

A woman with curly hair is lying on her stomach, reading a book to two young children. The children are also lying on their stomachs, looking at the book. They are in a tent-like structure made of white fabric, with a colorful patterned rug on the floor. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and yellow gradient.

TÚSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Parenting Support Champions

Project Framework

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1 | Introduction

This document introduces the Parenting Support Champions (PSC) Project Framework. The purpose of the Framework is to introduce the Parenting Support Champions Project, outlining how the project came to be and how it operates. The Framework defines what the project is about, the role, purpose, expectations, opportunities and coordination of the Parenting Support Champion Project as well as the steps to becoming a Champion.

The successful implementation of the framework will ensure a robust project whereby practitioners will understand the Project as well as their role as a Parenting Support Champion.

The development of the framework involved the following steps:

- Consultation with staff in Tusla
- Consultation with Parenting Support Champions
- Consultation with Tusla National Parenting Working Group
- Recommendations from a previous evaluation report carried out by NUIG

Tusla's Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Service is a comprehensive suite of early intervention and prevention work. Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) 'High-Level Policy Statement on Supporting Parents and Families' (2015) and First 5 – A-Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028', gives a policy platform for Tusla to strengthen and grow Parenting and Family Support as an effective prevention and early intervention measure to promote best possible outcomes for children.

Tusla's Parenting Support Strategy sets out the strategic direction of the Child and Family Agency in its role in supporting parents so as to improve outcomes for children and young people. The Parenting Support Champions

Project developed by Tusla is central to this work. PSCs are existing practitioners working with children and families who are employed by Tusla and its partner organisations. Whilst it is recognised that there are many practitioners

PSCs are existing practitioners working with children and families who are employed by Tusla and its partner organisations.

working with Children and Families that already have a role as 'Parenting Support Champions' this project represents an opportunity to carry out that work within a national framework of integrated service provision with benefits accruing through participation in training and networking opportunities. "Through shared learning, knowledge sharing and Continuous Professional Development(CPD), our workforce will ensure Tusla is a learning organisation that will continue to grow and deliver high quality integrated services"¹.

¹ Page 10 Tusla's Corporate Plan 2021-2023

2 | Context

Tusla's Parenting Support Strategy sets out clearly and concisely the strategic direction of the Agency in its role in supporting parents to improve outcomes for children and young people. The Parenting Support Strategy has been designed in recognition of the key role that parents and parenting practice has in the realisation of better outcomes for children and families. It seeks to positively impact on family wellbeing and children's outcomes by mandating for local needs analysis and commissioning of services around the specific task of supporting parents and parenting practice. It also seeks to reorientate practice within Tusla to enable practitioners to spend more time with families and in the community on promotional and preventative work. Part of this preventative work is the sharing of key messages and parenting information.

In 2018 an evaluation was carried out of the Parenting Support Champions Project where it detailed the impact of the project;

"While the project is still in its infancy, there is a perception that participation has had positive impacts on the practice of PSCs, resulting in: increased energy, confidence and focus on parenting work, increased awareness of the parenting element of their work, and improved coordination and links with other agencies. The project has generated ideas to improve practice in areas of collaboration, evaluation, planning, and dissemination, for example. Positive impacts on the practice of PSCs' colleagues were also identified, in terms of sharing and use of information, leading to increases in confidence. Such findings are highlighted in both RLG reports as well as this report.

There were also identified impacts on parents in a number of cases. Information gained as a result of participation in the project is perceived to be benefiting parents, as practitioners are

sharing resources and able to provide parents with a range of information. The findings from the RLGs and this report suggest that parents are more informed and have increased opportunities to participate, resulting in increased self-esteem.

*PPFS Manager views also indicate that the project has resulted in positive impacts, particularly in the practice of the PSCs, in terms of: knowledge gained being implemented in practice, parenting issues being highlighted more at local level, and the project having an impact on practitioners' approaches to supporting parents and parental participation practices, according to some PPFS Managers."*²

² Crosse, R. and Devaney, C. (2018) Tusla's Parenting Support Champions Project: Process, Implementation and Outcomes. Galway: UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland Galway.

2 | Context

The Tusla National Parenting Working Group has oversight for the Parenting Support Strategy. Some of the key projects include:

- **50 key messages on parenting including Parenting24seven**
- **Parenting Support Champions**
- **Parental Participation**
 - Parenting Seed funding
 - Parenting Learning initiatives

50 key messages: This document looks at evidence-based statements on supporting parents in their parenting role with guidance statements for professionals. These statements will guide practitioners to be ‘on message’ around how and why to support parents through general parenting and the different stages of the family life course. Each of the messages is supported by at least one study that demonstrates how the message can be helpful. To support parents in their important and challenging role, check out the messages for sound, practical and evidence-based suggestions.

Parental Participation Project: The project aims to enhance parental participation in their own child’s care and education and in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services. The Parental Participation Toolkit was published and disseminated in 2016 and is available on the Tusla website. The purpose of the toolkit is to provide a manual for practitioners to;

1. Facilitate parental involvement in the planning of supports and services and to facilitate parents’ engagement with supports and services, including Meitheal.
2. Facilitate the measurement of parental satisfaction with supports and services.
3. Consider examples of tools of participation.
4. Consider “enablers” and “barriers” to parental participation.

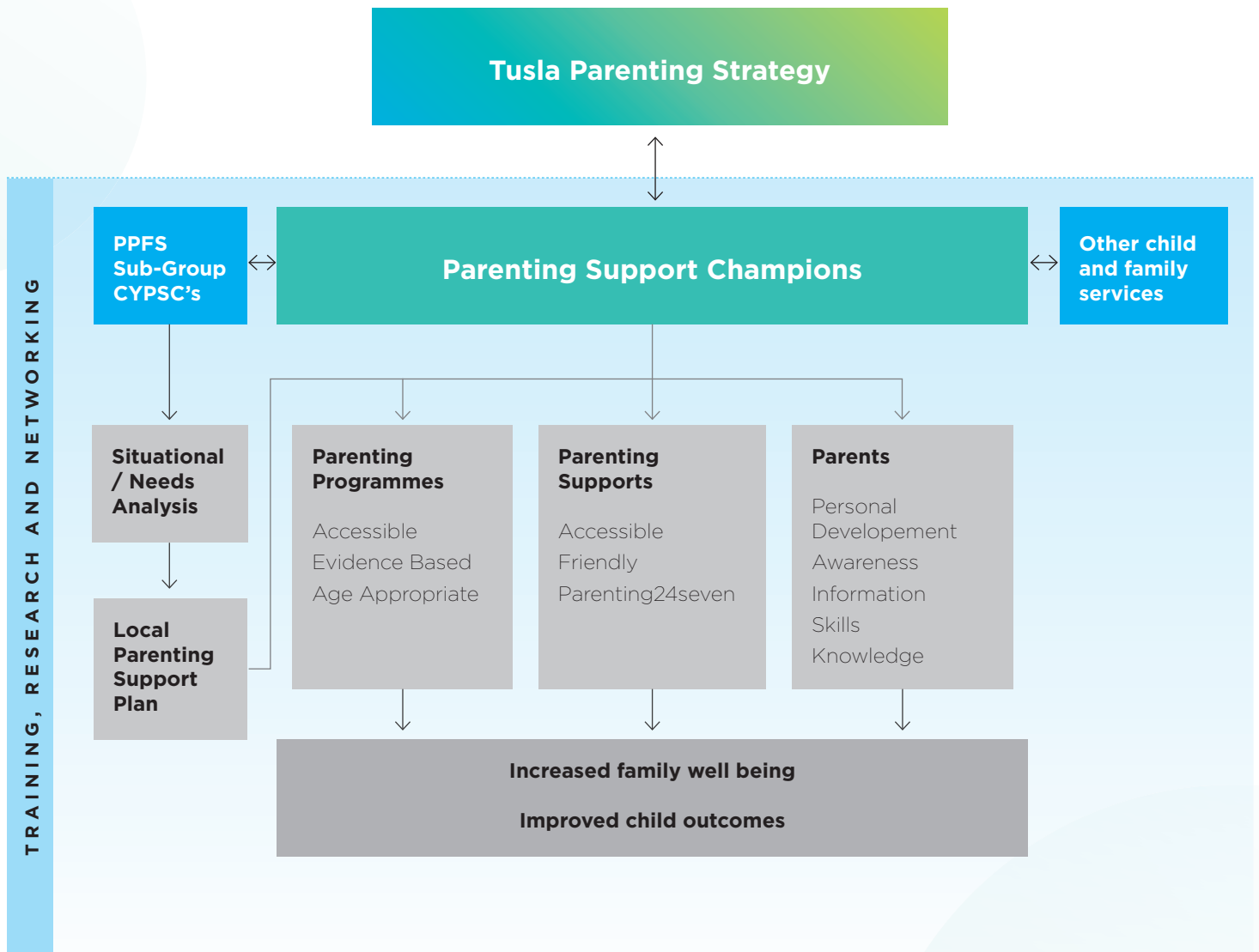
Parenting24seven: Parenting24seven is an integral part of 50 key messages for supporting parents to improve outcomes for children and represents 31 (24 and seven) of the messages which are useful to parents and practitioners alike. The remaining 19 messages relate to parenting in specific contexts, such as parenting when there is a mental health problem, parenting when there is a substance misuse problem and parenting children with additional needs. These statements are meant as a guide to practitioners and parents to provide a safe and positive pathway through the different contexts and experiences that families encounter. Each message is supported by at least one study. In addition there is an e-learning module for parents and practitioners that focuses on the message that child parent relationships are key. The e-learning module is available on <http://parenting.tusla.ie>

Parenting24Seven promotes 31 messages: seven general messages which apply to parenting children of all ages and 24 messages which are specific to different life stages:

- Preparing for and becoming a parent
- Birth to five years of age
- Six to 12 years of age
- 13 years of age and beyond

Achieving better outcomes for children and improving family wellbeing are key organisational goals of Tusla. The promotion of Parenting24seven messages through the Parenting Support Champions Project and related initiatives is an evidence-led approach to supporting parents to improve outcomes and achieve family wellbeing.

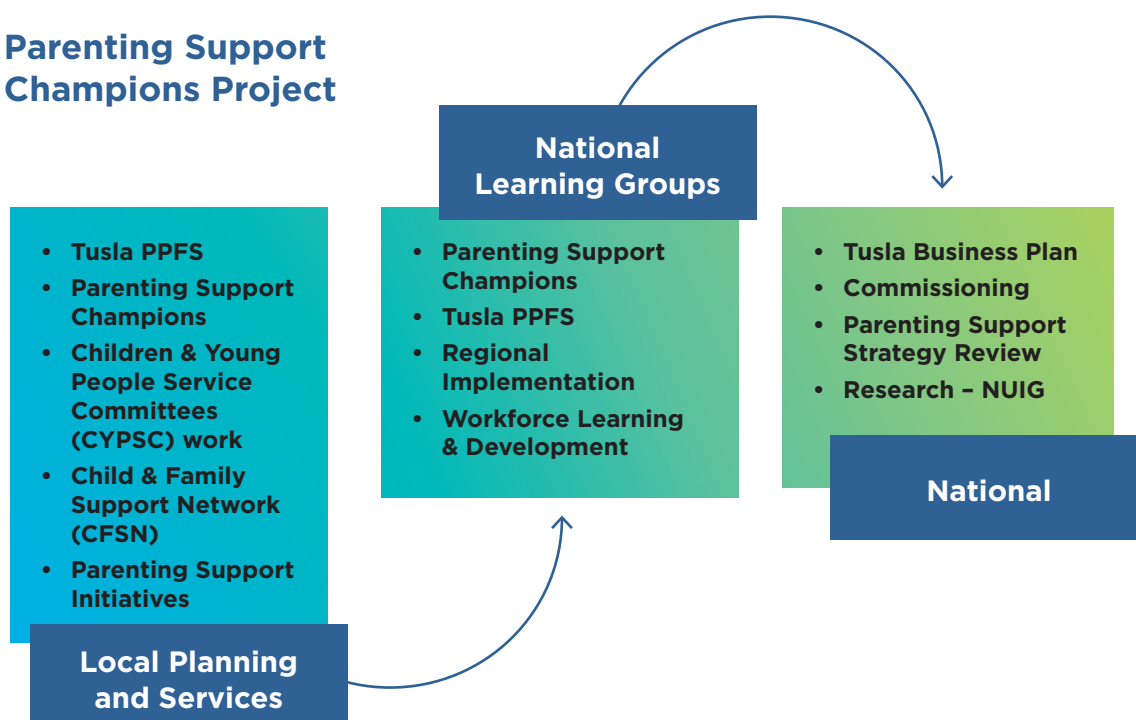
Structure



3 | Role of the Parenting Support Champion

The Parenting Support Champions (PSC) Project is an initiative to bring together practitioners who are already involved with parenting and family support. The project has the aim of promoting and supporting parenting and the implementation of the Parenting Support Strategy within Tusla and partner agencies and organisations.

Parenting Support Champions Project



The role of a Parenting Support Champion is to:

- Promote the parenting24seven website and associated materials with families they are working with.
- Promote the 50 key messages, evidence based parenting support messages.
- Promote the objectives of the Parenting Support Strategy within their area. Part of this work is to support parental participation initiatives.
- Facilitate parents getting involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services in partnership with related initiatives and networks.
- Participate in relevant planning and networking events within their area that are related to the implementation of supports for parenting where possible.
- Promote the e-learning modules to parents and support parents in using the e-learning tool.

3 | Role of the Parent Support Champion

The purpose of a Parenting Support Champion is to:

- Create opportunities for learning through; peer engagement, supporting parenting and attendance at training and networking events.
- Keep the voice of the parent in mind when attending working groups/ networks/ committees.
- Capacity building: to develop the skills of individual members at local, regional and national groups to disseminate key messages on parenting.
- Sharing and promoting; resources and information relevant to parenting.
- Parental participation: facilitate meaningful engagement with parents through parental participation initiatives, including parenting learning communities.
- Reflective Practice; taking the opportunity to reflect on practice.
- Best practice; recognising best practice in parenting support, sharing it and modelling it with reference to existing guidance documents.

Expectations of a Parenting Support Champion is to:

- Bring evidence informed messages and approaches into their practical work situations.
- Signpost parents and other colleagues to the 50 key messages, and other parenting support materials and projects.
- Signpost parents and other colleagues to the parenting 24seven website.
- Participate in approximately 5 events in any one year:
 - Induction day x 1
 - Connect & plan days locally with local PSC's x 2
 - Learning days for PSC's to get together nationally x 2
- Commitment to sharing experience and learning from Parenting Learning Initiatives

and their own regional practice. Learning initiatives will be planned based on local need and reported on in Learning days.

- Support and contribute to Parenting Support sub-groups within existing Children & Young People Services Committees (CYPSC).
- Complete a Parenting Support Champions Annual Audit.

Opportunities of a Parenting Support Champion

- Opportunities to promote the Parenting Support Strategy in partnership with the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Service in their local area including the Child and Family Support Networks and Meitheal Practise Model.
- Evidence based training related to parenting support and the Parenting Support Strategy.
- Evidence based training related to the parental participation toolkit.
- Training as identified by Parenting Support Champions .
- Opportunities to learn about and reflect on, a “value-based” approach to their practise.
- Opportunities to enhance their practise through intra and inter-disciplinary and inter-agency activities.
- Opportunities to support parents through involvement in cross-sectoral activities.
- Opportunities to support and enhance the participation and personalisation of parents in policy formation.
- Potential to inform and influence national Tusla policy development and practise
- Works closely with CYPSC/ PPFS/ CFSN to support parenting in the community.
- Supporting local and regional connections
- Wider opportunity to promote parental participation within Tusla and other organisations.

Parenting Support Champion's Feedback

Great opportunity to network with other partner agencies which builds on our working relationships.

Working together as a team of PSC brings a coordinated response to how parents are supported and enables the sharing of resources.

A great opportunity is provided to network at events and gain an insight into the workings of other projects.

- Potential to inform and influence National and Tusla policy development and practice.
- It has provided opportunities for me to bring back up to date parenting advice and supports to the families in my community as part of PSC role.
- Positive interagency communication and support.
- Greater accessibility to parenting supports and greater knowledge for parents around supports available.
- PSC project supports opportunity to work in partnership and offer services to families that individual organisations could not do on their own. This increases the range of supports being offered to families.
- Better relationship with local PPFS team. Allows better working relationships to grow with the multi aspect of the champions across county and country.
- Allows practitioners to attend more niche training and upskill to the benefit of the PSC programme but also their respective teams.

PSC helps to create a clear specific and accessible pathways for parents.

Resources provided to the PSC sets out a common approach and a common language used which demonstrates a uniform strategy.

The standard of specialist training delivered to PSC's is exceptional.

- Meeting other PSC at Symposium and training days, hearing what each area is doing is a great learning platform, I always come away feeling energized.
- The role has continued to build my confidence and the skills learnt have been transferable.
- It is locality based so projects can be most receptive to needs on their local level.

Parents are willing to engage in non-formal parenting learning within community based settings.

Great support from Child and Family Network Coordinator's (CFSN) in their area.

Coordination/ Responsibility of Parenting Support Champion:

Parenting Support Champions will continue to report to their usual line manager. They will be asked to liaise with/ continue to liaise with personnel within the Parenting Support Learning Community, parenting sub-groups and colleagues. Ways of sharing information and good practise will be explored as part of the initial work of the Parenting Support Champions learning community.

The coordination of the Parenting Support Project is the responsibility of the National Parenting Lead with support from the PPFS Managers or delegated person in the area and Workforce Learning Development.

4 | Process of becoming a Parenting Support Champion

Step by step:

- 1 Have an initial conversation with the Parenting Support Champion Lead (PPFS or delegated person) in your area.
- 2 Complete an application form getting approval and sign off from your line manager.
- 3 Your line manager to send completed application form to the Parenting Support Champion Lead in your area. Parenting Support Champion Lead to approve and sign off on the application and then send the completed application to psc@tusla.ie
- 4 Once your line manager and Tusla approve the application you will receive a welcome email with a briefing around the role prior to induction.
- 5 You will be invited to attend one induction day. Induction will take place twice a year.
- 6 You will be linked in with other Parenting Support Champions and your Lead in your local area.
- 7 Local Parenting Support Champions will meet locally a minimum 2 times a year as arranged by themselves.



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