Research and Information Mentors Strategy

Progress Report

2017-2018

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Introduction

This report will provide an overview of how Tusla's Research and Information Mentor Strategy (2017) has been implemented by the National Research Office in 2017 and 2018. The implementation is on-going and continues into 2019. Tusla's Research Strategy 2015-2017 sets out to build a research culture by embedding research into everyday practice. It is important that research can inform practice governance, decision making, workforce development, service improvement, leadership and management. Through embedding a culture of research this will contribute to evidence informed thinking and practice among all staff groups, service types and disciplines. The Research and Information Mentors Strategy is a whole agency approach to developing and improving research and information skills in support of a learning organisation. The approach facilitates and supports the value of interdisciplinary learning, communication and practice. Overall there has been a positive and appreciative response by the agency to the strategy and this is welcomed. The National Research Office is learning through the implementation of the strategy about the benefits and the challenges that the agency is faced with in building a research culture and in embedding such culture across all services and disciplines. The following overview will include information about:

- The Research and Information Mentor Strategy development.
- Pre-implementation planning
- Monitoring and oversight of the strategy implementation
- Training needs and delivery
- Facilitating and supporting a National Network of Research and Information Mentors
- Promoting the strategy
- Future planning
- Summary and conclusions

The National Research Office supporting Research and Information Mentors in Tusla

National Research Office Team	Research and Information Mentors Assigned
Marian Brattman, Interim National Manager for Research	Michelle Reade and Megan O Leary
Bernard Barrett, National Research and Information Specialist	Caroline Roe, Mary Neligan, David Studer, Stuart Maloney, Berni Smyth, Conor McMahon, Micheal Callan
Edel Tierney, National Research Officer	Charney Weitzman and Jarlath Munnelly
Nerilee Ceatha, Social Work Team Leader assigned to the National Research Office	Anna Deneher, Lorna Kerin and Patricia Doherty
Angela Feeney, National Research Officer	Marie Gibbons, Jan Davis, Marian Durand, Noelle Keaney, Caitriona Kearns, Karen Condron, Karen Quinn, Godfrey Mushongera, Ruth Kelly and Anna Sheerin

	Name	Role	Area/location covered
	National Network of Research and Information Mentors 2017/18-2020		
	Name	**Role**	**Area/location covered**
1.	Michelle Reade	Workforce Learning and Development	Dublin Mid Leinster
2.	Caitriona Kearns	Social Care Manager	Dublin North
3.	Patricia Doherty	Social Worker	Kildare/West Wicklow/Dublin South
4.	Lorna Kerin	Children and Young Persons Services Coordinator	Dublin South East and West Wicklow
5.	Marie Gibbons	Researcher for Galway and Roscommon Children and Young People' s Services Committee	Galway and Roscommon
6.	Anna Deneher	Principal Social Worker	Dublin South Central
7.	Karen Condron	Manager, National Significant Event Notifications Team	Kildare
8.	Stuart Maloney	Educational Welfare Officer	South Tipperary
9.	Caroline Roe	Research and Information Officer	Mid-West
10.	Micheal Callan	Principal Social Worker	South Tipperary, Carlow and Kilkenny
11.	Megan O Leary	Senior Educational Welfare Officer	Dublin South Central
12.	David Studer	Children and Young Persons Services Coordinator	Limerick
13.	Noelle Keaney	Social Care Worker	Cavan and Monaghan
14.	Ruth Kelly	Senior Social Work Practitioner	Wexford
15.	Jan Davis	Workforce Training and Development Officer	Dublin North East
16.	Godfrey Mushongera	Social Work Team Leader	Dublin South Central
17.	Anna Sheerin	Acting Principal Social Worker	Cavan/Monaghan
18.	Marian Durand	Workforce Training and Development Officer	Dublin North East
19.	Karen Quinn	Social Worker	Dublin South Central
20.	Conor McMahon	Care Planning Reviewer	Sligo and Leitrim
21.	Charney Weitzman	Childrens First Information and Advice Person	Midlands
22.	Jarlath Munnelly	Children and Young Persons Services Coordinator	Mayo
23.	Berni Smyth	Service User Experience	Galway
24.	Mary Neligan	Social Worker	Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary

Getting started: Some initial thoughts of Research and Information Mentors on the implementation of the strategy taken from monthly activity records.

Have been using the electronic resources a lot…a really great resource and have been able to source all the articles I was looking for.

I need to be confident about using the databases, Athens, EBSCO…YAMMER forum is great.

…if we are to promote a culture of research then we should perhaps think about focusing on research integrity and responsibilities as a researcher.

…positive about the role but am aware that I have to develop the role…

Really enjoying the role but I feel I'm at the very start of the process.

I think this is gathering momentum and I am still enjoying the role. The online resources are a massive bonus and are being hugely welcomed by staff teams.

I am surprised at how well this is being received on the ground despite not yet formally engaging with staff through existing structures.

This is such a positive development within Tusla to be spreading the work of the research dept. and especially the availability of the online journals and access to Barnardos library.

1. Research and Information Mentor Strategy Development.

The Research and Information Mentor strategy was developed in support of Tusla's Research Strategy 2015-2017 and relates to all of the objectives as listed below:

1. **Develop research infrastructure.** To establish appropriate structures and functions to ensure that high quality research is embedded within the organisation.

2. **Provide research coordination.** To develop the systems and processes necessary to ensure that research is coordinated and supported across the organisation.

3. **Use research to develop the capacity of Tusla as a learning organisation.** To promote a culture in which there is a commitment by staff to use research including research skills and methods to promote the process of learning and in which individual learning can be transferred into organisational learning.

4. **Use research information to support improved service delivery through evidence informed practice.** To ensure ready access to information resources and establish linkages with academic institutions and other learning organisations.

5. **Use research to inform and guide policy development.** To establish the research requirements of the Agency so that the planning and development of policies and services is informed by best available evidence and to identify and address knowledge gaps.

Building on and in relation to the objectives of The Child and Family Agency's Research Strategy 2015-2017, the Research and Information Mentor Strategy was developed and published in 2017. The Research and Information Mentor Strategy (2017) draws from a range of literature and models in the area of information, research and knowledge utilisation. The strategy refers to models of developing research cultures and 'research mindedness'[1] and adopts the concept of 'information stars'[2] within organisations in the promotion and support of such models. The strategy sets out the Agency's own definition of *Research Empowerment*, a stepped approach to building research empowerment and presents *The Knowledge Cycle* context within the agency.

The strategy identifies key benefits for Tusla:

- A co-ordinated and systematic approach to research related issues throughout the Agency.
- Development of research skills and capacity throughout the Agency.
- Knowledge creation and transfer in support of Agency aims and objectives.
- Support to an evidence-informed practice approach.
- Support to the Agency in the development of a learning organisation.
- Contribution to the personal and professional development of Agency staff.

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[1] Feeney (2016) *National Research Office Reference Paper on the Development of a Research Skills Programme located within Research Minded Culture and Utilisation Structures*. Child and Family Agency: Dublin.
[2] Flanagan (2013) *Information Behaviour of Social Workers: Needs, seeking, acquisition and use of information to support social work practice*. Department of Children and Youth Affairs. No 24 Research Briefing.

The strategy document identifies an implementation plan to develop and embed a research culture. The plan adopts a research empowerment approach in support of the knowledge cycle by establishing an interdisciplinary National Network of Research and Information Mentors. The strategy was formally approved by Cormac Quinlan, Director of Transformation and Policy.

2. Planning for Implementation

The NRO adopted a considered approach as to how they would begin to implement the strategy. Key to this was a targeted communications plan, a nominations process open to all staff and a nominations review process.

2.1 Communications

In 2017, the National Research Office dedicated time to communicating the strategy across the agency. A presentation to an Area Managers meeting took place. In order to ensure that all services were informed about the strategy and the staff nominations process detailed communication emails were directed to all Service Directors, Area Managers and National Managers including DSGBV services, Early years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance, Human Resources, Workforce Learning and Development, Finance, Legal services, Educational Welfare Services and Alternative Care. An additional presentation to the Cavan/Monaghan area team meeting took place on request. A Newscast was issued with support of the communications office. The NRO used all opportunities available to them to communicate the strategy at events such as the Research Advisory Group meetings, the NRO seminar 2017 and through their contacts with staff across the agency.

2.2 Nominations Process

As above, the NRO communicated the nominations process through emails, presentations and newscasts. It was a priority for the NRO to provide as many staff with the information about the strategy in order for them to have the opportunity to seek a nomination from their relevant Area Manager/Service manager. Each Area Manager/Service manager was invited to make up to 3 nominations for their area/service. In total 36 staff were nominated for the role who were all then invited by the NRO to make an application for the role. The application form[3] sought information about their current post with the agency, why they would like to be a Research and Information Mentor and to include a summary of relevant education, skills and experience to the role. In total 27 applications were received and 26 were included for review. Overall, the applications reflected multiple disciplines and service areas thereby aligning with the interdisciplinary nature as set out by the strategy.

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[3] See Appendix 1 for Application Form.

2.3 Nomination Review Process

The NRO team and a member of the Strategy and Policy directorate engaged in an application review[4] process. The applications were reviewed in line with the specifications as set out in the strategy. All applications were confirmed. Following consideration by the NRO in relation to capacity to support the network of mentors a decision was made to bring the network on board in 2 phases by training the first group of thirteen mentors in January 2018 and the second group of thirteen mentors in July 2018.

3. Monitoring and Oversight

Monitoring and oversight of the implementation of the strategy is led by a dedicated strategy lead and is supported by the NRO staff team through the Research and Information Mentors Governance Group.

3.1 Governance Group

The governance group was established early in 2018. The terms of reference[5] set out the functions of the group and the membership includes the NRO staff team, Head of Policy and Research and there is a provision for additional attendees for specific inputs from time to time. The governance group met 6 times in 2018. For all meetings an agenda was prepared and circulated in advance and minutes recorded. The governance group have provided a monitoring and oversight function by reviewing activity records, discussing progress and challenges, planning for events and preparing communications about the strategy. The operation of the governance group will continue into 2019 and 2020.

4. Research and Information Mentor Training Programme

The National Research Office, in support of the skills development of all Research and Information mentors were responsible for the delivery of a bespoke training programme.

4.1 Training Programme Development

In 2017 the NRO commenced the design and development of a bespoke training programme. The development of the programme required consideration of the role and expected activities of the Research and Information mentor as set out in the strategy. The training programme was divided into 3 components namely; introduction, induction and skills development. A series of power point presentations and supporting documentation such as hand outs and articles were prepared. The training programme was reviewed at the request of the NRO by Training and Development Officers based in the Mid-West and was revised to incorporate their feedback where applicable. The training programme was finalised by the NRO by mid-January 2017.

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[4] See Appendix 2 for Application Review Sheet.
[5] See Appendix 3 for Governance Group Terms of Reference.

4.2 Delivery of Training

The training was delivered over 2 days in the Brunel building for the first group of 13 mentors on 17th and 18th of January 2018 and for the second group of 13 mentors on 10th and 11th of July 2018. The training was delivered and group work was facilitated by NRO team members with an input from Barnardos Library and Information Service reflecting the Tusla/Barnardos partnership. Included at the January training was a briefing on the EPPI programme and toolkit. A training schedule was developed and included the following:

- The introduction component included an introduction to the NRO staff team and an overview of the establishment and functions of the NRO including the Research Advisory Group, the Research Policy Working Group, the development of the Tusla Research Centre and research register, the Research Ethics Review group and on-going research projects supported and commissioned by the NRO.

- The induction component included an overview of the role including the duties and responsibilities identified within the strategy. All attending engaged in group work exercises to develop their ideas and to envision how they would approach the role.

- The skills development component included interactive hands on presentation of the Tusla Research Centre and a demonstration and opportunity to acquire and practice database search skills. A demonstration and practice session was also provided by Barnardos Library and Information Service.

4.3 Training Evaluation

The NRO prioritised obtaining feedback from participants on their experience of the training programme. With permission from Tusla Workforce Learning and Development, the standardised training evaluation form was used to capture feedback on learning objectives, knowledge skills and learning, application of knowledge and skills to practice/workplace, attitudes, core messages, training and facilitation, venue and other comments. Participants at both trainings were invited to complete an evaluation form. A report[6] including all feedback from the forms for each of the trainings has been completed and subsequently shared with the mentors, the NRO and by the Head of Policy and Research with SMT.

4.4 Training from EBSCO

Further database search skills training was provided by EBSCO in September 2018. This training was provided as part of the contractual agreement with EBSCO for the provision of 2 training days annually. One day was allocated to training the full National Network of Research and Information Mentors in Athlone. All mentors were invited to submit their training needs in advance of the training and the programme was developed by the trainer and in conjunction with the NRO in

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[6] See Appendix 4 for Training evaluation reports.

response to these needs. Feedback and evaluation was provided by the mentors to the trainer.

4.5 National Network Event

The strategy sets out for a national network day to be held annually for the full network of mentors. The purpose of the day is to bring the full network together so as to provide an opportunity for networking, communication and exchange of ideas. The first national network day took place on 9th of October 2018. The day included a mix of research and information inputs along with the facilitation of group work[7]. The group were addressed by the Director for Transformation and Policy (as set out in the strategy) and the Interim National Manager for Research. Presentations were provided by Assistant Professor Eavan Brady, Trinity College Dublin in relation to her experience working in Practice and Research Together (PART) Canada and from Professor Dorothy Watson of the ESRI and Dr Clare Farrell of the DCYA in relation to the Growing Up in Ireland longitudinal research study, this was a bespoke presentation tailored to respond to the interests and questions identified in advance by the mentors. The NRO sought feedback on the event from all those attending and a feedback report has been complied[8].

5. Facilitating and supporting Research and Information Mentors

Section 9 of the strategy sets out the requirements for a formal liaison between the mentors and the NRO to facilitate and support mentors in their role. The formal liaison is on-going and is regularly monitored by the governance group. There are a number of actions set out to meet this requirement as detailed below.

5.1 One to One Meetings and Contact

The strategy states that mentors will formally liaise with a National Research Officer assigned to that area to ensure that the approach is in line with the local research and information plans devised and in alignment with national research priorities.

All NRO team members are allocated a number of mentors each to facilitate and support their roles. The current allocations are divided between all 5 team members and where possible these allocations have attempted to align NRO team members with the geographical locations of mentors. The provision of support was agreed by the governance group to include: a minimum one monthly phone call to each mentor and one face to face meeting per year. This contact can be increased at the discretion of the NRO and the mentors which often depends on the level of support required and/or the activity of the mentor. Some challenges were faced in maintaining contact most often in situations where mentors had difficulty allocating time to the role.

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[7] See Appendix 5 for schedule of National Network Day 2018.
[8] See Appendix 6 for National Network Day feedback report.

5.2 Meetings on a Quarterly Basis - Regional Events

The strategy states that *mentors will formally meet with the NRO on a quarterly basis for reporting and monitoring*.

Two half day regional meetings took place in April (Dublin) and in May (Kilkenny) in 2018. These events were organised by the strategy lead and facilitated by NRO staff. An agenda was prepared in advance based on reviewing the experience, progression or challenges with implementing the role so far. Mentors trained in the first group i.e. January 2018 attended these events. No regional events were planned for Q3 or Q4 due to pre scheduled events including; training of the second group in July, full day EBSCO training in September and the national network event in October. Four dates for regional events will be scheduled for 2019.

5.3 Skills Development Training

The strategy states that *mentors will engage with a skills development training programme to support them in their role.*

All mentors received skills development training in database search skills as part of their initial training programme provided by the NRO. A further training day dedicated to database search skills was delivered by EBSCO and the NRO in September 2018 and this was prepared in response to identified training needs of the network. Included on the training programme was a component on critically appraising research evidence and this has further been supported with the provision of presentation slides. Further training will be made available either online or at the regional events planned and this will be provided for through the work plan 2019-2020. Currently online tutorials on database search skills are available through EBSCO.

5.4 Sharing Research and Information Resources

Mentors, with the support of the NRO will have a dedicated space on the Electronic Research centre for sharing the outputs from the local research and information initiatives.

A dedicated YAMMER group has been established. All mentors and NRO staff are members of the group. The online facility provides for opportunities to share ideas, suggestions, and resources such as research articles and information. Information about conferences and training events have been posted along with useful tools and communication materials such as presentations and leaflets developed by the mentors themselves. The group has also provided opportunities to encourage mentors to link with one another thereby strengthening the communication and relationships among the network.

5.5 Annual Meeting with the Director for Policy and Transformation

Mentors, with support from the NRO will meet with the Director for Policy and Strategy annually to ensure that local research and information outputs inform and/or align with policy developments and service priorities.

This item was partially met at the National Network day in October 2018. The Director for Policy and Transformation addressed the group attending and engaged in introductions and gave a briefing on his support for the strategy and acknowledgment of the interdisciplinary nature of the group. A more formal approach to how this meeting can be facilitated will be considered for the next annual national network day in 2019.

5.6 Informing Area Managers

The NRO will ensure that Area Managers are informed of the work of the Research and Information Mentors strategy by making this information available through presentations and/or meetings with the Area Managers.

Some mentors have delivered presentations to their local area and regional management/ service teams and groups. The NRO have not yet formally engaged with meetings or presentations with Area Managers/service managers to specifically brief them on the work so far. The strategy lead has been invited to the DML senior management team meeting and this will be scheduled shortly. The formal communication of the strategy progression is a component of the overall NRO communication plan for 2019.

5.7 Mentors Annual Review of the Strategy

Mentors, with support from the NRO will review the strategy on an annual basis. A number of metrics will be devised to support the implementation and review of the strategy underpinned by planning tools and other evaluative methods.

The annual review by mentors will be planned for in 2019. Metrics have been devised including: number of mentors, number of mentors trained, disciplines and work titles.

6. Research and Information Mentor Activity

The strategy lists examples below of local research and information activities that the NRO have encouraged mentors to engage in. These examples do not cover the full range of activities. Engagement with particular activities is also dependent on the skills and confidence of any one mentor.

There are many ways, formal or informal in which Research and Information mentors can promote information sharing practices, promote research and support and influence colleagues to become involved in research related activities.

The following are examples of local research activities:

- *Promoting a clear understanding of the relationship between research, information, knowledge and evidence.*
- *Assisting and enabling staff to frame clear and well-structured research questions.*
- *Becoming a local source of expertise in interrogating available electronic and print information resources.*
- *Providing (where appropriate with colleagues e.g. WLD staff and NRO staff) a mix of one to one and group training in the use of and extrapolation of information etc from available electronic and print information.*
- *Working in cooperation with the NRO to develop linkages and partnerships with universities, Institutes of Technology and partners.*
- *Acquiring facilitation skills to establish lead and coordinate communities of practice.*
- *Evidence based practice seminars*
- *Journal clubs*
- *Lunchtime research lectures*
- *Writing for publication groups.*

6.1 Activity Records

In order to capture the activity that mentors engage in as part of their role they are requested to record and submit a monthly record. Mentors are asked to record what activities they have engaged in, how many hours allocated to the role, any challenges or progress made, their contact with the NRO and if they have any additional support requirements.

6.2 Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis of activity reports received from the first group of 13 mentors trained covering the months of March to July 2018 was undertaken and a report was completed. Overall the records reflected the early stage work of the mentors in establishing and communicating their role. Emerging themes included communications, working with each other, skills development, allocating time, engaging with a range of teams and disciplines, challenges and supports, research ethics and practitioner research, supporting agency staff with academic research, progress and future planning. The thematic analysis will be used to inform the work plan for 2019-2020. The thematic analysis report can be found on the Tusla Research Centre.

7. Communication of the strategy

Research and Information Mentors are focused on communicating their role, the strategy and the work of the NRO. Evidence from the thematic analysis would indicate that communication in relation to Tusla's research ethics process has had a particular impact with subsequent queries and applications being made by internal and external applicants. The NRO have continued to communicate the strategy and the work of the mentors internally with a Newscast to all Agency staff and information update communication to all mentors, line managers and Area Managers to be issued shortly.

7.1 Promotional Material

Mentors have been provided with promotional material from the NRO including leaflets on the responsibilities of the NRO, information leaflets on the databases and journals available on the Tusla Research Centre. The NRO has provided a standard letter of introduction to colleagues and a standard power point presentation for delivery to staff groups locally and regionally. Some mentors have developed their own promotional material including power point presentations, information leaflets describing the role and a flag which some mentors have included on their email address and signature. A dedicated page on the Tusla Research Centre displays the online profiles of Research and Information mentors including contact details, areas covered and research interests.

7.2 External Communications

The NRO has sought to communicate the strategy externally for example with groups such as the Research Advisory Group or through academic liaison function of the office. Other examples of external communication include:

➢ An oral presentation at the International Social Work and Social Development Conference at the RDS, Dublin, July 2018.
➢ A poster presentation at the Health and Social Care Professional Conference at Dublin castle, November 2018[9].
➢ The strategy has been cited in a journal article in the Winter 2018 edition of the Irish Social Worker journal[10].

8. Moving Forward

The NRO are planning for the continuation of the strategy implementation for 2019-2020.

8.1 Work Plan 2019-2020

A dedicated work plan will support the strategy implementation and will seek to strengthen and embed the strategy across all agency areas and disciplines. The plan will be informed by the learning so far that has been captured by: training events, regional and national events, on-going contact with mentors, activity records and the thematic analysis and the work of the governance group.

8.2 Communications

Improving the visibility of the strategy with the agency is a priority and it will be a component of the wider communications plan of the NRO in 2019.

8.3 Budget and Associated Costs

The implementation of the strategy is supported by the NRO budget, to date there have been minimal costs to implementing the strategy with costs incurring for events i.e. catering and venue hire and poster printing.

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[9] Poster is available to all mentors for sharing and is available on the Tusla Research Centre.
[10] Flanagan, N (2018) Collaboration in Social Workers Information Behaviour: A valuable asset for the profession. Irish Social Worker. Open Access Practice and Research Journal.

8.4 Preparing for Evaluation

In 2019, the NRO through the Research and Information Governance Group will begin to consider a future evaluation of the strategy implementation and what this might entail.

8.5 Second intake 2021

The NRO will utilise all feedback and learning to inform planning for the second intake in 2021 where geographical and disciplinary gaps will need to be considered. Where expressed, as set out in the strategy, current mentors can retain the role for a second term of three years. Planning for the second intake will commence in 2020.

9. Summary and conclusion

The NRO and the Network of Research and Information Mentors are learning about the challenges and successes of the strategy throughout the implementation so far. Some of the challenges faced are about overcoming skills gaps, building confidence, negotiating communication barriers within the agency, role identity and visibility and allocating time for the role within exiting substantive posts. Indeed there have been successful transitions to the role and where this is evident is in the agency support for research and information mentoring in instances where Research and Information Mentors have been supported by their respective line managers and colleagues to engage with the role and where Research and Information Mentors have actively sought out opportunities to implement their role in in a variety of service areas and settings across the agency.

The NRO and Network of Research and Information Mentors will continue to learn together about the strategy implementation and through this learning will be in a position to scope out an initial evaluation on the strategy implementation and to use this in preparation for and support of the second intake of Research and Information Mentors planned for 2021.

References

Brattman, M & Barrett, B (2017) Tusla - Child and Family Agency Research and Information Mentor Strategy. Tusla Child and Family Agency: Dublin.

Feeney (2016) *National Research Office Reference Paper on the Development of a Research Skills Programme located within Research Minded Culture and Utilisation Structures*. Child and Family Agency: Dublin.

Flanagan (2013) *Information Behaviour of Social Workers: Needs, seeking, acquisition and use of information to support social work practice*. Department of Children and Youth Affairs. No 24 Research Briefing: Dublin.

Tusla Research Strategy 2015-2017. Tusla Child and Family Agency: Dublin.

Appendix 1: Application Form

Application Form

As part of the Tusla Research Strategy 2015-2017 we are looking for Research and Information Mentors to support the implementation of the strategy in line with Tusla's corporate objectives.

Thank you for your interest in the role of Research and Information Mentor and for taking the time to seek nomination by your Area Manager or equivalent. The next step in the process is the completion of the Application Form below which will enable the National Research Office to match your skills and knowledge to the available roles.

Once you have completed the application form, you can submit the form electronically (scanned PDF copy by e-mail) or via post to the details listed for either Angela Feeney or Bernard Barrett below; Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us with any enquiries you may have.

Angela Feeney, National Research Officer, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Brunel HQ, Military Road, Kilmainham, Dublin 8. Ph: 01 7718877 Email: angela.feeney1@tusla.ie	Bernard Barrett, National Research and Information Specialist, Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, E45 A099 Ph. 067 46626. E-Mail: bernard.barrett@tusla.ie

Before completing this form please read and consider the eligibility, essential and desirable criteria along with the desired attributes of a potential Research and Information Mentor as detailed in the Person Specification included in the Research and Information Mentor Strategy document
http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/National_Research_Office_Research_and_Informati on_Mentor_Strategy_Document_Aug2017.pdf .

Please take time to reflect on and include your *academic and professional* education *to date*, *academic and professional* qualifications, training, previous work experience and skills that may be relevant to the role.

The deadline for applications is no later than 5pm on Friday 29th of September.

1. Personal Details

Applicant Name:	
Workplace Address:	
Post currently held:	
Work Telephone number:	
Work Mobile number:	
Email address:	
TUSLA Area Worked In:	
Name of Area Manager or Equivalent:	

2. Present Occupational Role

Title of post:	
Level of position (e.g. social care worker, team leader, Senior EWO)	
Personnel Number:	
Description of main duties / responsibilities:	
Date appointed to current role:	

3. **Why would you like to be a Research and Information Mentor?** (Max 100 words)

   (type text into box and box will automatically expand)

4. **Provide a summary of your relevant education, qualifications, and training for the role of Research and Information Mentor.**

5. Previous work experience

Please list, starting with the *(most recent)* latest, any previous positions you have held that are relevant to the Research and Information Mentor role.

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[blank box]
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6. Please outline your skills and experience that are relevant to the role of Research and Information Mentor role.

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[blank box]
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7. Area

What TUSLA area are you applying to be a Research and Information Mentor in? (if applicable)

Please tick one box only

Dublin Mid Leinster	Tick	Dublin North East	Tick
Midlands	☐	Dublin North City	☐
Dublin SE / Wicklow	☐	North Dublin	☐
Dublin S Central	☐	Louth / Meath	☐
Kildare W Wicklow / Dublin SW	☐	Cavan / Monaghan	☐
South	**Tick**	**West**	**Tick**
Cork	☐	Sligo / Leitrim / W Cavan	☐
Kerry	☐	Mayo	☐
Waterford / Wexford	☐	Galway / Roscommon	☐
Carlow / Kilkenny / S Tipperary	☐	Donegal	☐
		Mid-West:	☐
		Clare	☐
		Limerick	☐
		North Tipperary	☐

If your role does not fit into this structure, please specify the geographical area you cover:

_____

8. Consent

I confirm that I have sought and received consent from my Line Manager to apply for, and if successful, carry out the role of Research and Information Mentor.

Name of Line Manager		Manager's Telephone no:	

Workplace Address		Manager's Email	
Your signature:			
Manager's signature:			
Date:			

Please return this application form to Angela Feeney or Bernard Barrett by 5pm, Friday 29ᵗʰ of September.

Appendix 2: Application Review Sheet

Research and Information Mentor Selection – Application Review Sheet

(Please complete one sheet per application)

Name of Reviewer:	
Date of Review:	

Applicant details	
Application Number:	
Name:	
Title:	
Service:	
Location:	
TUSLA Area:	
Tusla Service Type i.e. EWS, Adoption, Alt Care	

Review of Responses provided by the Applicant (Please review responses and comment on the suitability of the applicant to the role based on the person specification included in the Research and Information Mentor Strategy)		
Q3.	**Why would you like to be a Research and Information Mentor?**	**No Score Required**
Q4.	**Provide a summary of your relevant education, qualifications, and training for the role of Research and Information Mentor.**	**Score**
Q5.	**List of previous work experience relevant to the role**	**Score**
Q6.	**Please outline your skills and experience that are relevant to the role of Research and Information Mentor role**	**Score**

Comment

Appendix 3: Governance Group Terms of Reference

Research and Information Mentors Strategy

Governance Group - Terms of Reference

1) Group membership will include the Head of Policy and Research, NRO staff and other Tusla staff as required[11].

2) The group will meet every 2nd month for the first six months of implementation and every third month thereafter.

3) An agenda will be prepared in advance.

4) The group will have oversight of the implementation of the strategy using a project management approach.

5) The group will review the operations of the strategy.

6) The group will monitor and advise in relation to the accompanying communications strategy.

7) The group will review the 'capturing of the learning' mechanisms in place.

8) A review of the design and progress of local area plans will be undertaken by the group so that they reflect interdisciplinary working.

9) The group will work in accordance to the Quality Improvement Framework.

10) The group will monitor the support provided by the NRO to all mentors assigned.

11) The group will review the training needs of mentors in respect of their roles and make suggestions as to how training needs can be addressed.

12) The group will consider an evaluative approach to the implementation of this strategy.

13) The terms of reference of this group will be reviewed after 12 months.

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[11] Communications staff will have a role in developing the communications strategy, Workforce Training and Development will have a role in relation to training review and quality. The Project Management Office will have a role in relation to supporting the NRO in the project management approach to implementation of the strategy.

Research and Information Mentor Training Programme

Evaluation Report

17th and 18th January 2018

Location: Brunel Building

Delivered by: Angela Feeney, National Research Officer, Bernard Barrett, National Research and Information Specialist. **Contributions** made by Marian Brattman, Interim National Manager for Research, Maria Rogers, Barnardos Library and Information Service, Stella Owens, EPPI project Manager.

All participants (13) completed the evaluation form. This report is a record of all the responses provided by the participants in respect of the training received on the 17th and 18th of January 2018.

1.0 REACTION	OPTIONS	RESPONSES
The amount of material covered in this training was	Just right, too much, too little	All Participants ticked 'just right'. Comment: very positive, covered a lot of information-very professional.
2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES		
	The learning objectives were clearly explained The learning objectives were achieved If no, please elaborate	All participants ticked 'yes' to the first statement. All participants ticked yes to the second statement, one did not tick yes or no but commented 'not sure - could do with revisiting at the end'. Comment: It is really what I hoped, even more so.
3.0 KNOWLEDGE SKILLS AND LEARNING		

What knowledge skills and learning did you acquire at tis training?	• Need more time after training to further explore research method, database. • Introduction to the role of the research office and staff, searching research databases, knowledge of work of other mentors /how they see their mentor role, ethics review- the importance of it. • Good overview of research policy, programmes and networks in Tusla. • Searching databases and journals, language, critical thinking, evaluation, networking. • Using databases for searching for documents, new databases, learnt about new services and roles from the group. • A wealth of knowledge on research and how to access and disseminate it, learnt lots about other Tusla services from other attendees. • Improved knowledge of research methods and skills applicable in navigating databases/journals etc. Informed on expectation of role. • Skills in terms of access to databases and becoming familiar with researching and accessing data in relation to research questions. • Knowledge of the role of the research office and research strategy, research skills e.g. using databases, searching. • The importance of preparing a research question in advance and then search on database to identify subject areas. • Literature searching, reviewing research, getting a sense of where we are in the organisation. • Role, purpose, structure of research mentor and network. Accessing Tusla electronic resources and Barnardos library and information services.
4.0 APPLICATION OF SKILLS/LEARNING TO WORK PRACTICE	
Please outline how you will transfer knowledge/skills/learning into your practice.	• I will send on my list via email/action plan as requested. • Provides a clear mandate for the role as mentor. • I already use some research and analysis skills but this training has broadened my exposure to the skills. • Initially at local team level through supervision and team meetings, secondly through local and regional management structure. • Action plan to be drawn up and learning transferred to colleagues. • Dissemination of information of role to team, support and guidance to colleagues as well as acting as a catalyst for work related/ pertinent to EWS. • Communicate with colleagues in relation to the mentor service and research team/dept and support and encourage them to be inquisitive and explore areas of interest in terms of research. • Presenting information at team meetings and to AM's, using

	database/Barnardos library search engines, critiquing articles/ studies. • Support frontline practitioners to engage in research. • I want to be the supporter of research. • I will hold a 'research ignite' workshop in assigned area to transfer knowledge. I will hold a 'research clinic' with interdisciplinary staff to support research capacity. I will support linkages with partners.
5.0 ATTITUDE	
How has this programme impacted (if relevant) on your values, beliefs or attitude?	• Yes, hopeful that the programme will fly and flourish. • I believe in sharing knowledge/information so this just encourages that advocacy role in Tusla. • Has been very positive. There's a lot of negativity surrounding Tusla and this has shown that there is a lot of positivity out there. • Emphasised a core value in research and knowledge, underpinned that this is a core value. • I feel energised on the importance of evidence based practice and the resources available to myself and my team to bring this to our practice. • Strengthen my value on research. • I'm very motivated following the training. I'm enthused about my role and feel very supported in terms of delivering my brief as mentor. • Reinforced the value of research and spreading the message to colleagues/ other teams. • Increased my enthusiasm in area of research and empowering staff. • I feel really enlightened, positive, having spent the 2 days learning about what being a mentor looks like. • Has reinvigorated my enthusiasm for applied research. Literature reviews and evidence into practices, learning networks, also has increased my trust and respect for Tusla as a learning organisation.
6.0 CORE MESSAGE	
Please list one message you will take from this course	• Empower everyone to engage in research. • Keep doing what I'm doing but build on it with greater confidence as it is now a structured part of my role. • Research is for everyone, not just specialists etc. • The energy of the team and the emphasis that Tusla is placing on research. • My role is to empower and enable. • The importance of research and communication of my role in acting as mentor.

	- Research is not as daunting as previously believed to be the case. - I'm there to support and empower and encourage colleagues towards a learning environment. - It's important to take the time out of a busy workload to ask questions and to seek the answers. - Rome wasn't built in a day. Start steadily and gently to assist a change in value/ attitude towards research. - The research staff are very impressive-can't wait to work together. - Research can and should inform practice to improve outcomes for children, young people, families, communities and services.				
7.0 TRAINING/FACILITATION					
		Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
	Knowledge presented.	13	1	0	0
	Training methods used.	11	3	0	0
	Amount of interaction encouraged.	10	4	0	0
8.0 VENUE RATING					
	Please select venue/facilities suitability	Excellent 11	Good 3	Average	Poor
		Comment: Parking is a challenge; perhaps have visitor permits for training.			
9.0 ANY OTHER COMMENTS	- I really enjoyed the two days. I am looking forward to the challenge ahead and to working with my mentor peers and the research office. - Great opportunity and feel very privileged to be part of a great new team of R & I Mentors in Tusla. Thank You. - Really enjoyable and informative, positive experience, important networking opportunity, exceeded expectations, really good two days. - Fantastic and enjoyable event. Excellent network established. Looking forward to working together and with staff team. - Well-presented training, trainers supported the creation of a relaxed and friendly environment that encouraged good enjoyment. - Thank you to Angela and Bernard for making this enjoyable. Perhaps the task of using databases and critiquing journals could be done in pairs in order to work more effectively, also perhaps more time to be provided around how to begin acting as mentors and what it could look like. - Dynamic between co facilitators and how they interacted was				

particularly impressive. Angela and Bernard succeeded in at least creating the impression that research mentoring is possible for us all.
- Really enjoyed the training, felt it very useful towards my role and feel a lot more confident in becoming a research mentor.
- Meeting colleagues from different areas and sharing experiences re research has been very useful.
- Thank you for a very informative 2 days.
- Very enjoyable 2 days, great networking, very informative, great to see/hear what is going on, thank you.
- Greatly appreciate the high quality information- provided, the research library and Tusla e-resources and the professional, friendly, supportive approach of the research office staff.

Summary Points

- The hands on training provided in relation to accessing the online resources available was useful to participants.
- Participants valued the sharing of information about the work of the National Research Office and its role within Tusla.
- Participants had the opportunity to hear about the current work of their colleagues.
- Participants received clear messages about the role of the Research and Information Mentor.
- Communication about the strategy is important and participants plan to action this as a first step.
- Overall, the comments reflect the interest, enthusiasm and motivation shown by all participants over the 2 day training programme.

Research and Information Mentor Training Programme

Evaluation Report

10th and 11th July 2018

Location: Brunel Building

Delivered by: Angela Feeney, National Research Officer, Bernard Barrett, National Research and Information Specialist. **Contributions** made by Marian Brattman, Interim National Manager for Research, Colm Carroll, Barnardos Library and Information Service. **Assistance** from Nerilee Ceatha, social work team leader assigned to the National Research Office and Ashleigh Munn, PA to Head of Policy and Research.

All participants (13) completed the evaluation form. This report is a record of all the responses provided by the participants in respect of the training received on the 10th and 11th July 2018.

1.0 REACTION	OPTIONS	RESPONSES
The amount of material covered in this training was	Just right, too much, too little	All Participants ticked 'just right'.
2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES		
	The learning objectives were clearly explained	All participants ticked 'yes' to the first statement.
	The learning objectives were achieved	All participants ticked 'yes' to the second statement.
	If no, please elaborate	No response here.
3.0 KNOWLEDGE SKILLS AND LEARNING		
What knowledge skills and learning did you acquire at this training?	- Information on the NRO and Tusla research website and resources. - More knowledge about research centre. Better ability to navigate databases. - Bibliographic software, searching databases, role of mentor. - The vision, research techniques.	

	• Understanding of NRO and approach taken for R&I mentors.
	• Basic computer search skills. I know what research team does.
	• Explanation of research terms, research skills.
	• Research role, database search, role of research team/office.
	• Tusla research strategy, accessing databases/info.
	• Enhanced knowledge of research generally. Enhanced knowledge and understanding of Tusla Research functions. Good searching skills.
	• Search engine use.
	• Informative, enjoyable and practical learning experience.
	• Researching and looking up research questions on databases and search engines.
4.0 APPLICATION OF SKILLS/LEARNING TO WORK PRACTICE	
Please outline how you will transfer knowledge/skills/learning into your practice.	• I will get to grips with the Tusla research website and associated resources.
	• Support colleagues to set up on open Athens etc. Promote use of research and on an individual basis.
	• I will use the information I've learned over the last couple of days to assist my colleagues in looking for research and helping them look at the information critically.
	• Journal group/supervision/team meeting/ one to one for accessing research- Athens/Barnardos.
	• Will use vehicle of R&I mentor to share learning of database use and encouraging use of available tools. Will also use learning in my work.
	• Build on existing networks, use skills learned, link in with research groups/networks.
	• Gave clear understanding of the role. Bring the role/information to other Tusla teams.
	• Through team meetings, one to one interaction and email correspondence.
	• Will use research skills, will share with team/colleagues the role of mentor.
	• Will use them for mentor role.
	• Provided clear 'road map' re mentor role.
	• All the information and skills are very relevant to my practice.
5.0 ATTITUDE	
How has this programme impacted (if relevant) on your values, beliefs or attitude?	• It has reinforced my passion for research and evidence informed policy and practice.
	• Reinforced my own commitment to applying research to practice.
	• It has complemented my belief in sharing learning.
	• Inspired.

	• Encouraged me that there is a culture of research and learning culture within Tusla. • Opened up my attitude to using resources available to me. Nice meeting people from all Tusla disciplines. • Yes, probably supported and strengthened views about above, not changed them. • Great to refresh skills and upskill. • Positive impact on me as I have an investment in research. • Positive attitude towards new development and much needed development. • It hasn't. • Full on enthusiasm for the role. • Very positive.			

6.0 CORE MESSAGE				
Please list one message you will take from this course	• Tusla is eager to become a learning and knowledge organisation. • Take time to formulate your research question- it saves time. • Share the learning. • Quality of research, influence change. • We are not alone in implementing this. There is peer support and support of NRO. • Research is integral to what we do and no need to be intimidated. • Importance of planning research questions properly. • That research is accessible to all employees. • Collaboration/networking. • Research is essential and the use of the knowledge gained from it is even more essential. • Start small-the work of research mentor. • Empowerment through research.			

7.0 TRAINING/FACILITATION

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Knowledge presented.	12	1	0	0
Training methods used.	10	3	0	0
Amount of interaction encouraged.	10	3	0	0

8.0 VENUE RATING

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Please select venue/facilities suitability	8	4	1	

9.0 ANY OTHER	Thanks very much.

	Lovely to meet you, looking forward to getting involved, many thanks. Really enjoyed the training and meeting everyone. Long drive to Dublin, we come up very often. Location great, handy to get to for me. Excellent presentation and facilitation by Angela and Bernard- very good learning experience.

Summary Points

- In relation to knowledge, skills and learning, participants acquired familiarity with the Tusla research centre, the databases available and engaged in practical search skills training.
- Participants gained a familiarity with the vision for and role of the Research and Information Mentor, and the functions of the National Research Office.
- In relation to the application of skills and learning and with a clear 'road map', participants intend to use and share their skills to support and assist their colleagues in searching for information and research through existing networks, team meetings, one to one interactions and email correspondence.
- The training had a positive impact on attitudes by complementing existing beliefs, passions and commitments to using research.
- Research is integral, accessible and essential. Research and Information Mentors can share, collaborate and network while empowering others through research and being supported by the NRO in working towards becoming a learning and knowledge organisation.
- Overall, the comments reflect a positive learning experience had by all participants over the 2 day training programme.

Appendix 5: National Network Day Schedule

Research and Information Mentors National Network Day

Tuesday 9th of October 2018

Rooms 4.03 and 4.04, 4th floor, Brunel building

Schedule

9:00-9:30 am	**Arrivals, tea & coffee**.
9:30 am sharp	**Start**
9:30 - 9:40 am	Welcome, introductions and plan for the day.
9:40 - 9:50 am	*Implementing the strategy* Marian Brattman, Interim National Manager for Research.
9:50 - 10:00 am	Address from Cormac Quinlan, Director for Transformation and Policy
10:00 -11:00 am	*Supporting research utilisation (EIP) in child welfare in the Canadian context* **and** *Being a Critical Consumer of Research.* Eavan Brady, Assistant Professor in Social Work, Trinity College Dublin. (including Q & A)
11:00 - 11:15 am	**Break, tea & coffee**
11:15 - 1 pm	*Growing up in Ireland, National Longitudinal Study of Children*. Dr Clare Farrell, Department of Child and Youth Affairs & Professor Dorothy Watson, Economic and Social Research Institute. (including Q & A)
1pm – 1:45 pm	**Lunch**
1:45 - 2:15 pm	*Research and Information Mentor Activities – A thematic Analysis (presentation)*
2:15- 3 pm	*Research and Information Mentors – Learning and ideas exchange. (Group work)*
3pm – 3:15 pm	**Break**
3:15 – 4 pm	*How do we build an interdisciplinary learning community? (Group work)*
4 – 4:30 pm	Discussion and feedback - close by Cormac Quinlan.
4:30 pm	**End**

Appendix 6: National Network Day Feedback Report

Feedback

Research and Information Mentors National Network Day

Tuesday, 9th October 2018

1. Please provide your feedback on the Research and Information Mentors National Network Day.

- Excellent.
- Great presenters and support from the NRO.
- Thank you – learnt a lot.

- Excellent day, well organised, great input.
- Great to meet up with the group again.

- Input from Eavan was excellent and provided some positive context and guidance. She was also a fantastic presenter.
- GUI piece was very interesting. It was great to have a good combination of presenters. Eavan focusing on approach/process/development and GUI – the wider research piece.

- Really enjoyable, informative and supportive day.
- Thank you

- Really enjoyed the training day today. Great to be updated as to where the RIM fits into the overall Research Office.
- The GUI was a fantastic presentation and excited about the possibilities of looking at this study within the EWS.
- Great ideas in relation to promoting the role.

- Really great day, very enjoyable.

- Each research presented was excellent.
- Great group.

- Fantastic! Inspiring presentation on the rigorous longitudinal GUI.
- Intriguing to hear the thematic analysis and great to be part of the peer mentor network.
- Also will check the Canadian resources.

- Really excellent day.
- Presentations very informative.
- Presenters very engaging.
- Great opportunity for networking and sharing informative.
- A really great group of people who seem to gel well and have a laugh!

- Excellent, enjoyable day. Very well organised.
- I found all the presenters very interesting.
- Hearing feedback from other mentors also very good and meeting the new mentors on the team.

- Excellent, great opportunity to network, share practices.
- Informative and useful presentations.

- Very informative day, interesting presentations (although some similarities existed between the two GUI presentations).
- One of the most interesting parts was, as a Group 2 mentor, hearing from experiences of Group 1 mentors.

- Excellent day. Extremely interesting.
- Info on PART/Canadian Exp – very good.
- GUI study good to hear about it in detail.

Based on your experience today, do you have any suggestions for future research and Information mentor events

- More regular meet-ups e.g. on regulations.
- More feedback on research taking place within the agency.
- Inform Area Managers etc. in advance so that they are aware of the importance of the event.

- GUI workshop.
- Training on ethics.
- More training on searching databases.
- Any other research projects relevant, e.g., children in law project.

- Positive format, speakers and inputs.
- No constructive criticism on feedback on feedback sheet.
- I enjoyed and benefitted from all elements of the day.

- Maybe space for reflection.
- Continue to bring in excellent speakers maybe using themes identified for year on year.

-
  It would be great to get a little more time for the practical training in terms of searches etc.
- Thank you to the research team.

- Really glad of support.
- Really like the format – very informative.
- Support for students in work place.

- Would like to find a way for a research mentor to meet with CYPSC network to familiarise area RIM's with existing resources and to familiarise CYPSC coordination with role of RIM's so they can direct research queries our way.
- Also good to have Edel's expertise on PPI – particularly research on board.
- Look forward to connecting more.

- Group feedback sessions were useful so more of these to hear how everyone is progressing.
- Identify key tasks for 2019 and going forward in keeping with strategy.
- Ways and means to increase engagement.

- I think the opportunity to share, discuss and learn together is essential to the support of the role.
- Nothing particular at this time.

- Would be worth learning how to use the GUI data.

- Most of what was presented today could be taken a step further i.e. more info on PART and examples of things that worked, e.g. actual Podcasts/webinars etc. to see where we are heading.
- Same with GUI, update data regularly and cross analysis with Better Futures – so can demonstrate to our client group how research informs the policies of Dept. of Health and Tusla.
- Thank you. Most enjoyable day.