

## Children's Participation Work Package: Tusla's Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support:

The aim of this research programme was to find out to what extent children and young people are participating in decisions made by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and if this has become routine practice across the Agency.

The study involved a mixed methods baseline and follow up approach, using various research streams to measure progress with embedding participation in Tusla. A baseline report was published in 2016.

### **Eight research streams and data sources captured a number of participant perspectives**

1. A literature review exploring the how well structures and procedures intended to support children's participation in child welfare, child protection and alternative care services are working
2. Secondary analysis of Tusla's compliance with participation standards published in HIQA Inspection Reports 2013-2015 and 2016-2017
3. National baseline and follow-up participation survey of all Tusla staff
4. Interviews with children and young people about their experience of individual participation in Tusla services
5. Evaluation of fora which were set up to support the collective participation of children in care
6. Evaluation of child and youth participation training - Pre, post and follow-up survey with all participants in the child and youth participation training during the period January -June 2017
7. Documentary analysis of various aspects of Tusla PPFS children's participation programme
8. Interviews with internal and external Stakeholders about their views on how participation is being embedded across the Agency

### **What did the research find?**

There is strong evidence of children and young people's participation being embedded across the Agency.

The PPFS Child and Youth Participation Programme of Work, has supported this. Especially the participation training for staff and the tool kit, which supported participation of children and young people in line with the Lundy Model of Participation.

Levers to participation include an openness to work in a participatory way and a strong national legal and policy framework. The presence of a trusted adult, whom children and young people could express their views to and would speak on their behalf is important.

Obstacles to embedding participation include the time for staff to do participatory work and the idea among some staff that children and young people don't want to participate or they feel that their voice won't be heard.

Collective participation is less embedded than individual participation, but has showed large improvement over the course of the PPFS Child and Youth Participation Programme of Work being carried out.

### **Conclusion:**

The research concluded that The PPFS Child and Youth Participation Programme of Work has been a significant driver in embedding children and young people's participation across Tusla but there are still gaps which need to be addressed. There needs to be more awareness about the PPFS Child and Youth Participation Programme of Work. Finally, more long-term research should be put in place to track progress and to measure the impact of this programme on children's lives.

### **Published reports and papers from the research to date:**

Tierney, E., Kennan, D., B. Brady and C. Forkan and Jackson, R. (2018). *Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making within Tusla: Children's Participation Work Package Final Report*. UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway.

Tierney, E., Kennan, D., Forkan, C., Brady, B. and Jackson, R. (2018) *Children's Participation Work Package: Key Findings Report. Tusla's Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support*. Galway: UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland Galway.

Jackson, R., Brady, B., Forkan, C., Tierney, E. and Kennan, D., (2018) Collective participation for children in care: A formative evaluation of the Tusla / EPIC Foster Care Action Groups. Galway: UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway.

Tierney, E., Kennan, D., Forkan, C., Brady, B. and Jackson, R. (2018) 'Speak Up': Participation of Children and Young People in Decisions About their Lives in Tusla Services. UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway.

Kennan, D., B. Brady and C. Forkan (2018). "Space, Voice, Audience and Influence: The Lundy Model of Participation (2007) in Child Welfare Practice." Practice: 1-14.

Brady, B, Kennan, D., Forkan, C. Tierney, E., Jackson, R., Holloway, R. (2018) The participation of children's and young people in care: Insights from an analysis of national inspection reports in the Republic of Ireland. *Child Care in Practice*; <https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2018.1537257>.

Kennan, D., B. Brady and C. Forkan (2018). "Supporting Children's Participation in Decision Making: A Systematic Literature Review Exploring the Effectiveness of Participatory Processes." The British Journal of Social Work: <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx142>

Kennan, D., C. Forkan and B. Brady (2017). *Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making within Tusla: A Baseline Assessment Prior to the Implementation of the Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support*. Galway, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway.

McGreal, B. and Kennan, D. (2017) *The Perspectives of Educational Welfare Officers on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, prior to the Implementation of the Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support*. The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre. NUI Galway.

Kennan, D., Brady. B., and Forkan, C. (2016) *Systematic Literature Review: Exploring the Effectiveness of Structures and Procedures Intended to Support Children's Participation in Child Welfare, Child Protection and Alternative Care Services: Key Findings Accessible Format*. Galway: The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway. Tusla's Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support: