

Listen UP!

Tusla's Child and Youth Participation Newsletter

Launch of Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023 and Yearbook

Welcome to the fourth edition of Listen Up, our Child and Youth Participation Newsletter. 2019 has been a very eventful year for participation so far, culminating in the launch of Tusla's first participation strategy on 20th June in Tusla HQ Dublin. In April, we held our fourth successful Child and Youth Participation Conference, which has been described as one of the highlights of the year by Tusla senior management. In March, ChangingFutures.ie launched their website in Dublin Castle with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Katherine Zappone. The website, which began as a child and youth participation seed funding project in Dublin South East/Wicklow, was created for young people by young people and has received widespread acclaim since it went live. Read about these stories and more in this bumper 14 page edition and if you would like your projects featured in our next bulletin, please get in touch with your regional Participation and Partnership Officer. Contact details are on the back page.

Michelle Sheehan, Regional Implementation Manager



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Child and Youth Participation Video 2019

The fourth Tusla Child and Youth Participation Conference took place on 4th April 2019 in the Sheraton Hotel Athlone Co Westmeath. The action packed event was attended by over 400 children, young people and staff and was perhaps our best one yet. For anyone who could not attend please read on to pages 4-9 to catch up on all the action and have a look at our fantastic highlights reel [here](#) which captures the atmosphere of the day.



Launch of Child and Youth Participation Strategy and Yearbook



Meabhrach Music Group, Longford



Midlands Aftercare Service with Jim Gibson, Tusla COO



Longford Westmeath CYPSC and Lus na Gréine FRC



L-R: Jacqueline Concannon, Michelle Sheehan, Avril Dooley

The official launch of Tusla's Child and Youth Participation Strategy and Yearbook took place on 20th June 2019 in Tusla HQ, Dublin. The event was attended by over 50 children, young people and staff including CYPSC representatives, Senior Management, Director of Policy and Transformation Cormac Quinlan, Chief Operations Officer Jim Gibson and Tusla's Interim Chief Executive Officer Pat Smyth.

Meabhrach, a traditional Irish music band from Longford opened the event with a lively set of traditional favourites. Meabhrach (meaning mental as Gaelige) went down a treat with the attendees who thoroughly enjoyed their high energy performance. Michelle Sheehan, PPFS Regional Implementation Lead for Participation welcomed everyone to the event, before inviting Aisling Gillen, Service Director West and National Programme Manager for PPFS to officially open the event. Following another performance from Meabhrach, Pat Smyth officially launched the strategy and the yearbook (both available [here](#)). Mr Smyth acknowledged the hard work and preparation behind the scenes in publishing the two documents and thanked everyone involved for their contribution.

Wrapping up the event, Jim Gibson presented Investing in Children Membership™ renewals to:

- *Rosebrook Residential Children's Centre*
- *Midlands Aftercare Service*
- *Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre*
- *Longford Westmeath CYPSC*

The above four groups helped in the development of both the strategy and the yearbook and each received the Investing in Children Membership™ Award for the second time. Celebrating their fantastic achievements was the perfect way to conclude the event and the children and young people enjoyed some pizza before heading home.



L-R: Cormac Quinlan, Aisling Gillen, Pat Smyth, Jim Gibson

ChangingFutures.ie Launch at the Printworks, Dublin Castle



On the 5th March 2019, Tusla launched a new child friendly website, ChangingFutures.ie, to help young people to better understand the work we do. Changing Futures was an incredible journey for all involved. Originally born out of the Dublin South East/Wicklow Child and Youth Participation Seed Funding Project, from there it grew into a National Project. The journey began in 2016 with an Agenda Day™ that was facilitated by six young adults with lived experience of Tusla and its funded services. From there, the concept of a website specifically for young people containing accessible information about Tusla services was developed.

A research group of eight to ten young people aged 12-18 years old was formed from the further Agenda Days to ensure that young people were involved at every stage of the website development. The research group then partnered with students from IADT in Dun Laoghaire to develop the website's design and media elements. Website builders Piquant also helped to bring the site to life. Tusla practitioners from social work, social care, family support and educational welfare were interviewed about their work and filmed for the website.

"ChangingFutures.ie is the first website of its kind, and was only possible due to the immense creativity, passion and innovation embodied by this group of young people."

Pat Smyth, Interim CEO, Tusla

This work culminated on the 5th March when the young people involved in the project officially launched ChangingFutures.ie at the Printworks in Dublin Castle. Changing Futures was made possible by the Dublin South East/Wicklow Child and Youth Participation Project in conjunction with the immense creativity, dedication, passion and innovation embodied by the young people involved. The website is a testament to the hard work of the young people involved in the project.

Click here to visit www.changingfutures.ie.

Tusla's 4th Annual Child and Youth Participation Conference

The fourth annual Tusla Child and Youth Participation Conference was held on 4th April 2019 in the Sheraton Hotel Athlone. An incredible 15 exhibitors kept the 400 strong crowd entertained on arrival. The theme 'Bigger and Better: Building on Our Success' was chosen by the Mayo Youth Advisory Council.

After registration, Afro Éire drew attendees into the main hall with their vigorous drum beats where everyone was welcomed by MCs Bobby Marie O'Callaghan and Keith Allen from Limerick Youth Services. Jim Gibson, Tusla's Chief Operations Officer opened the conference and told the young people the day was about them. The first keynote speaker Danielle Douglas, spoke about her journey from foster child to president of an international organisation. Following that we heard from three inspirational young people who spoke about their experience in Tusla services including PPFS, Meitheal and Signs of Safety. Next up, was a rousing performance from an incredible young rapper from the Midlands who had the crowd on their feet with several original compositions.



MCs Bobby Marie and Keith

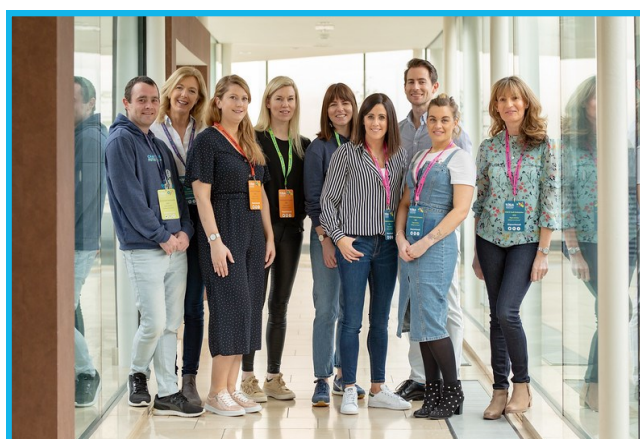
Leanne McDonagh, our second keynote speaker and a renowned artist from the Travelling community gave a moving talk on her life experiences. This was followed by another musical performance, this time the Soul Works singers from Tallaght and West Dublin. For their final song, the singers were joined on stage by the Tusla Staff Choir for a duet. Investing in Children Membership™ Presentations, rounded out a fantastic morning before attendees headed off to one of the five workshops on offer.

After lunch, friends of the conference Familibase kicked off the second half with an energetic set. This was followed by a thought provoking speech from Tony Griffin, CEO and Co-Founder of Soar who spoke about the importance of having one person who you can turn to. Darragh Byrne launched the Limerick Youth Services Counselling video before

Ballydowd Special Care Unit took to the stage to explain to how participatory practice led to the removal of thirty restrictive practices. The final performance of the day came from the phenomenal spoken word poet Natalya O'Flaherty. Aisling Gillen, Service Director West and National Programme Manager for PPFS closed the conference with the following words to the young people in attendance:

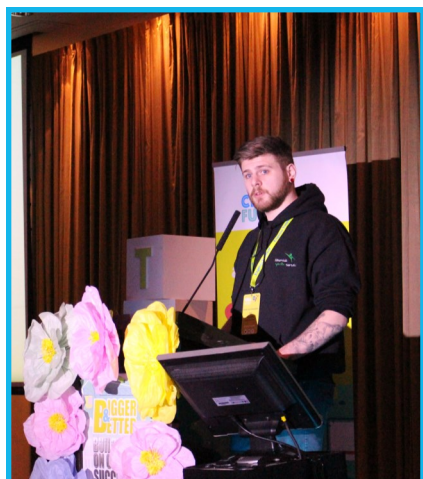
"We have got your back"

We have already begun planning for our fifth conference in 2020. If you have any ideas for the theme, please get in touch, our contact details are on the back page. See more on the conference on pages 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 or click [here](#).



Conference Planning Group

Tusla's 4th Annual Child and Youth Participation Conference



*Top left to right: Jim Gibson Tusla Chief Operations Officer;
Key note speakers Danielle Douglas and Leanne McDonagh*

*Middle left to right: Margaret, Amber and Tony Griffin CEO and
Co-Founder Soar*

*Bottom left to right: Marie Caul Ballydowd Special Care Unit;
Natalya O'Flaherty Spoken Word Poet and Aisling Gillen Service
Director West and National Programme Manager for PPFS*

Bottom left corner: Darragh Byrne Limerick Youth Services

Workshops — Child and Youth Participation Conference



Clockwise from top left:

Barnardos Limerick

Wellview FRC Dublin 15

Midlands Aftercare Service

Familibase Ballyfermot

Dublin 12 Social Work Department

This year's five workshops each showcased two Investing in Children Membership™ Awards and they were so popular there was standing room only in each room. The presentation **Midlands forum leads to better aftercare** saw care leavers speak about their research project on the barriers to participation. **Wellview children paint a bright future for outdoor spaces** described the children's renovation projects in Wellview FRC Dublin 15. **Key lessons from school goes in Monaghan** had students from Beech Hill College and Monghan NYP showcase their Unspoken Voices in Monaghan project. The ever **dynamic Familibase put mental health on the agenda** by explaining their Advocacy through Arts initiative and their collaboration with CAMHS. The Western Traveller and Intercultural Development (WTID) presented their workshop **Travelling**

community highlights diversity to much applause. Blakestown Mountview Youth Initiative returned this year with a new message, showing **Support for LGBTBI+ young people** and the renovation of the Butterfly Room in Dublin 12 was the subject of the workshop entitled **Crumlin children have a room to improve**. Following their exhibition success last year, Kilkenny based project **Head Hackers** spoke to us about their group to help manage anxiety. **Going for Glór in Limerick** presented their pilot of engaging children in advocacy work as part of the Barnardos Glór na nÓg project. And finally Galway showed us **its all about collaboration** describing how Galway CYPSC, FORUM Connemara, An Garda Síochána, Clifden North and West Connemara School Completion Programme came together to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Exhibitions — Child and Youth Participation Conference

This year our exhibition space was bigger and better than ever before. Projects worked with their regional Participation and Partnership Officers to transport their materials to the venue early, allowing the entire exhibition space to be set up the day before. This resulted in more colourful, eye-catching and engaging exhibitions and well rested exhibitors who did not have to get up extra early the morning of the conference! A lot of hard work, planning and preparation went into the space and the children, young people and staff are really out doing themselves every year. Well done to all involved.

Dublin South West/Kildare West Wicklow

Dublin South East/Wicklow

Midlands

Midlands

Midlands

Dublin North

Dublin North

Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary

Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary

Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan

Mayo

MidWest

MidWest

MidWest

Nationwide

The Unity Project Child Friendly Spaces

Arklow Springboard (Daughters of Charity)

Mountmellick Youth and Family Resource Centre

Longford Westmeath CYPSc

Lus na Gréine FRC

TOPS Project

St Louise's Early Childhood Development Service

Kilkenny Community Early Years Project

Carlow Area Peer Engagement (CAPE)

Tusla & Home Youth Liaison Service (HYLS)

Mayo Youth Advisory Council

Extern Midwest

Limerick Barnardos

Limerick Youth Service

Tusla Health and Wellbeing



Mountmellick Youth and Family Resource Centre (left)



Mayo Advisory Youth Council (right)

Exhibitions — Child and Youth Participation Conference




Clockwise from top left:
Lus na Greine FRC & Longford Westmeath CYPSC; Extern Limerick; Sligo Leitrim Home & Youth Liaison Service; Limerick Youth Service; Barnardos Limerick; the Unity Project Kildare and the TOPS Project Dublin North

Investing in Children Membership™ Awards Presentations

A small selection of Investing in Children Membership™ Awards presented at the 2019 Conference. Full list available [here](#).



Not pictured:

 Investing in Children

Dublin 12 Social Work Department

Ballydowd Special Care Unit

YMCA Parents and Kids Together

Clockwise from top left: Blakestown Mountview Youth Initiative Dublin 15; Unspoken Voices Monaghan; Galway Collaboration; Tusla FRC Navan; Arklow Springboard with St Louise's Early Development Service Dublin (Daughters of Charity); Kilkenny Early Years Project and Extern Midwest

Seed Funding Focus—Longford Westmeath CYPSC (DML)



Longford Westmeath CYPSC (LW CYPSC) brings together decision makers from the counties of Longford and Westmeath, and they work collectively to ensure that the services and supports identified by children and young people from the locality are provided and developed.

The Child and Youth Participation Sub-group was established to increase the participation of children and young people across the counties in the development of the LW CYPSC Three Year Strategic Plan 2019-2022. The group secured seed funding from Tusla's Child and Youth Participation Seed Funding Initiative for the Participation Project.

In Year 1 of the Project, consultations were held with approximately 400 children and young people aged 3-24 years. One young person facilitator explained how they approached the consultations:

"A lot of the time we ask what is OK but it is important to ask what is missing. What do you feel is missing. What the community needs. We had a voting system - what was the most important. We said more facilities for young people and child and youth friendly spaces. More transport".

The findings were compiled in a report and checked by children and young people to ensure their views were represented accurately. This report was presented to the LW CYPSC and the key actions put forward by the children and young people were submitted for consideration to the three year strategic plan. A number of these actions will be

included and are already taking place in the locality for example music workshops, a pet information event, mental health workshops and rotating Comhairle meetings.

Following the success of the Year 1 Participation Project, what was initially planned as a once off consultation to include children and young people's views in the three year strategic plan, has now evolved into on-going dialogue with children and young people to include their voice and input into the LW CYPSC itself in a meaningful way.

The 'Shout Out 4 Youth' event held in November 2018 was an opportunity to provide local, regional and national professionals with an insight into how the children and young people are actively involved with their local CYPSC but more importantly, it was a celebration of all the hard work achieved to date. It was also an opportunity to discuss the future of the Participation Project and what it might look like. Young people said they attended the event:

"to make people hear our voice. It gives you an extra push to keep going when they listen to us".

One idea raised by the young people was to have youth-led mini CYPSC's at a local level and representatives to sit on the Child and Youth Participation Sub-group and bring the feedback to their meetings. This idea is currently being explored. The LW CYPSC received the Investing in Children Membership™ Award on two occasions for their work and presented their project at Tusla's National Child and Youth Participation Conference in 2018 and 2019. A video of the 'Shout Out for Youth Event' can be viewed [here](#).



Members the Longford Westmeath CYPSC Youth Participation Project (left) and their 'Shout Out for Youth Video' (right)

Seed Funding Focus — Donegal Youth Voices (West)



Donegal Youth Voices, a youth participation panel established by Tusla and coordinated by Foróige, have worked on a number of projects, including having input into three Tusla building renovations in the county, presenting their work at a Tusla team meeting, and helping to launch a new Child and Family Support Network (CFSN) in North Central Donegal.



Members of the Donegal Youth Voices Group

Discussions at both the Donegal CYPSC Prevention Partnership and Family Support Steering Committee and the Meitheal Chair Forum had highlighted the mixed experiences of young people engaging and participating in their Meitheal process. Providing them with information and support on entering it was seen as a priority. It was decided to explore all this with the Donegal Youth Voices (DYV) group. A workshop with the DYV group developed an understanding of the Meitheal process, with the support of CFSN Coordinator Martin Keeney and Foróige youth worker Zia McLean.

The young people participated in a consultation session on Meitheal, identifying the challenges and fears they would have entering the Meitheal process, as well as the information they would need or want if going to participate in a Meitheal meeting. They highlighted many concerns, including embarrassment at being involved in the process and fears that the process might be very emotional, that they would feel intimidated by all the professionals involved, that they might not understand what was going on, or even know how much say they would have in the Meitheal plan agreed.

The next stage of the process looked at identifying the best multimedia format to develop a resource for young

people to support them when entering Meitheal. Everyone agreed that an animated explainer video would be best. The group developed a script and storyboard, and a professional animator advised on colour schemes, background music, and visual themes. Two young people, Ailbhe and Liam, recorded the voiceover for the video.



'Enter Your Meitheal Like a Pro' video

The 'Enter Your Meitheal Like a Pro' video was launched as part of a wider Donegal Tusla PPFS Child and Youth Participation Best Practice Seminar, held in Letterkenny in November 2018. It was organised and presented by the DYV group, who premiered their video project and showcased good practice across a range of service areas in Donegal.



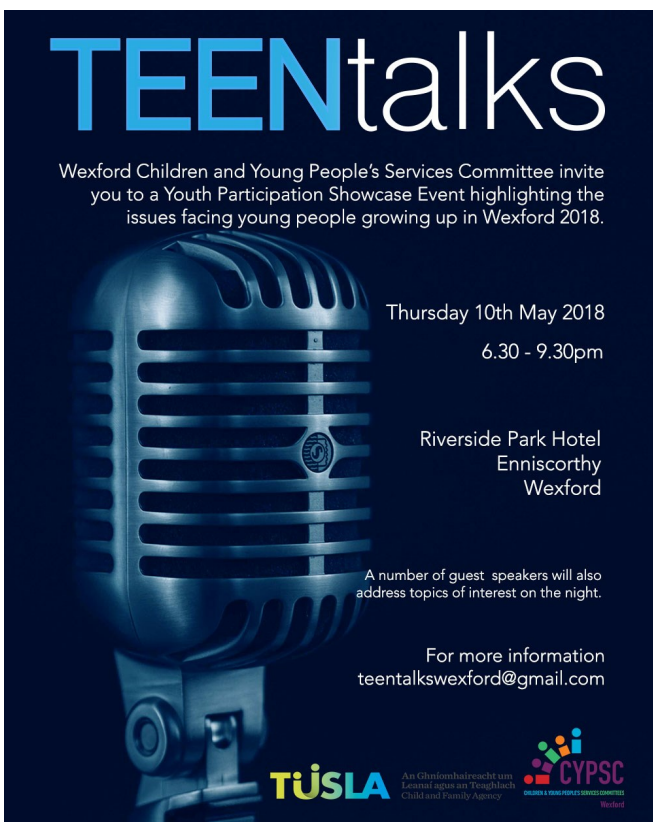
Members of the Donegal Youth Voices Group

In December 2018, the group presented the video at a workshop at the national PPFS conference in Kilkenny. It's planned to place it on the new Tusla national website ChangingFutures.ie so that it can benefit all young people nationwide.

Seed Funding Focus — Teen Talks (South)



A youth participation showcase event, 'Teen Talks', was held in May 2018 in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford to highlight issues facing young people growing up in the county.



Young people from all over the county were given a platform to speak about issues important to them, such as youth mental health, LGBTI+ issues, dealing with illness, and the importance of music in young people's lives.



Young person Matthew speaking at the Teen Talks event

Wexford Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) was able to initiate the event thanks to a further round of Child and Youth Participation Seed Funding from Tusla, via Atlantic Philanthropies.

The event, hosted by Wexford CYPSC, was organised in collaboration with local youth community and voluntary agencies and the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme of Tusla.



Local staff enjoying the Teen Talks event

Keynote speakers included:

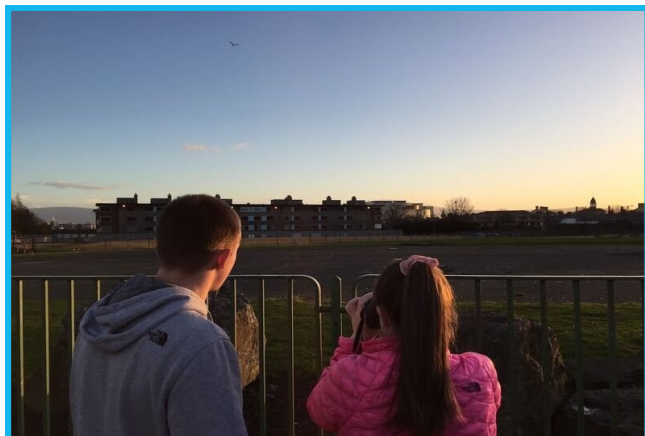
- John Dwyer, who addressed issues such as cyber security in 'Let's B Safe'.
- Deborah Somorin of Focus Ireland, who looked at homelessness and teen parenthood.
- Kelvin Akpaloo and Nenji Benstowe of the National Youth Council of Ireland, who spoke about migration.
- Vanessa Lacey of TENI, who explored transgender issues.

The free event was attended by young people from all around Wexford county, local politicians, professionals who work with children and young people, and representatives of organisations involved in Wexford CYPSC. The feedback from those in attendance was very positive. The inspiring speeches by a number of young people stole the show. Wexford CYPSC hopes to build on the learning from this event and host similar events in the future. Based on the event's success, there are plans to hold a second 'Teen Talks'

Seed Funding Focus — The MOST Project (DNE)

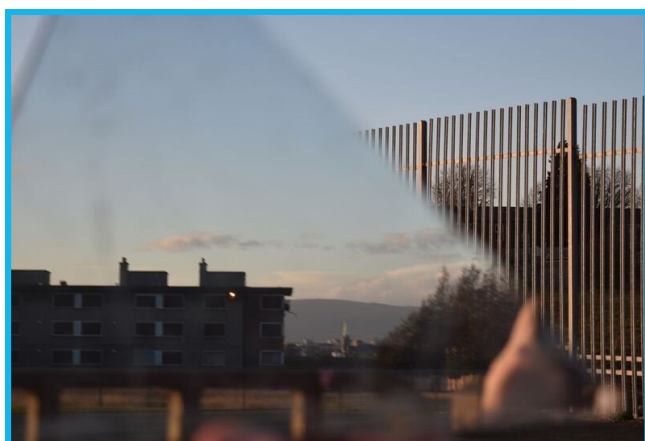


Two young Dublin north-siders, Mark and Aoife from the MOST project were declared overall winners at the inaugural Dublin North Central Garda Youth Awards in January 2018.



Aoife and Mark taking pictures during their project

The awards, held in association with Croke Park, recognise and celebrate the contribution young people are making in communities across Dublin's North Central area. Mark and Aoife, both aged 15, were nominated by Brádóg Youth Services for their involvement in a local project capturing what life is like growing up in their local community. The project consisted of creating a photo-documentary/documentary about O'Devaney Gardens.



Pictures from the photo-documentary of O'Devaney Gardens

The aim of the project is to show people the good side of what it was like growing up in O'Devaney Gardens, and to highlight the collapse of the regeneration plan for the area. As part of the project, the young people learnt about photography and developed video-editing skills, took part in sessions on public speaking and peer leadership, and developed their interpersonal and communication skills.



Pictures from the photo-documentary of O'Devaney Gardens

Their finished project will include photographs of the community and the desolate flats, and video recordings of interviews with community figures and residents.



Aoife and Mark exhibiting their work at the Child and Youth Participation Conference

As well as winning the Garda Youth Award, the young people exhibited at Tusla's National Child and Youth Participation Conference in Athlone, and also in Collins Barracks from mid-January to mid-March 2019. The Garda Youth Award judging panel were particularly impressed by the pride that Mark and Aoife have for their community and their commitment to the project.



See more articles in our the Child and Youth Participation Yearbook available [here](#)

Child and Youth Participation Toolkit

Specifically for Statutory Educational Welfare

Tusla is committed to engaging with children, families and communities, to involve them in key decisions affecting children's lives, their care and support them with the necessary tools to manage challenges while providing services that are proportionate and timely.

This resource will support Educational Welfare Staff to engage with children and young people in decision-making affecting their lives in relation to their education and attendance at school. Tusla is committed to developing participatory practice in all levels of the organisation and this resource will ensure that participatory practice is embedded within Educational Welfare Services. Embedding participation in Educational Welfare Services will enable staff to identify the best supports for each individual child and help him/her to access these supports.

This resource was largely influenced by the Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit, Signs of Safety work and work completed by individual Educational Welfare Officers. A working group was established made up of members from each Team across the Educational Welfare Service. National and international law was identified that justified why participation of children in decisions that affect them should become "the way we work" rather than an isolated activity or only done at the discretion of individual workers.

The Educational Welfare Service is committed to making Child and Youth Participation, in particular, the Lundy Model, a fundamental part of the way we work as an organisation and as individuals. This Educational Welfare Services document has been produced in consultation with staff representatives from each of our regions and the "voice of the child" has remained at the centre of all discussions. It is hoped that this document will be used to support staff in enabling the voice of all the children and young people we work with to be heard and to ensure they have "Better Outcomes and Brighter Futures". This document should at all times be used in conjunction with the main Child and Youth and Participation Toolkit.



Child and Youth Participation Toolkit
Specifically for Statutory Educational
Welfare Service
(Use in conjunction with main
Child and Youth Participation Toolkit)



Art Competition

We are looking for children and young people to design new certificates for our Child and Youth Participation Training programme. The only criteria is that the new certificate is A4 in size (landscape or portrait is up to you). After that, you have full creative licence! We want them to be colourful and eye catching so all staff will proudly display them at their desk. Please scan and send completed entries to avril.dooley1@tusla.ie before **September 30th 2019.**



Get Involved!

If you would like to get involved, submit content for our newsletter or have any questions there is a Participation and Partnership Officer in every region.

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All of the initiatives in this Newsletter are part of the Participation Stream of Tusla's Prevention, Partnership and Family Support programme.