

Report & Summary of Evaluation

2nd Parenting Conference

"Working together towards Positive Parenting"

25th May 2017
Dublin Castle



Acknowledgements

The organisers of the Parenting Conference 2017 – ‘*Working together towards Positive Parenting*’ are grateful to all contributors and attendees for taking the time to prepare for, travel to and engage in the event. Tusla Parenting Working Group would like to thank our funders, Atlantic Philanthropies and acknowledge the contribution that the F2 Fatima Family Resource Centre and St Andrews Family Resource Centre made in sourcing Children’s art pieces for the Art Exhibition showcased at our event, including submissions from the Limerick Social Services and Parent and Toddler Club. We would also like to sincerely thank the children and their families who made a special effort to show us what ‘positive parenting’ looks like through their great artwork.

This report was compiled by Caroline Jordan, Parenting Lead and Regional Implementation Manager for the Dublin North East, Orla Tuohy, Lifestart Foundation and Ann Butler, National Support Officer, Prevention, Partnership & Family Support. The evaluation summary was compiled by Lisa O’Reilly and Nicola Kane, Workforce Learning and Development.

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The aim of the second National Parenting Conference was to take a closer look at positive parenting and showcase how we spread messages about positive parenting through various initiatives including seed funding and the Parenting Support Champions project.

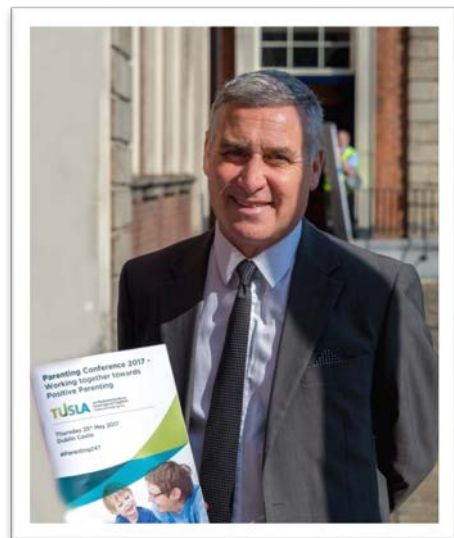


The second National Parenting Conference was aimed at exploring positive parenting and positive parenting supports. It highlighted the initiatives of the Parenting Support Strategy by:

1. Demonstrating a variety of parental participation seed funding initiatives.
2. Outlining the role of positive parenting in improving outcomes for children and families.
3. Highlighting Tusla's commitment in implementing the strategic objectives of the Parenting Support Strategy.
4. Promoting interagency and collaborative work between Tusla, partners and stakeholders.
5. Illustrating the journey of the Parenting Support Champions Project, phase one.

Participants would learn how to:

1. Outline examples of best practice in positive parenting and positive parenting supports.
2. Review and discuss positive parenting and its application in practice.
3. Recognise the importance of collaborative and participatory practice and its role in positive parenting supports.
4. Identify the strategic objectives of the Parenting Support Strategy and initiatives including; Parental Participation Seed Funding, Parenting Support Champions and Parenting24seven.



Master of Ceremonies (MC) Cormac Quinlan, Director of Policy and Strategy (Interim) Tusla, welcomed the participants to Dublin Castle and gave an overview of the day's events. Cormac then introduced Fred McBride, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Tusla – Child and Family Agency to the audience.

Fred McBride, Chief Executive Officer of Tusla welcomed attendees to the conference and thanked the Prevention Partnership & Family Support Parenting Working Group and the Conference Planning Group for their input into the conference planning. The CEO welcomed Dr. Katherine Zappone T.D., Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to the conference and thanked her for her on-going support of Tusla since its establishment in 2014.

The CEO outlined how parenting is a major part of the transformation project in Tusla. Positive Parenting is a significant program of work

reflecting early intervention and prevention, providing parents with the support they need when they need it, in an appropriate manner, at a local level and coordinated across the different services that need to be involved.

The pivotal role parents have in improving outcomes for children and families was acknowledged. It was outlined how important the first three years of a child's life are in capturing and promoting positive attachment and solutions to the enhancement of the wellbeing of children is best placed with families. The CEO stressed that Tusla's role should be to help families arrive at their own solutions while providing families with choices in decisions that affect their lives. Mr McBride emphasised that all Tusla efforts are striving towards prevention and supporting parents and the Parenting Conference is a testimony to that. The conference showcased positive initiatives around the country that are directed towards supporting parents. Other parenting initiatives and supports for parents was outlined, including the Parenting24seven website and seed funding sites enhancing participatory practice within services. Mr McBride also talked about the Parenting Support Champions Network of over 100 champions that provide support for the involvement of Parents in the design of services and help parents shape solutions for themselves. The audience was asked to learn, enjoy and take home ideas on how to inform everyday practice within their own services. Fred McBride concluded his address and invited Dr. Katherine Zappone T.D., Minister for Children and Youth affairs to officially open the conference. Full details of the conference can be viewed online at www.tusla.ie





Dr. Katherine Zappone T.D., Minister for Children and Youth Affairs opened the Positive Parenting Conference 2017. The Minister began by highlighting the current challenges for parents in Ireland today, including homelessness, domestic violence, drug abuse, direct provision centres and bereavement that can result in stress for parents and have negative effects on families and children. The Minister acknowledged the reality that parents and children need support and healthy family relationships are critical to achieving positive mental health & wellbeing of children and young people.

Minister Zappone outlined the importance of providing parents and families with the right type of support in the right place at the right time and how this will assist them & buffer the negative influence of stressful situations. It was outlined that Tusla and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) is committed to supporting families and children to overcome negative situations. The Minister outlined how she is a strong advocate of prevention and early intervention due to her own personal experience and how her department is placing greater emphasis on early intervention initiatives through various policy documents including *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Minister Zappone announced that Tusla and HSE have signed an agreement to work together on delivering disability services for children which was heralded as a good example of working together for all children. More parenting support initiatives were outlined by Minister Zappone, including the additional funding that will enable parents to access affordable childcare.

The Minister introduced the keynote speakers of the day as follows:

- . Professor María José Rodrigo, University of La Laguna, Spain
- . Dr. John McSharry, CEO and Co-Founder, Parents Plus
- . Dr. Rosemary Cross, UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre, NUI Galway





Dr. John Sharry, CEO and Co-Founder, Parents Plus, welcomed the idea of a conference orientated around working with both parents and practitioners and how it is indicative of Tusla's engagement with parents around key sets of values, empowerment and working with parents to find solutions. John Sharry's keynote was based on how practitioners can work positively with parents and introduce best approaches to see the benefits of positive parenting. It was outlined how stress can make parenting a difficult experience. Important components to understanding and empowering parents include "treating parents the way you would like them to treat their

children". Also adopt a very positive orientation towards parents to avoid parents having negative experiences. Practitioners need to understand the dynamics of practitioners and parents, "see yourself in their situation, be non-judgemental". Dr. John Sharry outlined the values of the Parenting Support Champions project: Empathise, Energise and Empower as useful for practitioners in the delivery of positive parenting initiatives within practices. Dr. Sharry outlined them as follows -

Empathise - Crucial for engaging with parents & family. Do not judge them. Social workers sometimes empathise with the child and not the parent. Parents should be encouraged to empathise with each other, parents understand the difficulties that each of them go through, there is a sense that they are not alone and are being supported by other parents, facilitated by professionals.

Energise – Promoting hope for parents in stressful situations can make a difference to parents and children. When parents are all out of ideas, instil hope that change can happen and make a difference in a difficult situation.

Empower – Provide opportunities and belief that parents can make positive changes in their lives. Help parents do it for themselves, listen for how they do well with successes and challenges.

Dr. Sharry then added a forth 'E':

Engage – practitioners should engage services locally, practitioners should not feel overwhelmed, practitioners should seek out resources that are available, for example services that are already engaging with a wider number of families.





Dr Rosemary Crosse, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, began by explaining the context of Prevention Partnership & Family Support, in particular the Parenting Support and Parental Participation work stream. Dr. Crosse presented the research findings to the conference delegation, including the finding that supporting parents can have a positive effect on children's wellbeing. It also has a number of benefits for parents and **significant** benefits for society in general, such as a well-educated workforce and reducing inequalities. Dr Crosse outlined three main strands to the Parenting and Parental Participation Work stream, as follows:

1. Commissioning framework is being developed to assist the commissioning of local and regional parenting support approaches and services
2. Parenting Conferences – to support the dissemination of parenting information.
3. [Parenting24seven](#) campaign promotes 31 key messages that relate to parenting across the life course. Other useful resources are the Parenting Support Champions project, the aim of which is to promote parenting knowledge, offer advice on parenting, engage with parents and promote parental participation. Other initiatives include Regional Learning Groups that support and promote positive parenting initiatives within services, and a Toolkit for Parental Participation developed for practitioners to help them incorporate Parental Participation into their practice.

Dr. Crosse gave an overview of the NUIG evaluation of the Parenting and Parental Participation work and the strategic approach to parenting within Tusla, exploring whether participation of parents is embedded in the structure and culture of Tusla. A literature review explored meaningful participation for parents and constraints and obstacles that prevent participation for parents. Mapping parenting supports in Ireland highlighted that indirect support for parents are fundamental to improving outcomes for families and children. Overall, there is an increasing need for positive parental supports and information for parents. More information is available on [Development & Mainstreaming - NUI Galway](#)





Cormac Quinlan, MC, introduced five Parenting Support Champions who are practitioners with Tusla and partner organisations. They are Alice Malone, Frances O'Reilly, Patricia Lee, Ciara Tyrrell. Also special thanks went to Darren Forde for his work on the presentation today. Each of the Champions took turns to speak about their Journey so far with the Parenting Support Champions Project. Each spoke about how they got involved in the project through their own involvement as parenting and family support workers. They provided an overview

of

- The Parenting Support Champions Project –
 - Their induction into the Project as Parenting Support Champion practitioners
 - Their involvement in promoting and supporting the Parenting Support Strategy
 - Opportunities for the Champions to be involved in evidence based parenting support programmes and engaging with seldom heard parents
- Promoting and sharing parenting information and supports with parents
- Their involvement in the development of Regional Learning Groups
- The training on Parenting 24seven – seven general messages and , Empathise, Energise and Empower
- The Toolkit for Parental Participation to support and share with Child & Family Support Networks and Parents.
- The Planning & Networking Day (8th December, 2016) including the development of a Parent Support Champions project plan
- Excellent training choices and supporting material to bring back to their own areas.
- The Journey of continuous learning – for all involved
- Parenting Support Strategy will highlight effectiveness of using this approach.

“Action without vision is only passing time, vision without action is merely day dreaming” [Nelson Mandela](#)



Parents' Panel - Chaired by Ms Karen Kiernan CEO One Family
Parents talk about Positive Parenting and Positive Parenting Supports

Three parents hosted a Parent's Panel to share their personal experiences on positive parenting with the conference delegates. Karen Kiernan, CEO of One Family, introduced three parents in different families from different parts of the world that provided an insight into a whole range of parenting supports they found useful in their lives. The parents had participated in a number of different parenting programmes including Lifestart and Parents Plus.

The chair acknowledged that listening to other parents and working together as partners with parents, finding out what parents want in services and building good relationships with parents are key to success and we should continue to learn from parents and continue our journey with parents as partners. Karen Kieran thanked the parents and acknowledged the participatory voice of parents at the conference. The inclusion of parents and putting parents at the heart of services is essential in the development of positive parenting programmes and supports.

Karen thanked the parents for sharing, reflecting and being brave in their [presentations](#).



Initiatives to Support Positive Parenting in Spain with Professor Maria Jose Rodrigo, La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain



Professor Maria Jose Rodrigo provided an overview of Positive Parenting Supports in Spain, its origins, background and the ongoing development of positive parenting in making positive changes for families. Core objectives included a recommendations from the Council of Europe and a road map to affection, stimulation, learning of opportunities, the recognition of achievement and freedom from violence.

Maria outlined the key aspects of Positive Parenting initiatives in Spain across the different programs. These include delivering important messages about Parenting and supporting the realisation that the parental role is crucial to well-being for children. The initiatives have focused on strengthening and empowering parents and families by

improving the ecology of parenting and promoting parental competencies. There is a recognition that all parents need informal and formal support to perform their parenting task, especially those living in adverse circumstances. Practitioners should ensure that positive parenting programmes are based on evidence and make it part of their workplan. Training, evaluation and effectiveness including fidelity to the programme, need to be conveyed when rolling out parenting programmes. Dr. Rodrigo outlined the importance of Parenting Support programmes being available for all groups. “It is important that families receive positive messages that programmes are for all parents as a normalised resource.”

For practitioners, promoting a culture of prevention – Key messages.

Professor Rodrigo outlined that pictures and diagrams are important to illustrate key messages around ‘secure attachment’. Parents need to know and understand what secure attachment means for them and their children in everyday life. They need to be shown alternatives they can use and put into practice. She recommended exposing parents to different ways of doing things, and helping them to modify to suit their own use within their own homes. “Bring joy into the learning, introduce structures and programmes with modules for all parents, improve and adjust the delivery of your service to improve the way you support parents and children in Ireland.”

For further information on Parenting Supports in Spain, please go to website <http://educarenpositivo.es>



WORKSHOP 1**Clarecare (West):
Partnership in Practice - Promoting
Positive Contact**

Parents of children in care, social workers and the Clarecare Advocacy Service for parents of children in care have identified a need for parents of children in care to have an additional parenting input, tailored to support them to understand and develop a meaningful way of engaging with their child in care.

Promoting Positive Contact, an 8-week pilot programme for parents of children in care was developed as a response to this need. This workshop will describe the practical delivery of this programme which focuses on the use of a memory box to create and save memories from the parents to share with their child in care. The learnings from this experience and potential future developments will also be shared in the workshop.

**Lus Na Gréine Family Resource Centre
(DML):**

'The Precious Early Years – Nurturing the Seeds for Optimal Family Wellbeing' project recognises the fact that parenting is a critical factor in the lives of children and plays a significant factor in family support. The initiative focuses on the capacity building of parents and creates a therapeutic alliance between parents and prevention and early intervention support services.

**Parenting Monaghan
(DNE):**

An interagency Parenting Support Initiative in County Monaghan working to support parents of children from 0–18yrs of age, the journey from beginning to present and future plans. Demonstrating the importance of the Child and Family Support Networks and collaborative working in our communities.

WORKSHOP 2**Power2Change (West):
Child to Parent Violence Intervention
Programme**

Learning Outcomes - Working with Teenagers and Parent/Guardians to address the issue of Child to Parent Violence in Families.

The Power2Change programme aims to challenge aggressive/violent behaviour in a safe environment and ultimately promote healthy interpersonal relationships in order to break the pattern of violence continuing within families. It aims to support young people and their parents/carers to learn alternative ways of coping with stressful situations.

Community Links Project (DNE)

Tusla Family Resource Centre consulted with parents that were attending a parent and toddler group in the building. Parents suggested that they would like to be more linked to the community in their area and to be more aware of what supports are there.

In consultation with parents, trips to the library, Gymboree, play centres and talks in oral health, healthy eating and messy play and Easter egg hunt etc. were facilitated.

Parentingsupport.ie (DML)***An Inter-Agency Approach to Parent
Support***

The presentation will provide an overview of the experience of the Kildare/West Wicklow Parenting Forum, with specific developments that have emerged from the work of the Forum since 2009.

WORKSHOP 3

Amen *Cook it!* (DNE)

Cook It ! A Skill for Life workshop describes how Amen Support Services set up a six-week cookery and nutrition programme for dads. The aims of this programme is to give men the confidence to cook, to encourage men to get their children involved in cooking, and to create a positive experience with their children. Learn from this experience and see what is possible while working on a shoestring. If you are thinking about a fun healthy-eating learning experience for you and your clients, then this is the workshop for you.

Parenting Pod (DML)

The development of Ballyogan 'Parenting Pod': a parent led, weekly drop in support group, underpinned by the 7 general messages within Parenting 24seven.

Parent Hub Donegal (West)

The Parent Hub is an inter-agency group of Statutory and Community Services who have a common interest in parenting support. The group have been working in a collaborative manner since 2013 and have been engaged in numerous projects together increasing access to parent support to families across Donegal. Some of the work to date includes joint funding applications and training, collaborative rollout of evidence based programmes, parent information fairs and the development of a Parent Hub Website. Thanks to seed funding, the Hub has secured a part-time Coordinator to help bring its development to the next level.

WORKSHOP 4

3 Drives Parent Advocacy (South)

Advocacy Support for the parents of children in care

Advocacy worker, Imelda Farrell, will deliver a presentation highlighting the need for support for the parents of children in care, her experiences, challenges and deliberations on the service and current practice.

School's Out Family Learning Programme (DML)

Family Literacy

The 'Schools Out' Family Learning Programme was held in the Clara Community and Family Resource Centre during the Easter mid-term break. Its aim is to bring fun into learning. This out-of-school initiative supports children and parents to develop their children's language, literacy and learning in a fun environment (based on the Balanced Literacy Framework).

Sessions included reading together, storytelling arts and crafts and a trip on the last day.

Balseskin Project (DNE)

St Helena's Family Resource Centre work with Balseskin Reception Centre for asylum seeking families.

The workshop will provide an overview on the process involved in implementing an established programme into an environment which presents with many challenges such as language barriers, up-skilling participants with diverse parenting strategies, and building relationships with a traumatised population.

It will also demonstrate how we hope to become an informative hub through welcome mornings once a month and how we are teaching parents to play with their children through art.

Closing Address from Cormac Quinlan, Director of Policy and Strategy (Interim)



Cormac Quinlan, MC, began closing the conference by summarising on key messages from presentations and workshops that took place throughout the day. Messages included a celebration of Positive Parenting work already happening in Tusla and across multi sector organisations. Programmes are all evidence informed and performing well internally, “we are learning, growing, and sustaining what we have, although there is need for on-going investment.” One of the critical messages from the conference is that we need both formal and informal network support, and building a team around the family and child is crucial. Finding solutions with parents in partnership came across very strongly in discussions and a combination of support is required depending on each family’s’ needs.

Other key messages included creating a sense of hope in families and “allowing ourselves to be vulnerable allows us to be humble in the task of supporting parents in their role.”

Cormac gave a special thanks to Dr. Katherine Zappone T.D., Minister for Children and Youth Affairs for opening the conference and CEO Fred McBride, keynote speakers, Tusla Parenting Support Champions, workshop presenters, Tusla management and staff PSC, Tusla partner agencies, and special thanks went out to the parents.

Particular thanks went to the Tusla conference-working group, especially Ann Butler & Mary Ferris. Cormac closed the conference as follows: “Above all, thank you for your passion and commitment to the work of positive parenting, safe home!”

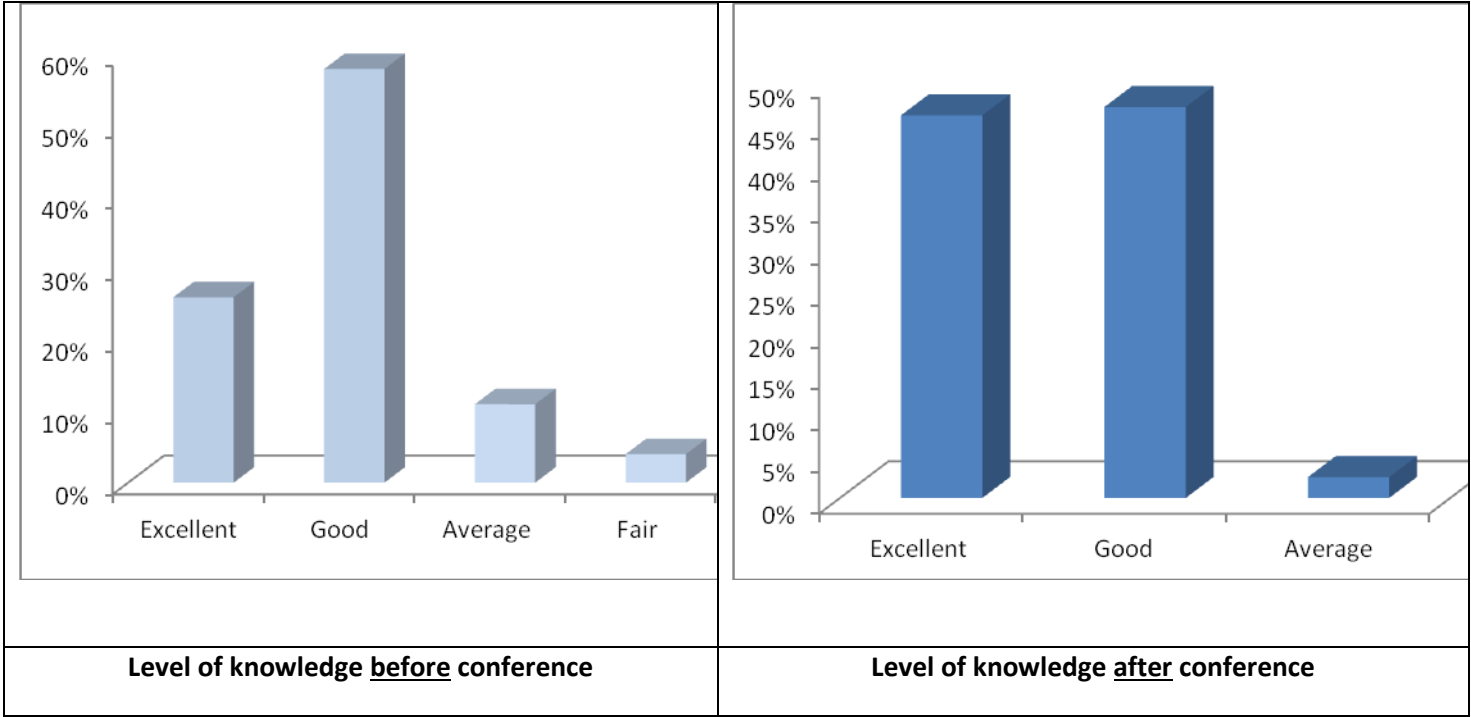


Summary of Delegate's Evaluations

The following pages provide a summary of the key findings from the participant's evaluation feedback from the conference. 118 completed evaluation forms were received from participants. The data from the forms has been collated and organised under the key headings.

Level of knowledge

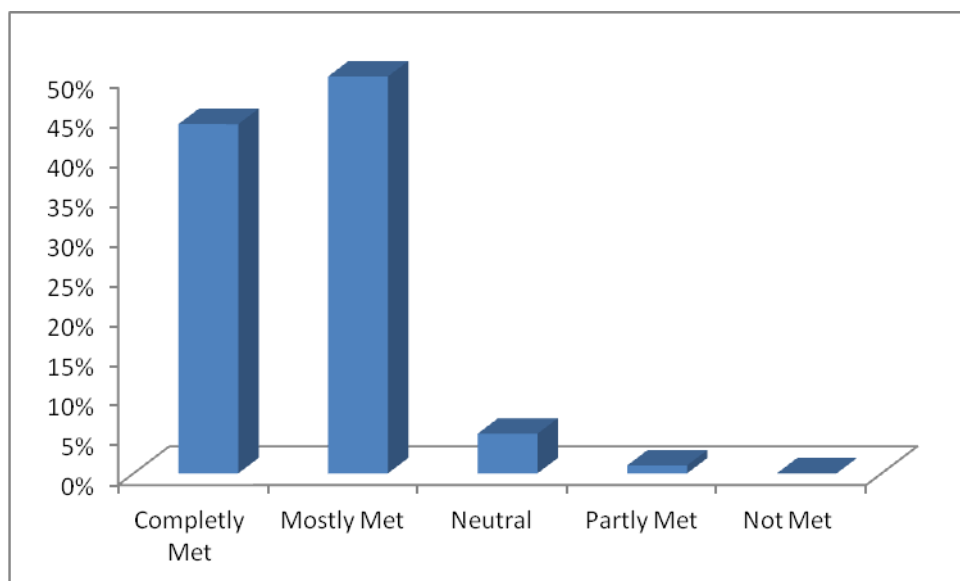
Participants were asked about their level of knowledge of parenting before and after attending the conference.



The vast majority of participants indicated excellent to good knowledge of Parenting Support prior to attending the conference. The data demonstrates that overall participant's level of knowledge improved following participation at the conference.

Objectives

Participants were asked if conference objectives were met.

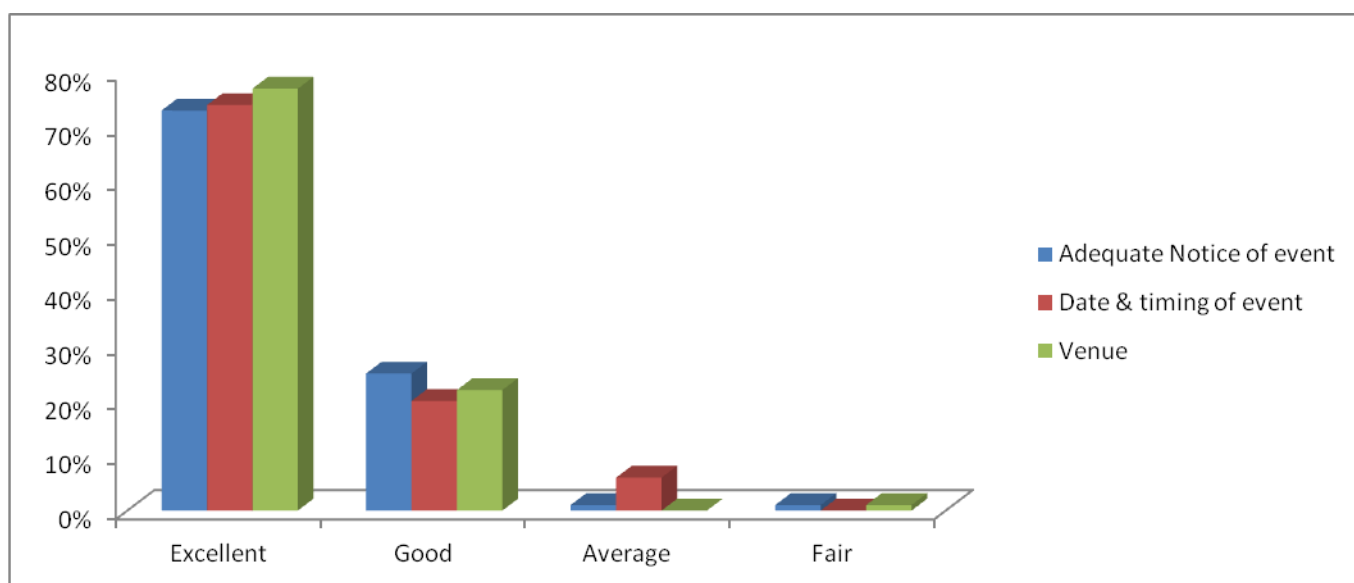


The majority responded that the conference objectives were mostly met.

One respondent indicated that she was unable to identify the learning objectives.

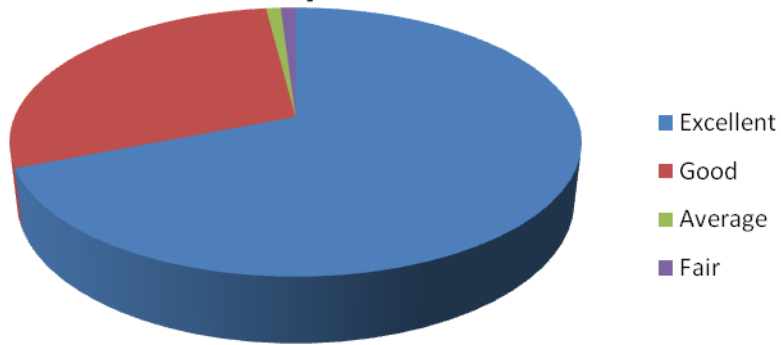
Logistics

Participants were asked to rate the three key logistics of the conference.



The vast majority of respondents found the date, timing and venue of the event excellent. There were a number of positive comments about the overall organisation of the event. However two respondents stated there were not enough toilet facilities and two respondents indicated that parking at Dublin Castle is an issue.

Speakers

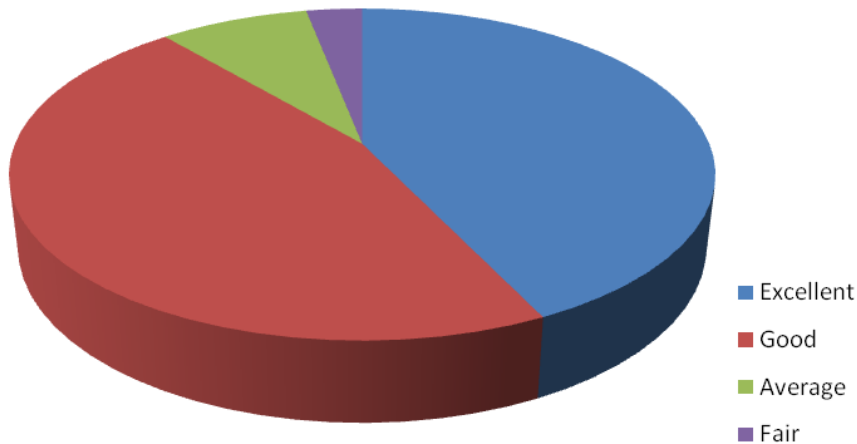


Overall the speakers were rated as excellent or good.

Excellent	Good
69%	29%

No respondents rated the speakers as poor.

Catering



87% of respondents stated the catering was excellent and good.

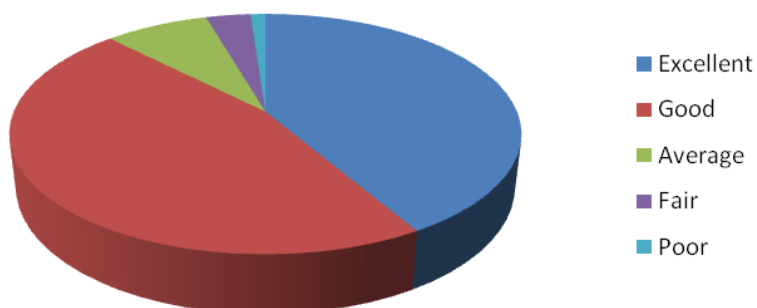
Those who rated it as average or fair had some additional comments;

"Meal lovely but rushed"

"Que for lunch very long, not enough food/snacks at break and participants had travelled from early morning"

"Provide sufficient food breaks & snacks"

Exhibition Area



The majority of respondents rated the exhibition area as excellent or good.

A small portion of respondents commented that they were unaware that there was an exhibition area, or did not have the time to view it.

One respondent stated it would be useful to have an area designated to advertise parenting support services across the country.

The most useful aspect of the conference

Participants were asked what they found most useful from the conference. The word cloud below depicts the responses. The larger the word in the cloud the more mentions recorded by the respondents.



The respondents enjoyed the Parents Panel. Many respondents specifically mentioned Dr. John Sharry and Dr. Marie Jose Rodrigo as the most useful.

"Hearing Parents views, a breath of fresh air"

"Very impressive set up in Spain, worth looking into further!"

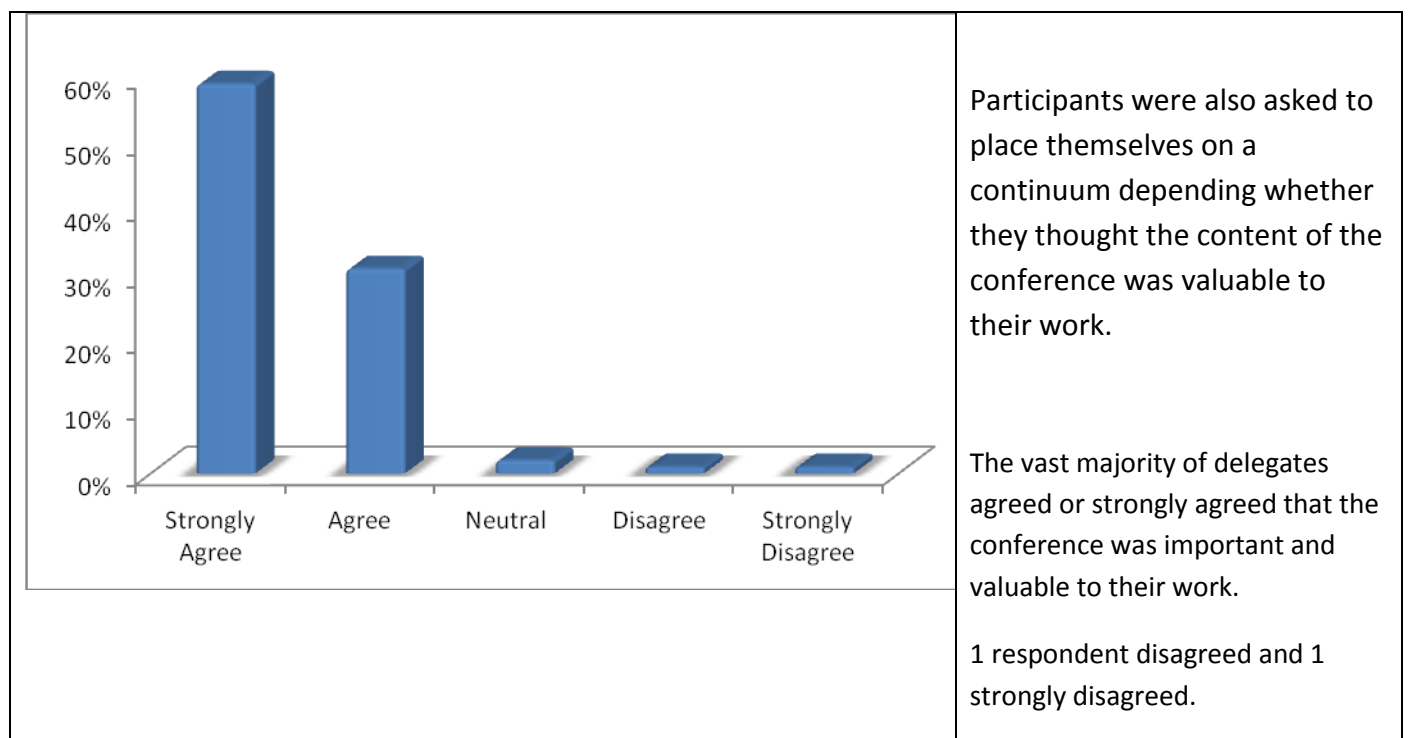
"I could listen to John Sharry all day"

Least useful aspect of the conference

50 % of respondents indicated that everything about the conference was useful. Other comments in terms of what was least useful;

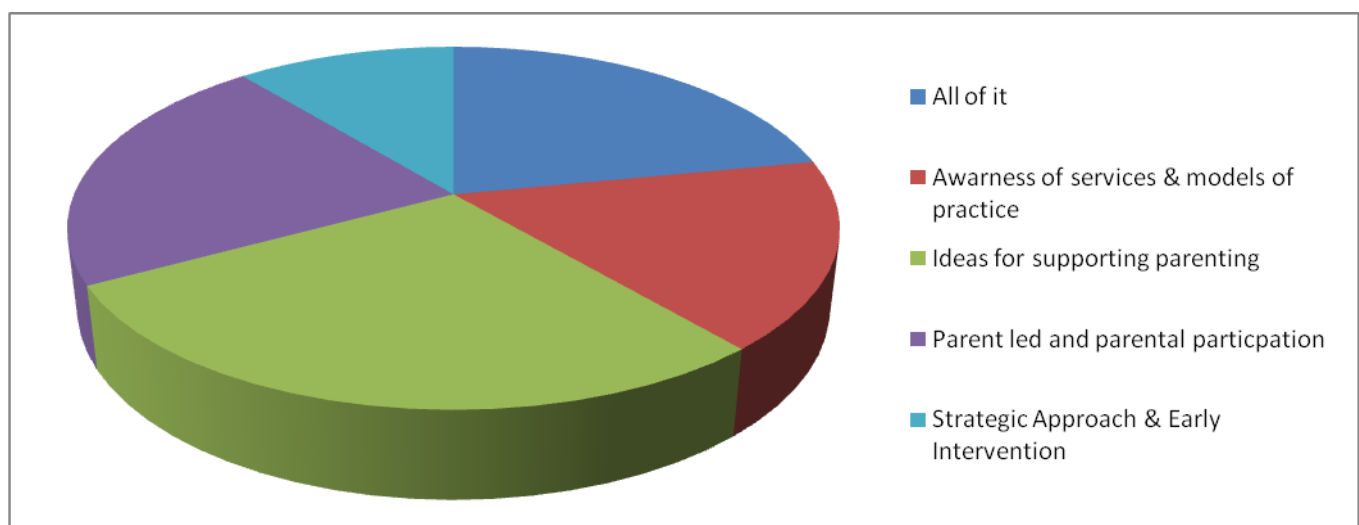
- Feeling parts of the conference was rushed, poor time keeping. In particular *"workshops were a little too rushed"*
- NUIG presentation *"NUIG Input was a little out of step with the other more person centred inputs"*

Application of learning to practice



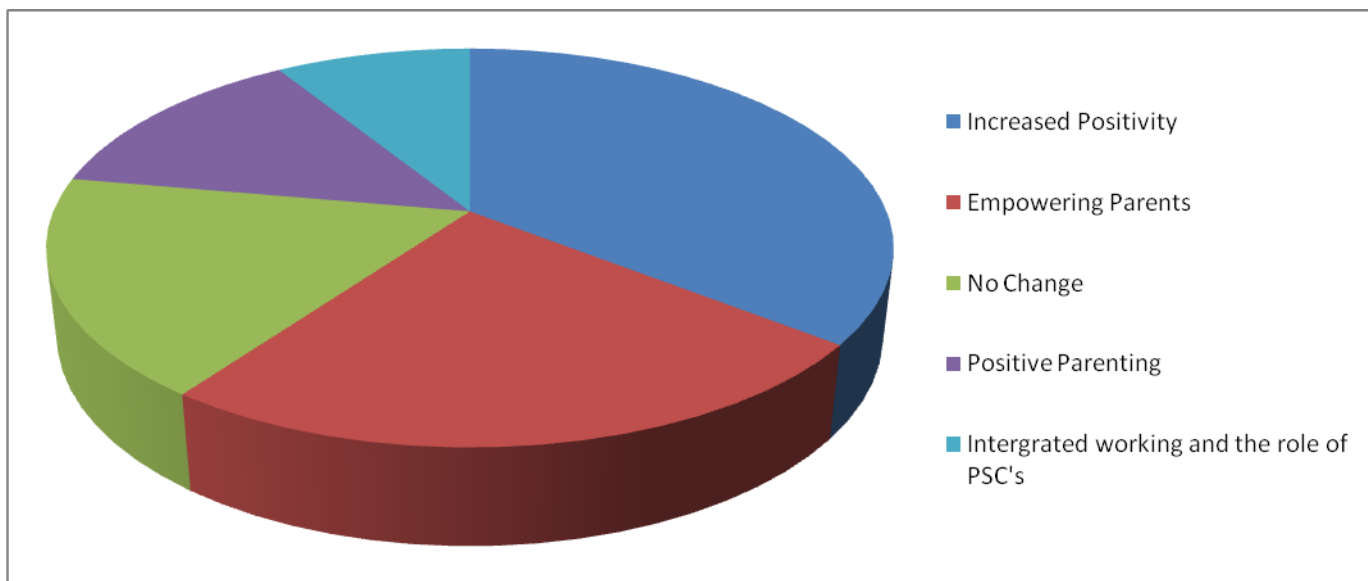
Participants were asked *“What (if any) learning from this conference can be applied in your job?”*

The responses have been grouped thematically in the pie chart below and the size of the segment denotes the volume of responses under that theme. The learning from the conference was distributed evenly across 5 themes, noted below.



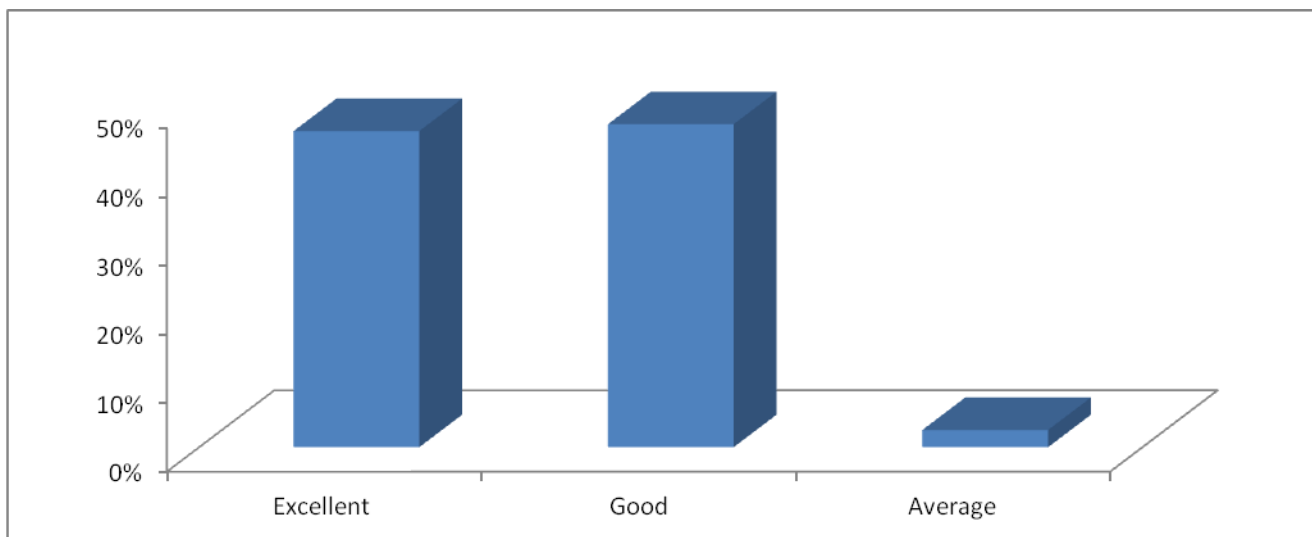
Attitude

Participants were asked if any change of attitude had occurred as a result of attending the conference. The largest response indicated an increase in a sense of positivity; respondents mentioned feeling more motivated and excited to see the changes in parenting supports



Satisfaction

Participants were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the conference. The majority of respondents rated the conference as excellent and good.



Participants were also asked to offer suggestions for future conferences; there comments are listed in the table below.

<i>"Hear from parents of children who are living in care or have been in the care system"</i>	<i>"Provide sufficient food breaks & snacks"</i>	<i>"Involve more parents"</i>	<i>"More time"</i>
<i>"Set up twitter account, with live streaming"</i>	<i>"Email participants the presentations after the conference"</i>	<i>"Stands in foyer with information about services"</i>	<i>"More from Professor Maria Rodrigo"</i>

Conclusion

In conclusion the data collected and collated by Workforce Learning and Development from the standardised evaluation forms completed at TUSLA'S National Parenting Conference 2017 is very positive. There is a clear indication that the learning objectives of the conference were met, that the overall organisation was excellent. The speakers were excellent and very useful to the participants in their work practice. The data identifies the 2 key note speakers Dr John Sharry and Dr Maria Jose Rodrigo were particularly interesting and useful to practitioners in their work and the Parents Panel was the most useful part of the day for majority of the participants. Some timing issues were highlighted in terms of lunch and breaks. Data indicates that participants left the conference with an increased sense of positivity, an awareness of the importance of empowering parents and working in an integrated manner to promote positive parenting. The central ideas respondents took from the conference are detailed on the next page.

Core Messages

The central idea participants took from the conference.

"Early intervention is so important to promote positive outcomes for families"

"Remove the barrier between us and them, agencies and parents"

"Parents are experts in their needs; we need to listen to what parents want"

"To bring enjoyment back into parenting"

"Empathise, Energise and Empower"

"Don't be afraid to ask for help with your parenting"

"Treat parents as you would like them to treat their children"

"All parents need support at different times"

"The importance of empowering parents and enabling them to tackle their own problems"

"Parents are central to working services"

"Positive parenting programmes work. Working with parents ensures better outcomes for children"

"Importance of parental participation in service development"

*"Yesmi,
L.E.A.R.N.I.N.G.
Ethos"*

"Working in partnership with parents, empowerment"

Speakers Biographies



Fred McBride

Chief Executive of Tusla – Child and Family Agency

Fred McBride was appointed Chief Executive of Tusla – Child and Family Agency in February 2016. Tusla was established on 1st January 2014 and is the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children in Ireland. As Chief Executive, Fred manages almost 3,500 staff and an operational budget of over €650 million. Prior to this, he served as the organisation's Chief Operations Officer from October 2013. A native of Scotland, Fred was educated at Grove Academy and Dundee University, graduating with an MA Hons in History and Social Administration in 1983.

His first job in the social work field was with Aberlour Trust, where he worked in residential units in Stirling and Paisley. He subsequently returned to Dundee to complete a postgraduate diploma in social work in 1987.

Fred went on to work in a number of social work roles, including in a generic intake team and young people's team as a social worker, before being promoted as a senior social worker (1991) and subsequently to the role of service manager (1994). In 1998, he became Head of Children and Families in Stirling Council, where he helped to create Scotland's first integrated children's services management structure. Fred returned to his native Dundee in 2005 as Head of Children's Services in the Social Work Department, where he remained until June 2009. He then took up post as Director for Social Care and Wellbeing at Aberdeen City Council.



Cormac Quinlan, Director Policy and Strategy (Interim), Tusla – Child and Family Agency

Cormac has been a practising social worker and manager in child protection and welfare work since 1997. In addition, Cormac was a tutor with the Master Social Work Programme in TCD for many years and is currently a member of CORU Council and member of the Social Work Registration Board. A main area of interest for Cormac throughout his career has been practice development in the area of child protection, welfare and family support.



Professor María José Rodrigo University of La Laguna, Spain

Maria has a Ph.D. in Psychology for the University of Salamanca and director of the Master Programme on Family Intervention and Mediation at the University of La Laguna, Spain. President of the European Association of Developmental Psychology (2008-2011). Fellow since 2010 of the Association for Psychological Science (APS) for sustained and outstanding distinguished contributions to psychological science. Organizer of several postgraduate courses on Evidence-based Parent Education Programs and Best Practices to Promote Positive Parenting sponsored by the Council of Europe and the Jacobs Foundation. Expert commissioned by the Spanish Ministry

of Health, Social Policy and Equality to promote good practices among professionals in the use of evidence-based and preventive approaches for family work. Her research topic is Evidence-based parenting programmes to promote positive parenting in families at risk and the prevention of child maltreatment, on which she has published many international papers. Prof. Rodrigo and her team have designed, implemented and evaluated group parenting programs targeted at families referred by the local social services, which are widely spread in Spain and currently applied in Portugal and Brazil. Prof. Rodrigo and her team have also developed a web resource for Spanish-speaking parents "Educar en Positivo" that contains an on-line evidence-based parenting programme (<http://www.educarenpositivo.es>). Prof. Rodrigo is also involved in a second line of research in developmental neuroscience with two topics: a) the study of the neurological and personality bases of maternal insensitivity to infant signals in neglectful mothers; and b) the study of the neural networks activated in adolescents' risky decision-making in social contexts.



Dr John Sharry, Co-founder, Parents Plus

John is a social worker and family psychotherapist with over 27 years' experience as a child and adolescent mental health professional. He is co-founder of the Parents Plus Charity an adjunct senior lecturer at the school of psychology in UCD, clinical director to Silver Cloud Health and former Principal Social Worker at the Mater CAMHS. John is co-developer of the award winning Parents Plus Programmes (evidence-based parenting courses), the Working Things Out Programme (a multimedia therapeutic resource for young people overcoming mental health problems) as well as lead clinical developer of several innovative online mental health programmes such as Mind Balance for depression and anxiety which are used by services throughout Ireland, the UK and the USA.

John is the best-selling author of fourteen positive psychology and self-help books for families including Positive Parenting, Parenting when separated, Counselling Children Adolescents and Families and Solution-Focused Groupwork. His books have been translated into twelve languages including, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Arabic and Japanese. John is the weekly parenting columnist for The Irish Times and a regular contributor to the national media. His practice website is www.solutiontalk.ie



Dr Rosemary Crosse, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre Department of Political Science and Sociology NUIG

Rosemary holds a Doctorate in Sociology (2015) and BA in Political Science, Sociology and Psychology from NUIG. Her doctoral thesis is a qualitative study exploring Irish mother's experiences of marital dissolution, with a specific focus on the effectiveness of Irish family policy and the value of service provision in this area. Her research interests include; parenting with an emphasis on structural inequalities and the possible paradoxical effects that social policy may have on parents, with a particular interest in those parenting alone. Reflecting these interests, Rosemary has recently worked on an Irish Research Council funded project on Lone Parents and Activation, What Works and Why: A Review of the International Evidence in the Irish Context (2016). In addition, Rosemary has explored both the challenges of parenting alone in contemporary Ireland and the paradoxical effects of work/family policy on Irish women and has been recently published in both of these areas. In addition, Rosemary has worked for Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development in NUIG as a Module developer for the MA in Early Childhood Studies programme and has lectured on a number of topics pertaining to children and families. Rosemary currently works as a Post-Doctoral researcher in the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre NUIG, examining Parenting Support and Participation as part of the Tusla Development and Mainstreaming Programme for Prevention Partnership and Family Support (PPFS).



Ms Karen Kiernan CEO, One Family

Karen Kiernan is CEO of One Family (www.onefamily.ie) Ireland's organisation for people parenting alone, sharing parenting and separating. One Family has developed and provides several manualised parenting programmes for one-parent families which are also available to other professionals working with diverse families through trainings and workshops. Specialist parenting services include parent mentoring, mediated parenting plans and parenting courses. Karen sits on Tusla's PPFS Parenting Working Group; CORU's Social Care Worker Registration Board; the Advisory Council on Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures - the national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020; as well as the Parenting Network.

Parenting Support Champions – BIOGRAPHIES



Alice Malone joined The Genesis Programme on secondment from Tusla – the Child and Family Agency. Alice is a qualified youth and community worker who has a long history of working in both the voluntary and statutory sector and she has held a number of roles including Director of what is now Youthwork Ireland Louth for 10 years. Alice moved to Tusla (Child and Family Agency) to manage the Muirhevanmor Springboard Initiative – a community based family support project. During her time there, she began delivering the Incredible Years® and became the first accredited Parent Programme Group Leader in Co. Louth in 2012. She also was a key driver in establishing an Incredible Years® Parent Forum in Dundalk, was responsible for piloting and facilitating the Louth Pre-School Incredible Years® Programme and also piloting the first ever Incredible Years® Parent & Baby and Toddler Programmes in the county. Alice is currently training to become an accredited Incredible Years® Peer Coach. She is also a Group Leader in the Teacher Classroom Management Programme.



Frances Reilly has worked in Family Support for the past 15 years in the Midlands, based in the Child and Family Centre, Mullingar. Her role as Family Support Worker is specifically focused on supporting families to be able to care adequately for their children in their home. Her work involves identifying areas of need and connecting families to appropriate services in their communities for additional positive support. Frances believes that having a broad range of skills and experiences are now key to Family Support work due to the current levels of disadvantage and the diverse nature of families in Ireland today. She feels passionately that parents “who find themselves challenged on a daily basis” need to hear positive things about themselves and their children.



Ciara Tyrrell qualified as a Social Care worker from AIT in 1995 and has worked in various children, youth and family settings since then. She is currently a Senior Childcare Worker at COPE Galway domestic violence and abuse services where she works with children, young people and their mothers in a refuge setting. She facilitates children's groups, one to one and parenting group support for mothers in the context of domestic violence and abuse, and training and awareness days for professionals in relation to domestic violence and abuse.



Patricia Lee manages ParentStop - a parent support service in Co Donegal with the focus on positive parenting, growing empathy and building resilience. Patricia hails from Galway and lives with her husband, two children, and their dog in Malin, Co Donegal. Her background spans the fields of psychology, youth diversion, community development, change management, ESF initiatives, gender equality, social policy research, children's rights, and the development and management of a range of early intervention and prevention support services.



Darran Forde is a Parenting Support Champion in the North Cork region. Darran, with a background in computers and youth and community, is a project worker with the North Cork School Completion Programme. What he enjoys most about this line of work is the diversity and opportunity to work with young people of all ages and backgrounds. In his leisure time, he is a huge DIY enthusiast and enjoys exploring his artistic side.



Trish Mc Laughlin is the Regional Manager of Lifestart Leitrim, Sligo & West Cavan. Lifestart is a parent education programme which provides the ‘evidence –based’ Growing Child Programme supporting parents on all aspects of their child's development. Trish previously worked in community development projects in the midlands and in the North West. Trish is currently working towards completing her Doctorate in Childhood Studies in Queen's University Belfast

PARENTS PANEL

Biographies



Arta Runika

Arta is a single mum to two year old Emmett. Arta is originally from Lativa but has lived in Limerick for the last 16 years. Arta shared her experience of how positive parenting has helped her family to be more healthy and happy by given her the opportunity to build a social structure and connect with others.



Alex Valadkevich

Alex and his wife Eugenia are parents to three and a half year old Nina. Alex moved to Ireland in 2001 from Belarus and was joined by his wife in 2013. Alex's positive parenting message was "to try your best, concentrate on good, ask for advice and playing together is the best way to bond and learn.



Yemi Oso

Yemi and her husband are parents to three teenagers. Yemi's perspective on positive parenting was centred around Love, Education, Appreciation, Respect, Nurturing, Interest, Natural and a Good Time. These made up the word LEARNING as learning with positive parenting is a continuous process. Yemi shares her positive parenting message in her role with the New Communities.

**APPENDIX 1
PROGRAMME**

9:30	Registration and Networking / Tea and Coffee
10:00	MC Cormac Quinlan, Director of Policy and Strategy (Interim), Tusla - Opening Comments - Fred McBride, Chief Executive, Tusla - Welcome - Dr. Katherine Zappone T.D., Minister for Children and Youth affairs - Opening Address -
10:30	Dr. John Sharry Empowering Parents to be Positive Parents – a Strengths-based Approach
11:10	Dr. Rosemary Crosse NUIG Research - Evaluation Parenting Support and Parental Participation
11:25	Break
11:40	Parenting Support Champions ‘Our Journey so Far’
12:00	Parents’ Panel – Parents talk About Positive Parenting and Positive Parenting Supports Chaired by Ms Karen Kiernan CEO One Family
12:45	Lunch
13:45	Professor María José Rodrigo Initiatives to Support Positive Parenting in Spain
14:30	Parental Participation Workshops
16:15	Summary and Vox Pop ‘Parents talking about Positive Parenting’
16:30	Close

Appendix 2 - CEO Welcome Letter

Dear participant,

Welcome to Tusla's second national parenting conference, as part of the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme. The theme of today's conference is "Working Together Towards Positive Parenting".

Children benefit from effective parenting from birth right through to adulthood. It is critical that we in Tusla and our partners support parents to raise their children in a manner that enhances child wellbeing and improves outcomes.

At the individual family level, preventative parenting support can enhance family well-being and reduce the prevalence of problems later in a child's life. At the community level, the provision of parenting supports can enhance the well-being of communities and promote greater social cohesion. Finally, at the societal level, support for parents can ensure a more effective use of resources, can serve to reduce inequalities and can develop and promote human and social capital.

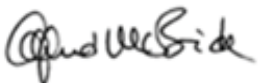
Over the past number of years, we have made great strides in supporting parents throughout Ireland. In 2013 Tusla published a Parenting Support Strategy, 'Investing in Families - Supporting Parents to Improve Outcomes for Children' and '50 Key Messages in Supporting Parents' for practitioners. Subsequently and as part of the PPFS Programme, Tusla has developed and published a parental participation toolkit for practitioners; created a network of over 100 Parenting Support Champions across the country; developed a website for parents (www.parenting24seven.ie) and a resource for practitioners; and provided seed funding to many projects which enhance participatory practice with parents.

Today we have an opportunity to learn from each other – from our Parenting Support Champions; from parenting experts in Ireland and abroad; from the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs who has dedicated much of her career to supporting mothers through An Cosán; from our fellow practitioners who have led the way in facilitating parental participation and promoting positive parenting in their own local communities; and perhaps most importantly from parents themselves.

I for one look forward to learning from people I meet today and I hope everyone here avails of this opportunity to share experiences and knowledge and improve our own practices.

I hope you enjoy today's conference. Kind

regards,



Fred McBride Chief
Executive

Tusla – Child and Family Agency

Appendix 3: Media Coverage of the Conference

Client: TUSLA - CHILD & FAMILY AGENCY PRINT
Source: The Irish Times
Date: 04/07/2017

Keyword: TUSLA
Page: 8
Reach: 72011
Size: 1344
Value: 22337.28

There is no need for parents to feel alone



Sheila Wayman

Free parenting support is becoming more widely available – if you know where to look

When Alex Valadkevich (40) and his wife Eugenia (36) went to register the birth of their daughter Nina in Kilkenny city more than three years ago, they just happened to pick up a leaflet advertising the Lifestart programme.

"We had a brand new baby and Eugenia said why don't we ring them and see what's the story with the programme; maybe they will help us with Nina," says Alex, a chef from Belarus who has been living in Ireland since 2001. "Any advice and help with a newborn baby is always welcome."

The Carlow/Kilkenny Parents Support Programme delivers the Lifestart scheme to families for free. Since signing up for it, the couple have had a home visitor, Margaret Lacey, coming out to them once a month and she's "like family now". She explains what they are likely to see in Nina's development over the next few weeks and how they can respond and encourage it.

Firstly, the programme is "brilliant" because they come to your home at a time when it's difficult to get out with a baby, says Alex. The other thing he really likes about it is that, unlike visits to, say, a public health nurse or doctor, "they are not assess-

ing, they are giving you a heads up on what is going to happen".

So much is going on in the first three years of a child's life, he points out, and Lifestart helps parents tune in to the changes. The couple see it as an investment in the future of their daughter.

"The more we work with her now, and the more education for development she will get, the better she will get on later in life, and she can contribute to the country and society even more."

Through Lifestart, Alex heard about other programmes and, being open to anything that might help them become better

parents, he attended a Parents Plus group course over six weeks.

"Most of the people doing this programme, they don't have big issues. They are not seeking help, just looking for more information," he explains. The focus was on concentrating on children's efforts and

good behaviour, and trying to deal with issues without negativity.

In a group setting you hear how other people are dealing with similar things and you learn from their expertise with their own children. "You realise you are not alone – it becomes less stressful."

Alex went out to the course because Eugenia, who is also from Belarus, has only been here since 2013 and did not feel her English was good enough. She was also breastfeeding Nina, so it was harder for her to get out. He is very grateful things turned out that way. If she had been the one attending, it would have been her rather than him reporting back on what went on.

"I would have listened to her and would probably have missed half of it – being a man," he remarks. "Because I have to do it, it is better for me because I am the first receiver of the information. It is beneficial for the family because we are two parents on the same page."

Relationship

He also thinks it is good for their relationship as they are "working as a team" for their daughter and they communicate more now on every aspect of life. Without the programme, he thinks he would have followed a more traditional male role, "putting nails in the wall and bringing money home".

As he and Eugenia just stumbled over information about Lifestart in the first place, Alex is passionate about trying to spread the word about how there are community supports like this for parents. He was one of the speakers at a recent conference organised by Tusla, the Family and Child Agency, to highlight the role of parents in improving outcomes for children, as part of its Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) programme.

For many people the mention of Tusla brings to mind child protection and intervention. And it is of course "*in loco parentis*" for more than 6,000 children taken into State care – most of whom live with foster parents.

However, the agency, which was established in 2014 to take over that child welfare role from the HSE, has a wider brief.

"Supporting parents is core business for Tusla," says Dr Aisling Gillen, programme manager for its PPFS. The 2013 Government strategy "Investing in Families: Supporting Parents to Improve Outcomes for Children" signalled the intention that Tusla would put more focus on early intervention and prevention, "working with parents collaboratively and supportively", she explains. It already funds "a huge range of parenting support activity both universal – what we call top-up parenting advice and support – and then moving into more intensive parenting support when families are more in trouble, through the child protection and welfare system".

It has 106 family resource centres around the country, along with two outreach centres, but also works with many voluntary agencies, such as Barnardos and Daughters of Charity.

"We fund them to provide a lot of this parenting support work on our behalf and in partnership with us because very often the families they are engaged with are the families we are engaged with," says Gillen.

Tusla is undertaking a lot of organisational work to co-ordinate services better, to get feedback from professionals working on the ground about what's needed and to let parents know what is available. It has recruited 104 "parenting support champions" among professionals already working in this area to help raise awareness.

Family resources are "patchy", acknowledges Gillen and as part of the strategy they are looking at what is needed as a minimum in every part of the country. At the

moment, what's available in terms of, say, parenting courses, differs from county to county. Take Co Donegal for instance, where the Lifestart programme, which the Valadkevichs are finding so useful in Kilkenny, is offered to all first-time parents, as well as other families who are referred by social workers.

In Co Mayo, says Caroline Jordan, the regional implementation manager for PPFS, the Common Sense Parenting Programme is being used. Public health nurses deliver the group sessions over six weeks and any parent in Mayo with children aged between two and five years or between six and 16 years can apply to attend one.

Scientific evaluation

Meanwhile, in a Border county, Parenting Monaghan, she says, has developed within the past year and it is using the Parents Plus programme in its countywide approach to offering family support. "There is a huge

amount of parenting activity going on," stresses Gillen, mentioning also the Incredible Years programme that is run in parts of the country and Strengthening Families, which was first implemented in Cork in 2007. The Midland Area Parenting Partnership offers free Triple P courses in Cos Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath, news of the scientific evaluation of which featured in these pages last year.

Another, very targeted, approach that Tusla has adopted is "Meitheal", a parent-led, "wrap-around" initiative. It involves drawing in professionals from various aspects of a child's life. For example, in

the case of a troubled teenage boy who is missing a lot of school, it might involve a teacher he gets on well with, somebody from the addiction services, a parent support worker, etc and the boy would be invited to attend team meetings too.

"The parent identifies the help that they need and we bring together the people to support that parent, to work out a plan for that child and the agencies commit to what they can do to provide support," says Gillen. "That is working really well on the ground and it is being researched by the

Child and Family Research Centre in NUI Galway. The interim results are very good."

Meitheal is seen by parents as "giving them help when they need it and also empowering them to ask for help when they need it", she adds.

Different stages

The advice to parents who might be looking for more information or support is to contact their nearest family resource centre to find out what is available. There is also the Parenting24seven section of Tusla's website, where lots of topics relating to different stages of a child's development are covered. Tusla is very keen to work with parents in the community, making sure that from their early days and right through all the different stages of parenting, they don't feel alone, adds Jordan. "It's there for them and for them to understand they should be offered support, as well as know where to find it."

Although the Lifestart programme will finish for the Valadkevichs when Nina is

five, Alex and Eugenia intend to continue their parent education. They now know where to find information about programmes appropriate to their daughter's development stages and need no convincing about their value.

"We can see the results," adds Alex. "We can see how Nina is developing and how great she is – it is just pure joy for us."

For more information: tusla.ie.
swayman@irishtimes.com

Most of the people doing this programme, they don't have big issues. They are not seeking help, just looking for more information





■ Alex Valadkevich (40), his wife Eugenia (36) from Belarus and their daughter Nina (3) in Kilkenny; and (right) Arta Runika and her two-year-old son Emmett with Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Katherine Zappone at a recent **Iusla** conference in Dublin on family support.

PHOTOGRAPH (MAIN):
 DYLAN VAUGHAN

Art Exhibition

Some examples of the type of activities enjoyed by children when '*spending time with their families*' from the art pieces exhibited at the National Parenting Conference – there were over 38 pieces displayed on the day. Many thanks again to all the children involved, their families and the F2 Fatima Family Resource Centre, St Andrews Family Resource Centre and Limerick Social Services and Parent and Toddler Club for facilitating this work.



'Mommy and Me'

By

Mauda Ibrahim and Mum

Aged 6 months

Limerick Social Services



'Watching Boss Baby with my Family'

By

Layla Mahmoud – Yousef

Aged 6 years

Rialto Springboard Project

Many thanks to Paul Gannon for Photography on the day

Celebrations in F2 Fatima Family Resource Centre - Parents with their children following Award Presentations for pieces of art showcased at conference.



Parenting Working Group Members	
Dr. Aisling Gillen	National Policy Development Manager Family Support & National Programme Manager for Development & Mainstreaming Programme for Prevention, Partnership & Family Support
Caroline Jordan	Regional Implementation Manager Prevention, Partnership and Family Support, Dublin North East
Orla Tuohy	Tusla & Lifestart Foundation
Noel Kelly	Director, Educational Welfare Services
Susan McGlone	Regional Manager - Parent Support Programme, Mid West, Tusla
Nicola Kane	Workforce, Learning & Development Officer, Tusla
Barry Murray	Tusla Area Manager, Cork
Grainne Collins	Policy Advisor for Alternative Care
Ruth McCourt	Communications/Press Officer, Tusla
Karen Kiernan	C.E.O One Family
Dr Phil Jennings	Director of Public Health/M.O.H/National Lead Healthy Childhood Policy Priority Programme
Anne Mc Ateer	Health Promotion Unit Donegal
Ann Butler	National Support Officer, PPFS, Tusla
Lisa O'Reilly	Workforce, Learning and Development Officer, Tusla
Deirdre Fradl	Family Resource Centre National Programme, Tusla
Ann Marie Quigley	Workforce, Learning & Development Officer, Tusla
Jean Rafter	Regional Manager Educational Welfare Services, Tusla
Liam White	PPFS Senior Manager Mayo

EVALUATION FORM



An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Conference Title: **Date:**
Venue:

Thank you for attending our conference. Please take this opportunity to provide feedback on the event.

1. What was your level of knowledge of this subject before attending the conference?

Excellent Good Average Fair Poor

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. Do you feel the objectives of the conference were met?

Completely met Mostly met Neutral Partly met Not met

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

If not, specify why:

3. Please rate the following in terms of logistics:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Date and timing of event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Venue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Catering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional comments:

.....

4. Please rate the following elements of the conference:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Speakers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibition area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Networking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Catering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional comments:

5. What did you feel was most useful about the conference?

6. What did you feel was least useful about the conference?

7. The content of the conference was important and valuable to my work?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

8. What (if any) learning from this conference can be applied in your job?

9. What change in your attitude (if any) has taken place as a result of attending this conference?

10. Please list one core message you will take from this conference?

11. What is your current level of knowledge of this subject after attending the conference?

Excellent

Good

Average

Fair

Poor

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

12. Do you have any suggestions for future conferences?

13. Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003

Thank you for completing this evaluation form. Tusla Child and Family Agency values feedback on your experience of this event. Please be advised that Tusla staff may contact you in relation to evaluating this event. By adding your contact details you consent to being contacted in relation to this evaluation.

NAME _____ ORGANISATION _____

EMAIL _____ TELEPHONE (optional) _____

The
A T L A N T I C
Philanthropies