

FORA

Initiatives

2020



TÚSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Tusla Child and Youth Participation Initiatives

In 2015 Tusla in partnership with EPIC (Empowering People in Care) and supported by the Atlantic Philanthropies began the process of setting up national participation groups for children and young people in Foster Care, which are known as 'Fora'. In 2019 and again in 2020, Tusla has made funding available to support children in care or aftercare initiatives that require funding in order to progress. Services from these areas had the opportunity to submit their proposals endorsed by the relevant area manager. Tusla's Fora starter kit and the Lundy Model of Participation (2007) were recommended for reference when completing the applications.



Lundy Model of Participation 2007

Dublin Mid Leinster

Dublin South East/Wicklow

Children in Care Fun Day

Following on from the success of the first Fun Day in 2019, the Wicklow Social Work Department planned to hold another Fun Day for Children in Care for their Child and Youth Participation Project. The idea came from children in care themselves and a focus group was put together with a number of children and young people so that they could be consulted on their hopes and wishes for the day. Using the Lundy Model, we actively sought children's views on what they wanted to see at the Fun Day in 2020 and if there were any changes that they wanted to make from the year before. The day is all about the children so consulting them on their views was important to ensure that their participation was meaningful and effective. The aim of the day was to allow children in care to meet in a fun and relaxed environment with other children in care and with Social Workers and other professionals they are in contact with. Unfortunately, due to government restrictions, the Fun Day had to be postponed until next year but the hope is that the Fun Day in 2021 will be bigger and better!

Dublin South Central

Pizza Express/ Care Bears FORA group

Our Fora commenced in September 2019 and the young people are aged between 8-12 years old. The group came together and discussed their understanding of what a social worker's role is and what they liked/ disliked about their social worker. We celebrated Care day in February 2020 and it is planned that the group will collaborate with EPIC and Ballyfermot Art College with the hope of completing an animation aimed towards all young people in care with the intention of encouraging attendance at their Child in Care reviews. Our hope is to explore the reasons why attendance is poor and what changes can be made to make Child in Care reviews more children centred. The team of volunteers have now agreed to complete "The One Good Adult" workshop which offers practical tips on how to promote and support the mental health of young people, recognise the importance of the role of One Good Adult and have a greater understanding of mental health.

Dublin South West/Kildare West Wicklow

I.A.I.C – Young People in Care Group

The I.A.I.C Group is a safe and inclusive space where young people in Care (12+ years) come together to chat, enjoy and participate in fun social activities to raise their spirits and the profile of young people in care in KWW. They started off 2020 by participating in "Care Day" with a trip to the Mansion House to enjoy Care Day celebrations, followed by the epic Viking Splash Tour. Since the pandemic took over in March, the group have continued to regularly meet online with general check in sessions, a fun quiz and most recently a "concert night" accompanied with some delicious take away food. Each group member has also received a pack of goodies to stay connected during lockdown. The group is continuing to expand with 3 new members joining while some young people have move onto third level education. The group are looking forward to the day they can return to "meeting" up in person to continue on their journey as a group.

Midlands

Longford/Mullingar Fora support and participation group

The Longford/Westmeath FORA group is a support group for young people in care. It gives them an opportunity voice their opinions and ideas on how to make things easier for them in Care. There are currently 6 members between the ages of 9 and 13. The young people are supported to discuss their feelings and given tools to help them with difficult feelings. At the start of 2020 the group went to Dublin to The Mansion House to participate in Care Day celebrations and the Viking Splash Tour. This was a memorable day out for everybody. There was a disruption to the group meeting face to face due to government restrictions but the group is going to continue by MS Teams until we can meet in person. The group will be doing a fun Christmas get together on MS Teams and each member will be sent a Christmas surprise box.

Dublin North East

Cavan/Monaghan

FORA-sight

The primary aim of the group is to support children in care and to share their voices. They wish to be listened to and be directly involved in possible decisions and changes that affect them from the organisations that support them. This process of change encompasses the Tusla Child and Youth participation strategy [2019-2023]; underpinning the strategy are the four principles of the Lundy Model (i.e.) space, voice, audience and influence.

The group participation processes are spearheaded by the young people in order to promote their social and emotional well-being and their sense of empowerment. They have been involved in the GDPR competition, Care day event 2020 and briefly discussed social media engagement. They are planning to consult with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (formerly DCYA) on the child care act in January 2021. Provisionally there may also be an additional follow up consultation with HIQA in 2021 as they previously consulted with HIQA in January 2020.

Dublin North

North Dublin's Children's Fora

North Dublin's Children's Fora for young people aged 8-12 years was established in September 2019 & we held our first event in December 2019. During 2020 we held a number of events & initiatives to remain connected to not just the Fora but also our 100+ children in foster care during COVID 19:

- We celebrated Care Day in February with other Children's Fora at Mansion House and a trip on the Viking Splash Tour
- In May we sent out Fun Packs & our survey 'What I miss most' to our young people
- In August we had a Sports Day in a local football club
- In October we held an online Halloween Baking event
- In November we sent out Late Late Show Treat Bags
- In December we worked with some of our regular Fora attendees who designed a Christmas card & message. This card will be sent to all our foster carers by their Link Worker & a card will also be sent out to each child for them to send to their special person. We also hosted an online Christmas event where we made Gingerbread Houses
- In January the Fora Planning Committee will be evaluating our 2020 events & will start planning our events & initiatives for 2021.

Dublin North City

DNC Fora group

The DNC group are developing a child friendly Social Worker business card, which is being designed by young people. The card will be printed professionally and can be used by Social Workers to introduce themselves to their allocated children & young people. We also have plans to develop a resource packs for use during contact between children, their families and their workers, which will involve the young people participating in a review of these resources. DNC look forward to being able to resume face to face group meetings in the future, where young people can be facilitated to meet each other in a supportive manner.

Louth/ Meath

Louth Meath Youth Participation Forum

New for 2020! Joint Tusla project with Foróige. All young people engaged in local Foróige CCA funded 'Chapters' programme are invited to join the Forum. Current focus on locally commissioned service delivery - what works, what doesn't work, what else is needed? Young people have also been asked 'What do you regard as a 'therapeutic' intervention?' Consultations have taken place both as a group and individually. We are now working with DKIT Creative Media third year students to develop a related video showing a market place stalls type scenario with young people guiding the viewer through the market. The market represents all their feedback and should be ready early 2021. We hope it will inform and influence local services to consider adapting some of the ways adults engage with young people. Young people also enjoyed days out during the summer as a group and a Christmas get together is planned - government restrictions allowing.

Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan

Youth Fora 16-23 year olds – Leaving and Aftercare Service

The Youth Fora is a peer led group of children in care (16+) and young adults 18+ engaged in the Leaving & Aftercare Service. The older group support and explain the service to newly engaged young people. The 18+ participants experience and guidance will help to support and advise younger peers new to the service.

The group will also help to develop a user friendly guide to the Leaving & Aftercare Service for young people at referral stage. They will also participate in an outdoor adventure activity as part of the group activity.

Unfortunately due to government restrictions the Youth Forum has to be postponed to Easter break 2021

Mayo

Mayo Aftercare Fora

The Mayo Aftercare Fora has been set up for 2 specific reasons;

1. To explore better ways at getting the voice of the child heard in the CIC review meetings. Looking at current templates for teenagers and seeing whether there is a more engaging and up to date way, the 14 to 17 year olds can share their views at the meetings.
2. The FORA will look at and review the current aftercare welcome pack provided by the aftercare service in Mayo.

Galway

Galway FORA Youth Group

The purpose of the Fora is to find out directly from children and young people; what they believe are the positives and challenges about living in care. To hear their views on issues of relevance to them as experts in their own experiences, to amplify their voices and to influence change within policy and practice.

In the new year the Galway Children in Care Team hopes to be able to arrange meet ups and do fun projects and activities for young people (14-18 year olds) in Galway county to give them a chance to TELL US how to improve the service.

- What would they like to see happening?
- What do they think is working well?
- What might need to be changed?

A FORA activity fun day will be organised for the new year.

After this, meet ups & projects led by the young people will be arranged and supported to take place by the Children in Care Team staff.

Carlow

Children in Care Focus Group

The group of optimistic young people like to help others who are in care. The group would like to enlighten Social Workers on what they would like and not like to happen during their meeting. The group feel Social Workers need to know this so they don't make children uncomfortable while doing their jobs. The children in care understand the struggles of working with a Social Worker. It can be frustrating sometimes and we would like to make it easier to have their voices heard. The Focus Group is a safe place and children's voices are heard.

So far the group have given feedback on how to improve child in care reviews. We have made bookmarks for social work staff on how to work better with children and we are now preparing a booklet of information for children in care about engaging with social work department.

Kerry

Young Person Feedback Fora

The purpose for this group was to focus on participation and give a Forum to Young People involved with the services of the Child and Family Agency in Kerry, to have a space and a voice with the purpose being to inform practitioners of their experiences so that the service providers can engage in a reflective process with the information gained in order to strive and deliver a better service with children and young people placed front and centre.

This was initially to be in a group type setting, however owing to the COVID 19 Pandemic, we needed to reconsider how we could now do this safely. Therefore we set about creating questionnaire's that were designed in a child centred manner and posted to children across the county in order for them to return their views to us.

Waterford/Wexford

Waterford /Wexford Children in Care Youth Participation Forum

The Waterford /Wexford youth participation forum for Children in Care was first established in July 2016. Having previously completed a booklet "South East Gets Talking", a book written by children to give children useful information about care including tips for social workers, teachers, residential staff, foster carers, and friends, the forum had decided this year to produce a video .

During February mid-term our Youth Participation group enjoyed 2 workshops with Waterford Youth Arts working on their video project. The Young people wanted to make their messages to other young people and those working with children in care more accessible and meaningful. Progress was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In July, 12 of the young people enjoyed an informal, outdoor afternoon including a picnic and games. This was to allow everyone the opportunity of keeping in touch during the pandemic.

As restrictions have continued to impact on young people meeting, Waterford Youth Arts completed two further workshops via zoom meeting during October Mid-term. They have recorded some of the work completed by the young people and we await this production. For the final zoom meeting the young people enjoyed a Halloween hamper of treats posted to them in advance.

Adapting to current circumstances revised plans were agreed in October. An invitation was posted to young people in Care in Waterford to submit a creative piece on "My life during Covid-19". We received some great entries, which the youth participation group are currently editing via zoom. A colourful booklet will be printed, to be shared with everyone in Alternative Care, Waterford.



WHAT WE LIKE

We like when you speak with us honestly and truthfully

We like the social aspect of the visit... less business more chat

We like when we know what you know... remember it's okay not to know all the answers

We like when you take time to get to know us, build a relationship with us

We like when you give respect because then you get respect

WHAT WE DON'T LIKE

We don't like when you talk down to us

We don't like paperwork but understand it has to be done

We don't like to be the last to be told... no fake promises

We don't like when you act interested... if you're not

We don't like when our relationship feels like pupil to principal



Carlow
Children in care focus group; Bookmarks



North Dublin
North Dublin Children's Fora Initiatives to stay connected

Children in Care Fora

The 'Children in Care Fora' is a child-led youth forum, that was established in DSC in consultation with EPIC in September 2019. While EPIC had been operating youth fora all over the country in recent years, it had been some time since young people in care in DSC had been given the opportunity to gather together in a safe and inclusive space, to talk about their care experiences. The idea behind the forum is that our young-people are provided with a space to express themselves freely, where their views are actively listened to and acted upon. The fora have gathered on three occasions since last September, and they have all been a roaring success to date. The highlight of the fora, aside from our young people's interactions with their amazing facilitators, has been the delivery of pizza to feed our ravenous participants. The fora has aptly been re-named the 'Pizza Express, Care-Bear Club' as a result! While the pizza and our group-activities are the main draw, the fora has seen the development of many new friendships between young-people from similar backgrounds. It has shown each of our young-people that they are not alone in their care-experience, and that it is okay to talk about being in care. It has also shown our young people that the professionals involved in their lives aren't afraid to have a laugh! The fora are always looking for new young-people, and facilitators, to participate, and the hope is that the 'Pizza Express, Care-Bear Club' will become a permanent feature in the lives of young-people in care in our area!



As young people, it is **so important** for you to tell adults your views and opinions on everything that is happening in your life.

That's why we have sent you this short survey, so that you can tell us your views on the Fora group.

*Dublin South Central
Newsletter, care packages and questionnaires sent to the Fora*

Waterford/Wexford

Halloween Hamper given to young people for completing workshops via zoom



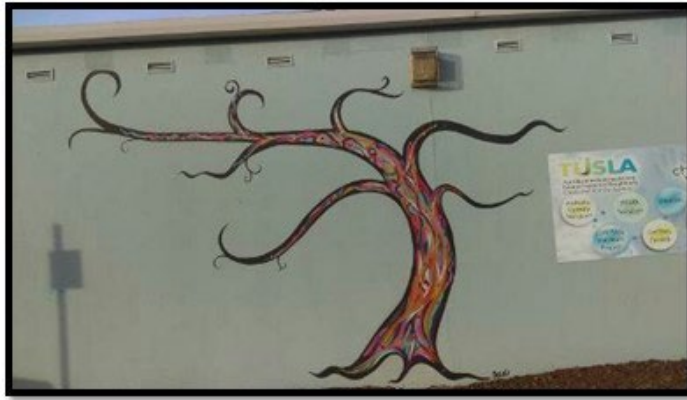
Wicklow Fora Fun Day 2019

*Evelyn Keogh, Graham Healy, Liz Cullen, Grace Fairweather,
Suzanne Nolan, Elaine Lucey, and Sharon McCormack*

Care Day 2020, Mansion House
Bernard Gloster, CEO Tusla opening the event.
MC Tiny, Kabin Crew performing two raps.



Mural wall, GDPR competition and Young people's testimonials from the group, Cavan/Monaghan



The young people's testimonials

'If a social worker is coming to talk to us, then they have already made a decision'

'we don't want Tusla staff to wear their staff identity badge around us'

'please use plain English with us'

'living in foster care is normal and good'

'We 'feel listened to'