing on early interventions and



quality services to promote best outcomes for children, particularly in the vitally-important early years;

- working better together to protect young people who are marginalised, at risk or who demonstrate challenging or high-risk behaviour;
 - setting a target of lifting 70,000 children out of poverty by 2020;
 - improving childhood health & wellbeing in line with goals of 'Healthy Ireland';
 - enhancing job opportunities for young people – building on the 'Action Plan for Jobs' and Youth Guarantee; and
 - delivering better supports for families and parenting.
- For further reading and to view a copy of the framework see www.dcyia.ie

Realising Roma Children's Rights



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

On April 10th, Pavee Point held a major conference on Roma children's rights. Speaking at the conference Gordon Jeyes, Chief Executive of the Child and Family Agency emphasised the importance of Children First Always.

Commenting on the task of protecting Ireland's children Mr. Jeyes said: "The challenge is to achieve this through cultural sensitivity and an awareness of the endemic nature of discrimination and especially of poverty. Our fundamental duty of loyalty

cannot be to church or institutions of State but to children –we need to focus on outcomes that ensure our children are safe and respected - outcomes that put children first always."

Commenting on the issue of discrimination and cultural differences he said that society as a whole needs to ensure that no child is at a disadvantage and presented with less favourable life chances by virtue of heritage or through poverty.



Tusla, Child and Family Agency is now on Facebook following the creation of a new page on 17th April 2014.

The Tusla page will work in conjunction with our website, Tusla.ie, to provide information in respect of the Child and Family Agency to the general public.

By following us on Facebook, people will automatically be updated on any news items which are placed on our page directly through their newsfeed.

The Facebook page will be used to promote relevant news items and events.

Staff will not be able to access this new page from the Agency PC's and Laptops.

www.facebook.com/tuslachildandfamilyagency.

Update

Teach Fhaiche Stiabhna, Ardán Phort an Iarla, Baile Átha Cliath 2
St. Stephen's Green House, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2

t. +353 (0) 1 611 4100 f. +353 (0) 1 676 0824
info@tusla.ie

www.tusla.ie



An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency