

# Driving Innovation and Continued Service Improvement:

Tusla Research Strategy 2024 – 2029



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## Foreword

**It gives me great pleasure to present Tusla's second Research Strategy covering the period 2024 – 2029, which speaks to our core Tusla values and behaviours and its ongoing translation into our work programmes focusing on Practice, People and Public Confidence.**

One of the specific functions of Tusla, as set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 Part 2 Section 8 (1)(f), is to “Undertake or commission research relating to its functions”. In the context of wider government policy, investment in research is fundamental to achieving societal change across a number of policy domains, including social care research. In terms of Ireland's overall spending on research and development, the latest report (2020-2021) from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) states that the levels of government research and development expenditure as a percentage of all government expenditure have remained around 1% since 2011. It is significantly less in the domain of social care research.

Within Tusla, research should be seen as an Agency wide capability. It is everyone's business to ensure that their work and practice is always informed by the most recent evidence, knowledge and insights. This democratisation via the enablement, facilitation and participation in research across the Agency, and the development of a culture of embedding evidence in practice, is facilitated by the National Research Office, (NRO).

Tusla has built a substantial capability and framework to help shape the social care research agenda. A set of enabling processes and methods to help all employees keep up to date with new evidence are already in place. The NRO is integrated and seen as a significant research leader in the broader Irish social care community. Research that has been commissioned by the Agency has resulted in some outstanding and seminal bodies of research that inform our current practices.

Tusla is undergoing a very significant reform programme with the aim of identifying and providing the right intervention to the child and family at the right time in the most efficient and consistent manner.

It is the aim of this strategy to build on the foundational research work and to further mature the research agenda within the Agency as a key enabler of that reform.



**It is important that the Agency continues to invest in the capabilities that allow the right research enablers, facilitators and commissioning to be selected and developed.**

The most important step is to develop the necessary understanding within Tusla around a knowledge cycle and a knowledge management programme. This will enable the Agency to realise the knowledge held by staff members, externally published research and Tusla commissioned research to identify ways to translate that knowledge into policies and practice.

This will require improved coordination of research and information across the Agency for better prioritisation, visibility and sharing of evidence to maximise efficiency and funding. It is envisaged that the NRO is well positioned to lead out on this coordination.

It is important that the Agency continues to invest in the capabilities that allow the right research enablers, facilitators and commissioning to be selected and developed. Investments that will allow this include expanding the commissioning budget, continued support of the Care Experiences project (as per the Ryan report) and the creation of a new post for a professionally qualified Librarian / Knowledge Manager.

I encourage you to read and reflect on the contents of this strategy and continue to work individually and collectively to embed research and information into Tusla services.

**Dr Anthony O'Leary**  
Executive Director,  
Quality and Regulation Directorate.

## 1. Why do we need a Research Strategy?

**Tusla requires a research strategy because:**

- Research underpins all Tusla practice, policy and decision making. Underpinning our services with research and best evidence builds trust within the public about the services provided and facilitates better outcomes. Investment in research aligns with our duty of care to service users to use public funds to drive change and implement better services.
- Research enables and facilitates a better understanding across the Agency, government departments and the public, that Tusla is deriving new ideas and new solutions to difficult and sometimes intractable societal problems.
- Research enables strategic alignment with existing Tusla strategies and government strategies (e.g. Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy), as well as new and planned functions nationally and regionally.
- Research is essential to ensure that all staff nationally have access to the most appropriate and recent evidence to support their practice.
- Research promotes a shared understanding of Research Coordination through the development

of collaborative working relationships, in the context of the ongoing regionalisation of service management and delivery.

Additionally, one of the specific functions of Tusla, as set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 Part 2 Section 8 (1)(f) is to “Undertake or commission research relating to its functions”.

Tusla's Corporate Plan 2021-2023 has informed this strategy. Action 3.2 states: “Develop and implement a strategic plan for the Agency that drives increased research in the evaluation of outcomes, and we will commission prioritised research projects.”

This research strategy proposes how this activity should be led by the Agency via Tusla's National Research Office (NRO).

This strategy is also forward looking as it also describes some of the challenges of the existing research and information landscape within Tusla which need to be addressed to avoid duplication and ensure that the commissioning of, and learning from, research benefits the whole Agency.

## 2. How did it begin? Tusla's first Research Strategy

Located within the existing policy context of the time and aligned to the Corporate Plan for 2015 – 2017, the plan defined research as “A process through which we attempt to achieve systematically and with the support of data the answer to a question, the resolution of a problem, or a greater understanding of a problem” (Leedy, 1997:5).

This new research strategy and Strategic Objectives below seek to develop and extend what has been achieved in the first strategy. The section below provides a high-level summary of the objectives of the first strategy from 2015 – 2017 as well as how this has been built upon and what has additionally been achieved subsequently to date detailed in Section 5.

1. Develop research infrastructure and establish appropriate structures and functions to ensure that high quality research is embedded within the organisation.
2. Provide research coordination through developing 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. 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, ensuring ready access to information resources and establish linkages with academic 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.

### 3. Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles and Strategic Objectives

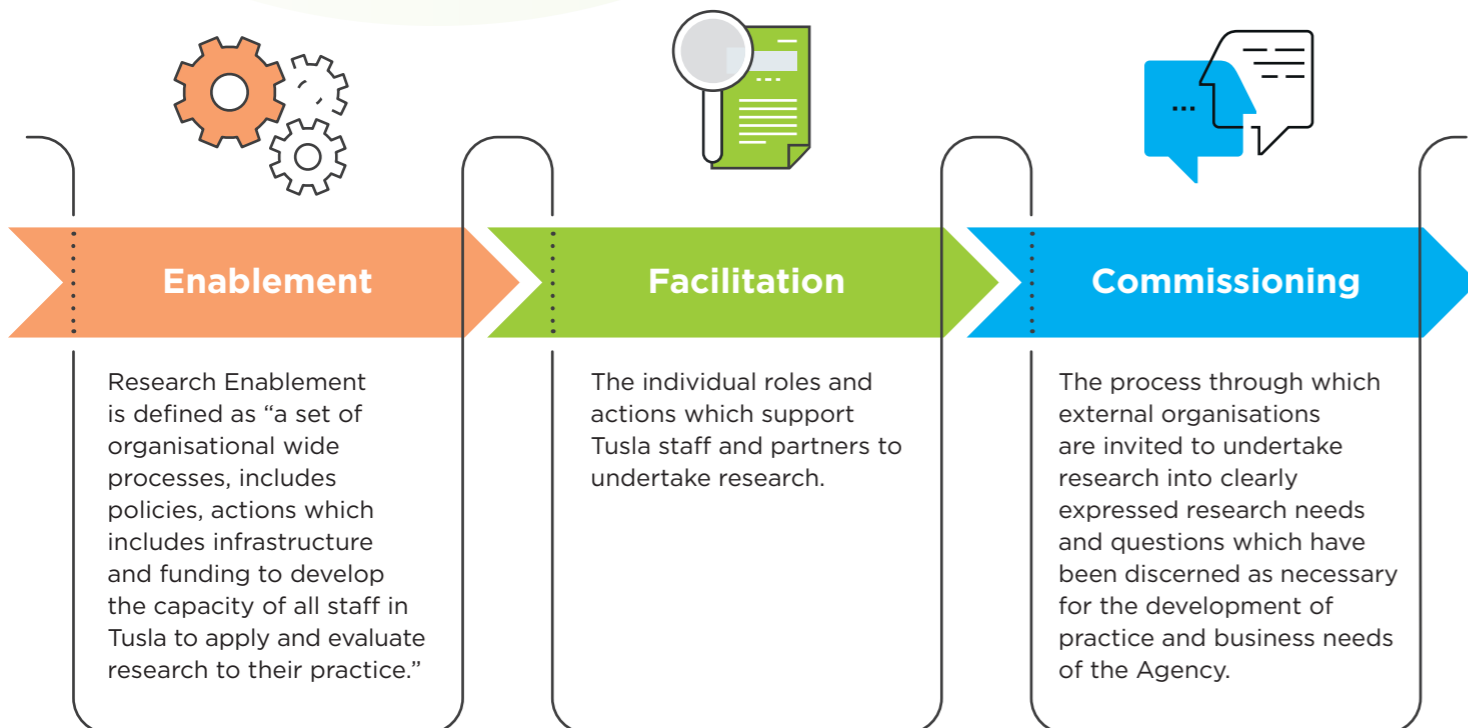
#### Vision

Research in Tusla is experienced as a forward looking, exciting, empowering and collaborative activity, embedded within all practice and business activity, and is seen as essential to improving Tusla services to deliver better outcomes for service users. Much of this activity derives from objectives described in our first strategy as evidenced in Section 5.

#### Mission

This research strategy seeks to develop and extend the research and information landscape further with an increased focus on Research and Information Coordination, development of a Shared Knowledge culture within Tusla, embedding the principles of Open Research within all research undertaken within the organisation as well as the Commissioning of Research to meet research priorities identified by Tusla. The strategy is progressed through the following three principles:

#### Guiding Principles



One of the key understandings which the strategy seeks to communicate is that research is not purely an academic activity. First and foremost, it is about asking well designed questions. While this is a necessary first step in any academic exercise, it is also a necessary first step in all practice activity.

All practitioners, when interacting with their service users, need to decide in advance what questions to ask service users, what words to use to frame the questions and systematically record those interactions (using Tusla Case Management System). If they are doing this, then in essence they are undertaking the research process.

Additionally, through the use of the evidence-based resources, which are available via Tusla Open Athens user names and passwords, all Tusla staff nationally ([www.tusla.ie/research](http://www.tusla.ie/research)) have access to the most recent research evidence available within each of the practice areas within which Tusla staff work, to ensure their practice is current and evidence based.

Such understandings, when taken in conjunction with the enabling and facilitation work of the NRO and the wider Agency, must also be seen in light of the ongoing professional portfolio mandated for all CORU professionals (as well as other professional associations) and enable the ongoing development of reflective practice throughout the organisation.

### Strategic Objectives

- 01 Development of a Knowledge Framework:**  
Developing and embedding a Tusla knowledge cycle process.
- 02 Capacity building:**  
Strengthening the research framework around enabling and facilitating and ensuring it is appropriate for the new organisation structure.
- 03 Coordination and Oversight:**  
Developing coordination for all Tusla research through the NRO for oversight, funding, dissemination of results, etc.
- 04 Open Research:**  
Provide a framework for Tusla to respond and actively co-operate with plans described within Impact 2030 to ensure that all Research, Information and Data is openly and immediately disseminated and shared.
- 05 Inclusive Research:**  
Become an essential champion and partner for inclusive research both internally and nationally to ensure that research which embeds the voice of children, young people and their families is integrated into health and social care systems.  
  
An implementation plan for these objectives will be found in Section 8 below.



## 4. Tusla’s National Research Office: Staffing and Function

**Tusla’s NRO is a national function which has a cross-organisational remit to realise and embed a research framework and strategic priorities for the Agency in relation to research commissioning, research enablement, research facilitation and coordination of research activity.**

The aim of the NRO is to support the utilisation of research and information to inform practice development, service improvement and decision making thus contributing to better outcomes for service users.

In light of the above, research must be seen as being fundamental and integral to practice, continuing professional development and maintaining one’s accreditation as practitioner and professional. What this means is that it is

everyone’s business to ensure that their work and practice are always informed by the most recent evidence, knowledge and insights, which as described below, the NRO seeks to encourage, enable and facilitate.

The NRO sits within the Quality and Regulation Directorate (Q&R) and comprises the following members of staff, all of whose roles contain a national brief.



The Agency is aware of the pressures which many frontline practitioners face, their desire to keep up to date and their desire to share and coordinate knowledge and information within the organisation. The NRO currently pays for external resources to enable all our staff to do this. It is recommended therefore that this

resource be brought in-house through the creation of an additional post within the NRO of Librarian/Knowledge Manager, in order to deliver on these needs and reduce dependence on an external organisation for the delivery of these services – as is the case at the current time.

## 5. Development of the Research and Information Landscape within Tusla

These developments, which arose out of our first research strategy include:

- 5.1 Creation of the first [Tusla Independent Research Ethics Committee](#) which has become an essential component of Tusla’s research infrastructure ensuring that research is coordinated and supported across the organisation.
- 5.2 Development of a [Research Advisory Group](#) membership of which is composed of NRO staff and others from external Research Performing Organisations (RPO’s) who provide independent expert advice to Tusla on identifying and prioritising research topics and ensuring that the planning and development of policies and services is informed by best available evidence. (For further information see Appendix 7). The following external research organisations participate in the Research Advisory Group:

**Health Research Board**

**Empowering in People in Care (EPIC)**

**An Garda Síochána Research Unit**

**Irish Research Council**

**UCD School of Education**

**DCEDIY Research & Evaluation Unit**

**Irish Association of Social Workers**

**Social Care Ireland**

**The Wheel**

**Trinity Research In Childhood Centre**

**Health and Information Quality Authority (HIQA)**

- 5.3 Development of the **Tusla National Research Database** which comprises
  - (i) **An Electronic Research Ethics application process**
  - (ii) **An Electronic Research Ethics application management system (using the Tusla Case Management System)** and
  - (iii) a **Tusla Research and Knowledge Community Repository** which will become an essential

component of Tusla’s research infrastructure ensuring that research is coordinated and supported across the organisation.

- 5.4 Development of the [Tusla Research Centre Web Pages](#) which give access to a wide range of information, knowledge and evidence sources to support improved service delivery, through evidence informed practice and ensuring ready access to information resources. Within these pages is the availability to all Tusla staff nationally of Tusla Open Athens user names and passwords, which give access to a further range of information, knowledge and evidence sources in the form of databases and peer reviewed journals.

- 5.5 Provision of non-electronic Library and Information services via [Barnardos Library and Information Service](#) which offers the loan and procurement of books, inter-library loan services and involvement in the teaching of the Evidence Informed Practitioner Programme (EPPI) within Tusla.

- 5.6 Development of a [Research and Information Mentor](#) strategy and Programme which provides enablement and facilitation in research and information to Tusla staff and seeks to evaluate the opportunities and difficulties in embedding evidence informed practice within Tusla. Research and Information Mentors support staff of all grades and disciplines to access, critique and utilise research, information and evidence for practice development, service improvement and decision making.

- 5.7 The **external commissioning of new research** to inform Tusla policy and practice via the NRO and throughout the Agency made available on the Tusla Research Centre. For example, [A study of Tusla - Child and Family Agency’s actions and decision-making process following An Garda Síochána’s application of Section 12 of the Child Care Act 1991](#) (NUIG: 2020) and [Through the Eyes of the Child - A study of Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Intervention \(TCD: 2023\)](#).

A list of previously commissioned research can be found at [www.tusla.ie/research/tusla-research-office/national-research-office-documents/](http://www.tusla.ie/research/tusla-research-office/national-research-office-documents/)

## 6. Linking to the external Research and Information Landscape.

**Staff within the NRO have established linkages with academic institutions and other learning organisations to both contribute to and feed knowledge and expertise from these sectors into the knowledge, policy and practice of Tusla.**

These include:

- 6.1 Each member of the NRO establishing linkages with academic institutions around the country ([www.tusla.ie/research/tusla-research-office/academic-institutions-and-tusla/](http://www.tusla.ie/research/tusla-research-office/academic-institutions-and-tusla/)) to raise awareness of the research and practice opportunities within Tusla and provide opportunities for collaboration.
- 6.2 Quarterly meetings with the Research and Evaluation Unit of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth which seek to share knowledge and awareness of strategic research and information issues.
- 6.3 Endorsing the recently published Action Plan of the [National Open Research Forum](http://www.tusla.ie/research/tusla-research-office/national-open-research-forum/) and raising awareness within Tusla of the National and European drive towards Open Research ([www.tusla.ie/research/tusla-research-office/tusla-and-the-open-science-agenda/](http://www.tusla.ie/research/tusla-research-office/tusla-and-the-open-science-agenda/)).
- 6.4 Tusla is a national partner in the [PPI Ignite Network](#). This network promotes excellence and inspires innovation in public and patient involvement (PPI) in health and social care research in Ireland and provides a shared voice for PPI across Ireland. The NRO is represented within the Network on two work packages pertaining to capacity building in PPI and PPI in research ethics. The NRO are members of the Steering Committee of this Network and also Co-Chair the Public Advisory Board.
- 6.5 The NRO actively engages with relevant governmental research bodies such as the **Growing Up in Ireland Policy and Research/ Practice Advisory Group, IMPACT 2030 Implementation Forum**, and representation on the **Steering Group/Stakeholder Advisory Group for the Care Experiences Project to address Action 65 of the Ryan Report** and the **Youth Justice Strategy Research into Evidence and Policy Programmes and Practice (REPPP)**.

## 7. Who has been consulted in the development of this new strategy?

**An extensive consultation and review exercise, both externally as well as internally within Tusla, has been undertaken to inform the development of this strategy.**

This includes:

- (a) Work undertaken in 2022 to review strategies and strategic plans from a range of academic and other organisations with whom the NRO has established relationships for a comparison of components within such plans. These are described in the table below with references to where they appear in this strategy document.**

In the Contents Section of the Table below, entries which have (A) attached to them refer to elements from Strategies/Strategic Plans of Academic Organisations. Entries which have (O) attached to them refer to those taken from other organisations.

Timeframes of external Research Strategies and Strategic Plans	Timeframe of Tusla Research Strategy
Academic Institutions 3, 4 and 5 years	6 years
Others (e.g. mental health & advocacy bodies) 3, 4 and 10 years	

Contents of external Research Strategies and Strategic Plans	Where alignment can be found in Tusla Research Strategy
Vision and Mission statements (A)	See Section 3 above.
Targets, Roadmaps, Actions (A)	Targets and Actions in Section 8 below
Focus on Objectives & Expected Outcomes (O)	Objectives & Implementation Plan in Section 8 below
Enablers and enabling themes (O)	See Section 2 and Section 5 and Appendices 1 and 5
Research themes (A)	See Appendix 5
Governance, Strategic Research Opportunities (A)	See Sections 5 and 6.2 above.
Dissemination and Impact (A)	See Sections 5.3, 5.4, 5.6 and 6.3 above
Focus on collaboration with Stakeholders (O)	See Sections 5.2, 6.1 and 6.5
Academic Partners and Young People (O)	See Strategic Objective 1 and 5
Knowledge Translation Activities to inform Decision Making (O)	See Strategic Objective 1

(b) In addition to the above benchmarking exercise, the **Tusla Research and Information Needs Analysis (RINA)** and **Horizon Scanning Initiatives** have and will go forward continue to inform the discernment of research and information priorities.

Tusla's **Research and Information Needs Analysis** is a dynamic and participatory consultation exercise designed by the NRO which enables all Tusla staff nationally to make known to the NRO their research, information and capacity building needs and priorities, and seeks to embed research and information as items to be discussed at every team and department meeting. The RINA also enables the NRO to realise part of its vision related to Research Coordination.

Needs expressed within the RINA also inform the development of this research strategy.

The needs and priorities expressed, having been analysed via a Thematic Analysis (see Appendix 5), are developed into proposals via consultation with those whose contributions are included within a theme, and then feed through into a Research Commissioning plan.

The highlight of the RINA is an **Annual RINA consultation day** which brings together a network of local RINA Coordinators and other interested staff. Throughout the lifetime of this plan, the annual RINA Consultation Day will become the main vehicle for Research and Information priority setting within Tusla, at both local and national level.

Appendix 4 lists all the services who contributed to the Research and Information Needs Analysis together with the 22 'Coordinators' – staff nominated/appointed by their Teams who ensured that each of the RINA questions were discussed at Team and Directorate meetings, collated the responses and communicated the responses to the National Research Office.

The **Horizon Scan on the external research environment 2022 to inform the research strategy** is a desk-based review of reports and publications to identify research recommendations and trends identified therein and confined to the Irish research landscape. Horizon Scanning is defined as *“the systematic outlook to detect early signs of potentially important developments. These can be weak (or early) signals, trends, wild cards or other developments, persistent problems, risks and threats. It seeks to determine what is constant, what may change, and what is constantly changing in the time horizon under analysis”* Further details can be found in Appendix 6.

The Tusla [Research and Information Mentor Strategy](#) also influences this strategy. [Research and Information Mentors](#) play a key role in enabling and facilitating research and information capacity within the organisation. They also work with research and information needs in the respective areas and disciplines within the organisation that they represent.

Additionally, as well as the above, a detailed analysis has been undertaken of three current and external research strategies to examine/pinpoint areas of alignment between the work undertaken by the NRO and others nationally.

These include:

#### **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) Statement of Strategy 2021-2023.**

The current strategy concluded at the end of 2023. It contained five strategic goals. The first goal “We will develop, implement and influence evidence informed policies and legislation that improve the outcomes for those we serve;” is the one which the NRO is most closely aligned to and highlights the interdependency which exists between Research and Policy. This is a relationship which needs to be further understood and developed over the lifetime of this strategy. Goals two to five described actions which the Department intends to take with regard to a number of programmes such as *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and its successor *Young Ireland and Growing up in Ireland* (see 6.5 above) which the NRO is involved with. All these areas will be the subject of ongoing discussion with the Research and Evaluation Unit of the DCEDIY via NRO quarterly meetings (see 6.2 above).

#### **Health Research Board Strategy 2021-25.**

The current strategy contains five strategic objectives. Those which the NRO and the Agency aligns to are:

*“Invest in research that delivers value for health, the health system, society, and the economy”* which the NRO will do over the lifetime of this strategy through a Research Commissioning Programme derived from information provided through the **Tusla Research Information Needs and Analysis** and **Horizon Scanning** programme (further information on these above).

*“Promote and enable the use of data to shape health policy, enhance healthcare delivery, and drive broader research and innovation initiatives”.* We will provide a greater awareness of the importance of Research Data Management to staff and researchers, work to provide anonymised access to data from the Tusla Case Management system where applicable to research and seek to encourage the use of Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Repeatable (FAIR) principles in making data openly available for reuse.

#### **Impact 2030 Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.** (see 6.5 above)

The strategy is built on five pillars. Work planned to be undertaken by the NRO and the wider Agency aligns with Pillars 2 and 3 of this strategy.

Pillar 2: Impact of Research and Innovation Structures on Excellence and Outcomes

*Improved data collection and analysis will be central to this and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Innovation and Science's Evidence for Policy Unit will play an important role in this regard. As stated above, we are working to provide anonymised access to data from the Tusla Case Management system where applicable to research and seek to encourage the use of [FAIR principles](#) in making data openly available for reuse as well as a greater awareness of the importance of Research Data Management to staff and researchers.*

*Embed consistent good research practices to drive research excellence and quality of outcomes. We seek to do this through reflecting on and seeking to realise our values within Tusla, through the future development of frequent learning opportunities, the highest standards of research ethics and the application of research findings to practice.*

We have endorsed the National Open Research Forum (NORF) (see 6.3 above) (which sits under the above department) action plan for *Open Research* in Ireland and will be developing a Tusla Open Access Repository and Learning Community, as well as exploring opportunities to participate in a NORF commissioned project to explore open data research management in Ireland.

Pillar 3: Innovation driving Enterprise Success makes reference to *Knowledge Transfer / Knowledge Management*.

We will be working with the Executive Management Team to provide an understanding of and a strategy for Knowledge Management and Knowledge Sharing within Tusla.



## 8. Strategic Objectives and Implementation Plan

We have created five high level objectives with accompanying implementation actions to deliver this plan. These are now described in greater detail below. These will be subject to review each year and built upon over the lifetime of the research strategy.

Objective	Implementation Actions
<p><b>Developing and embedding a Tusla knowledge cycle process:</b> (See Appendix 8)</p> <p>(a) Identification of knowledge gaps via RINA and Horizon Scanning.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with the EMT or delegated authority to develop an understanding of knowledge management.</li> <li>2. Seek new resources to map existing practices and develop a culture of knowledge sharing within the organisation.</li> <li>3. Agree an approved methodology for Horizon Scanning and agree alignment with RINA</li> </ol>
<p>(b) Prioritising and awarding research through the establishment of a commissioning plan (identification, approval, funding, etc)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote agreement of research priorities through the RINA and an annual RINA planning and consultation day</li> <li>2. Develop an approved EMT commissioning plan for prioritized projects during the lifetime of this strategy.</li> <li>3. Through RINA Coordinators and Research Regional Point of Contacts investigate alternative sources of finance for emerging research and information needs, as well as research which is not prioritized for commissioning.</li> </ol>
<p>(c) Proactively influencing policy/legislation by research evidence.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to engage with a range of government research bodies and projects as detailed at 6.5 to ensure Tusla’s views, needs and expertise are represented.</li> <li>2. Continue to work with Tusla’s Research Advisory Group to discern policy and research needs.</li> <li>3. Develop key relationships within Tusla (i.e. the Office of the Chief Social Worker, National Operations Management Team, Chief Information Officer) as appropriate, to enable research evidence to be part of a whole organisation approach to policy and legislation development.</li> <li>4. Define how the Research and Policy interface should work within Tusla to inform practice.</li> </ol>
<p>(d) Development of a process to embed new evidence in practice.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with the National Operations Management Team to design a framework which will enable commissioned research to be applied to practice.</li> <li>2. Through our representation on the national PPI Ignite Steering Group (see 6.4 above) ensure that evidence is translated into practice in a meaningful and inclusive way.</li> <li>3. Engage in continued collaboration and commitment to the Care Experiences Project examining the lives of Children in Care and Adults who were in Care as Children and collaborate with the DCEDIY on how these results can be both disseminated and translated into practice.</li> </ol>

Objective	Implementation Actions
<p><b>Capacity building:</b> Strengthening the research framework around enabling and facilitating and ensuring it is appropriate for the new organisation structure.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to develop and align the Research and Information Needs Analysis (RINA), Annual RINA Consultation Day and Horizon Scanning programmes.</li> <li>2. Work with existing RINA Co-ordinators, Research and Information Mentors and Research Regional Point of Contacts to further develop the process and forecast research and information priorities for the Agency.</li> <li>3. Enablement of Tusla staff to develop basic and intermediate level skills to access and utilise evidence via a further 20 Research and Information@Lunchtime sessions for each year.</li> <li>4. Further promote and expand the network of NRO Research and Information Mentors who work with staff to enable and facilitate research.</li> <li>5. Continue to look at shared ownership and purchasing of resources through Tusla Open Athens user names and passwords.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Coordination and Oversight:</b> Developing coordination for all Tusla research through the NRO for oversight, funding, dissemination of results, etc.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote use of a single budget code for all research activity within the Agency.</li> <li>2. Develop the Tusla Research and Knowledge Community (Repository) to disseminate and contain all research materials developed and undertaken by the Agency.</li> <li>3. Seek opportunities to meet staff regionally and introduce them to NRO personnel, work and opportunities for collaboration.</li> <li>4. Work with Research Regional Point of Contacts to explain and promote an agreed understanding of research coordination.</li> <li>5. Promote knowledge of the role of the Tusla Independent Research Ethics Committee and its application to both research and practice.</li> <li>6. Create awareness of and embed within all research undertaken within or commissioned by Tusla the principles of good research practices.</li> </ol>



Objective	Implementation Actions
<p><b>Open Research:</b> Provide a framework for Tusla to respond and actively co-operate with plans described within Impact 2030 to ensure that all Research, Information and Data is openly and immediately disseminated and shared.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Produce an Open Research policy to be approved by Tusla’s National Policy Oversight Committee which will position Tusla to align itself with Irish and European demands in this area.</li> <li>2. Continue to work with the Office of the Chief Social Worker to explore how data can be made available from within Tusla’s Case Management System for research purposes.</li> <li>3. Work with the National Open Research Forum in the development of agreed metadata standards for repositories and standards in research data management.</li> <li>4. Work with Tusla’s Communications Section to develop a policy and process for the application of Persistent Identifiers (PID’s) to a defined range of Tusla materials (including research publications).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Inclusive Research:</b> Become an essential champion and partner for inclusive research both internally and nationally to ensure that research which embeds the voice of children, young people and their families is integrated into health and social care systems.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Through our membership of the PPI Ignite Steering Group (see 6.4 above) ensure that PPI is embedded within the research programme of Tusla, that all practice activities seek to embed a PPI approach and that best practice is shared nationally and internationally.</li> <li>2. Leverage learning from research and information to embed interdisciplinary approaches to care into Tusla’s structures and services as part of Tusla’s ongoing reform programme.</li> <li>3. Working with the National Operations Management Team to design and commission research which can be co-designed to inform the design and delivery of services to best meet their needs.</li> </ol>

## Appendix 1

### Research Enablers

**Research Enablement is defined as** “A set of organisational wide processes, which includes policies, actions, infrastructure and funding to develop the capacity of all staff in Tusla to apply and evaluate research to their practice”.

**(National Research Office review of definitions of Research Enablers)**

- Ensuring all research wherever undertaken within Tusla is underpinned by the principles of Research Integrity (principles of good research practice).
- The Tusla Research Repository (as part of a National Research Database) will enable Communication, Sharing and Dissemination of Research within Tusla.
- The Development of Research, Information Skills and Literature Review programmes in alignment with Tusla’s People and Change Strategy, will enable all practitioners and staff to take responsibility for informing their practice with evidence and knowledge.
- An Independent Research Ethics Committee has been established which encourages, evaluates and approves all research proposals from within Tusla, as well as external requests to Tusla, where access to Tusla information and data are concerned.
- Being a national partner on the PPI (Public and Patient Involvement) Ignite Network to support and promote excellence in PPI in research and hearing the voice of children and families in Tusla research.
- Evaluation of these needs as well as their fulfilment through Research Commissioning are met through the development of links between Research, Practice and Academia which the NRO plays a key role in developing.
- Development of the Tusla Research Centre web pages, hosted on Tusla’s public web site, which offer access to all staff nationally to a wide range of research, information and evidence sources.



## Appendix 2

### Research Facilitators

#### Research Facilitation is defined as

*“The individual roles and actions which support Tusla staff and partners to undertake research”.*

#### (National Research Office review of definitions of Research Facilitators)

- Development of a National Research Database comprising an Electronic Research Ethics Application Form, Research Application Management System and Tusla Open Access Research Repository
- Creating awareness and understanding within Tusla of moves at National and European level to create Research and Data which is Open – Open Research
- The development of a national network of Research and Information Mentors, who work with all staff nationally to raise awareness of and make use of the enabling infrastructure described above.
- Provision of non-electronic library and information services to all staff nationally through Barnardos Library and Information Service.
- A Research Advisory Group representative of a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in promoting and supporting child care and related research including service users, academic institutions, regulatory bodies, professional associations and research institutions who provide independent expert advice on identifying and prioritising research topics.
- Development and compliance with the NRO Research Dissemination Policy and Communications Plan to enable information sharing and a monthly Research and Information News Column to encourage Agency staff to share news of research.
- Creation and ongoing development of Tusla Research Centre web pages which provide access to contact details of Research and Information Mentors as well as a wide range of Electronic Information and Evidence sources both Open Access as well as through Open Athens user names and passwords.

## Appendix 3

### Research Commissioning

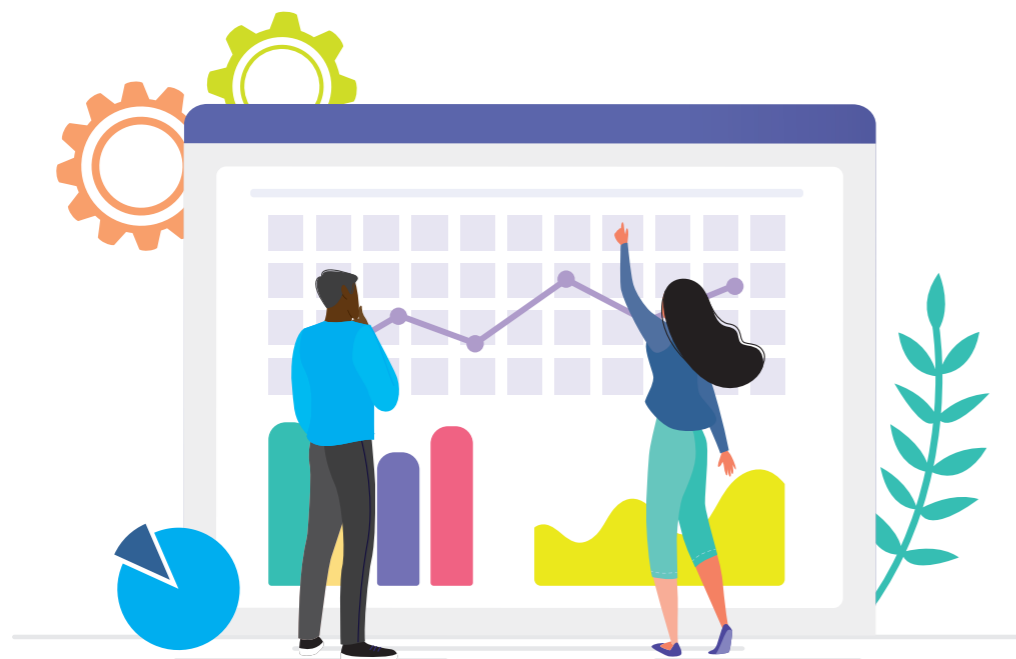
#### Research Commissioning is defined as

*“The process through which external organisations are invited to undertake research into clearly expressed research needs and questions which have been discerned as necessary for the development of practice and business needs of the Agency”.*

#### (National Research Office review of definitions of Research Commissioning)

Some examples of current research commissioning initiatives are:

- Identifying and prioritising new research and information projects - external and internal research and information needs analyses to inform how Tusla discerns future research and information needs for research commissioning.
- Collaborate with the DCEDIY on the Care Experiences Project to address Action 65 of the Ryan Report.
- Supporting Research Commissioning approaches by providing the procurement framework for Tusla wide tendering over €50,000.
- Child Research Study commissioned and undertaken by a Research Team within Trinity College, Dublin.
- A five Year memorandum of understanding with the Irish Research Council enabling Tusla to respond quickly to emerging research needs as well as research collaborations such as the joint research with Children’s Rights Alliance.
- Supporting ongoing projects and encouraging further engagement with research activity throughout the Agency.



## Appendix 4

### Who has been involved in the Research and Information Needs Analysis.

An initial 22 staff who have begun acting as 'Coordinators' to enable their Teams & Directorates participation in the RINA with the NRO

November 2021 & ongoing

#### Contributors

- Office of Chief Social Worker
- Regional Management Team, Dublin North East
- Prevention, Partnership and Family Support
- Children and Young Persons Services Committees
- Service Experience Governance and Risk Systems
- Regional Management Team South
- Tusla Educational Support Service
- Research Office Cork
- Early Years Inspectorate
- Domestic Sexual Gender Based Violence Services
- Practice Assurance and Performance Systems Unit
- Regional Management Team, South
- Human Resource Management Team
- Workforce Learning and Development
- Office of Legal Services
- Tusla Advisory Group
- Dublin South West /Kildare West Wicklow Aftercare Service
- Cork After Care Service

## Appendix 5

### Process and Themes to emerge from Research and Information Needs Analysis



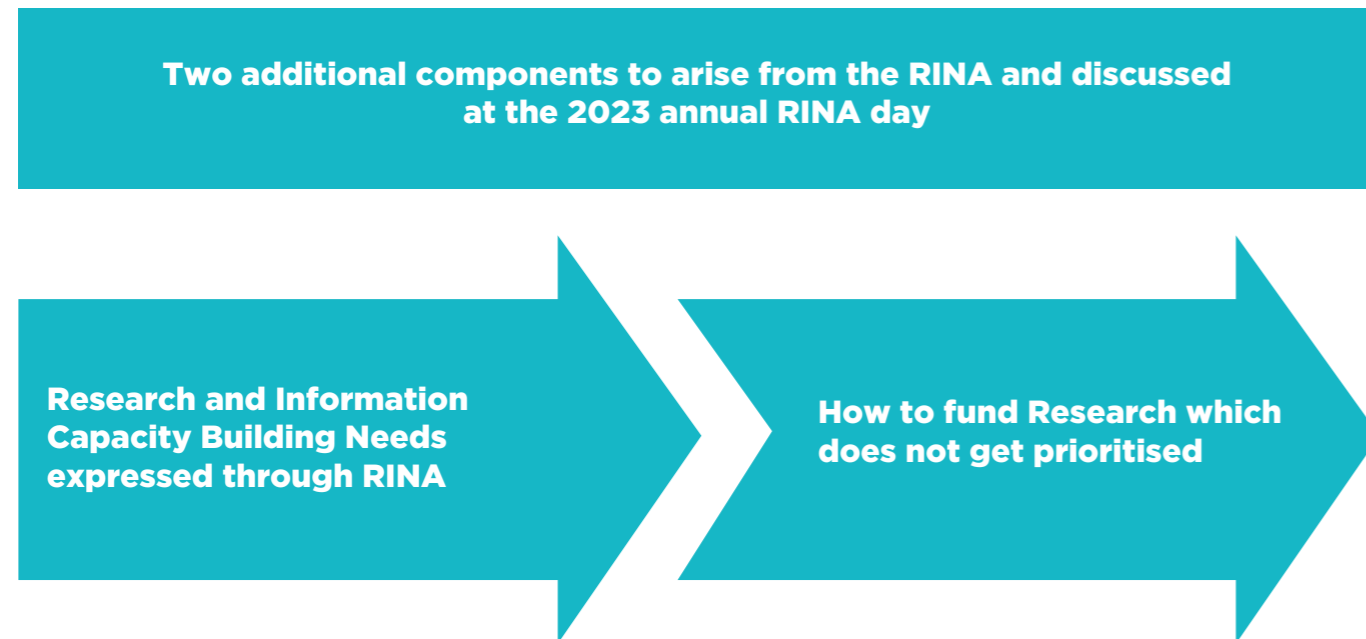
## Appendix 5

### Process and Themes to emerge from Research and Information Needs Analysis



### Key to Themes

- CP** = Child Protection
- ES** = Education Supports
- CSCIC** = Child Safeguarding & Children in Care
- EDI** = Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- DMSP** = Data Management & Service Planning
- IOR** = Impact & Outcomes Based Research
- DSGBV** = Domestic Gender & Sexual Based Violence
- ODC** = Organisation Design & Capacity Building
- SUE** = Service User Experience



## Appendix 6

### Horizon Scan on external research environment 2022 to inform the research strategy.

The NRO undertook a Horizon Scan of the Irish research landscape to inform the strategy. This was a desk-based review of reports and publications (for the year 2022) as listed below to identify research recommendations and trends identified therein and confined to the Irish research landscape. This Horizon Scan excluded newspaper analysis, news reports, and emerging trends from the international research landscape.

We drew on the following definition of a Horizon Scan for this purpose.

*Horizon Scanning is the systematic outlook to detect early signs of potentially important developments. These can be weak (or early) signals, trends, wild cards or other developments, persistent problems, risks and threats. It seeks to determine what is constant, what may change, and what is constantly changing in the time horizon under analysis. A set of criteria is used in the searching and/or filtering process. The time horizon can be short-, medium- or long-term (European Commission, 2015).*

Table 1: Sources to inform annual Horizon Scan and key emerging recommendations:

Source	Key Recommendations and Issues arising
<p><b>Corbett M. and Coulter C. (2021) Ripe for Reform; An Analytical Review of Three Years of Court Reporting on Child Care Proceedings.</b></p> <p><b>A Report Commissioned by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.childlawproject.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CCLRP-Ripe-for-Reform-Report-October-2021.pdf">www.childlawproject.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CCLRP-Ripe-for-Reform-Report-October-2021.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.childlawproject.ie">https://www.childlawproject.ie</a></p>	<p>Key recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) International best practice regarding a legal framework and service delivery model for treatment of children &amp; young adults with challenging emotional and behavioural difficulties, including emerging psychiatric &amp; personality disorders, who require detention for their own safety or safety of others.</li> <li>(b) Solutions-Focused Research on Ethnic Minorities and on Children with Severe Difficulties</li> <li>(c) Action in relation to the following: - Establish a Family Court - Address Gaps in the Legislative Framework: review and update the Child Care Act 1991 - Strengthen Capacity to Respond to Therapeutic Needs of Children in Care or At Risk of Entering Care - Develop an Inter-Agency Policy &amp; Protocols on Sexual Exploitation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Annual Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/214234/9e893871-ecb7-4a28-879a-d0a83d5bc7e2.pdf#page=null">www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/214234/9e893871-ecb7-4a28-879a-d0a83d5bc7e2.pdf#page=null</a></p>	<p>Significant events in Child Protection occurring between July 2020 &amp; December 2021, with dedicated chapters on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child protection &amp; on the Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes.</p> <p>A proposed State response to illegal Birth Registrations in Ireland sets out 17 recommendations which span the themes of the right to identity; access to counselling &amp; other supports; access to records; creation of a specialist tracing team to undertake a further review of suspicious files; DNA &amp; legal costs &amp; establishment of a Truth Commission.</p>

Source	Key Recommendations and Issues arising
<p><b>Children’s Rights Alliance Report Card 2022</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.childrensrights.ie/content/report-card-2022">www.childrensrights.ie/content/report-card-2022</a></p>	<p>The Children’s Rights Alliance Report Card 2022 is the second analysis of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party’s joint Programme for Government &amp; how it performed for children in 2021. Two ‘E’ grades were awarded – the lowest in Report Card 2022 due to the increase in the number of children and their families experiencing homelessness &amp; continued practice of admitting children to adult psychiatric units. Pandemic recovery and the impact of the cost of living were key themes for 2022.</p>
<p><b>Ombudsman for Children’s Office “Pieces of Us” Report 2022</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.oco.ie">www.oco.ie</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.oco.ie/pieces-of-us/">www.oco.ie/pieces-of-us/</a></p>	<p>The report raises and highlights the voices of the 5,515 children who took part in a national online survey and the 200 children who participated in in-depth focus group discussions. This report was submitted to the UN Committee in August 2022.</p> <p>In “Pieces of Us” children describe their frustration &amp; disappointment with health services, particularly mental health services &amp; express concerns about long waiting lists and inadequate services. They also talk about education, including the need for exam reform, the impact of bullying in schools &amp; supports they would like to see provided in schools to help them thrive.</p>
<p><b>Other Relevant issues emerging</b> <b>Legislative change</b></p>	<p>Recent &amp; forthcoming legislative developments that impact on Tusla’s work included the recent <b>Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022</b> and the forthcoming outcome of the review of the <b>Child Care Act</b>.</p>

## Appendix 7

### Tusla Research Advisory Group

The [Research Advisory Group](#) (RAG) is representative of a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in promoting and supporting child care and related research including service users, academic institutions, regulatory bodies, professional associations and research institutions.

RAG members are experts in their area and are well placed to recognise emerging research ideas and opportunities across all of the Tusla remit and to provide advice regarding the research implications of a range of strategic child care and policy issues.

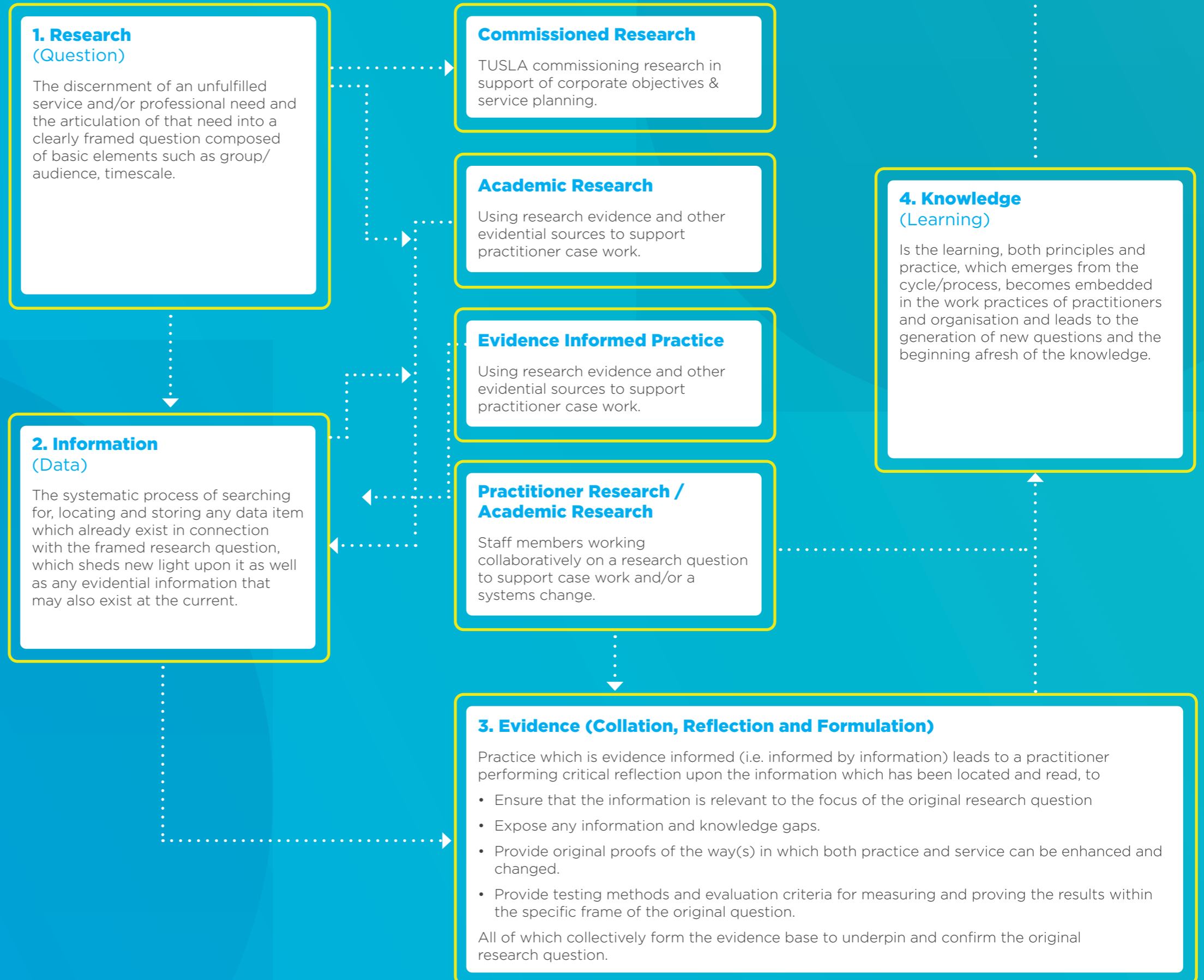
The RAG provides independent expert advice to Tusla on identifying and prioritising research topics. Its input helps to enhance the quality of both the research process and the research findings through eliciting a broad spectrum of experiences and views.



## Appendix 8

A clearly defined and focused question is at the core of any research activity. A prerequisite for the framing of a research question is the need to define and/or understand any terminology which is central to the consideration of such questions.

### The Knowledge Cycle







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