



## Letter from the Chief Executive

As we reach the end of yet another year I find myself wondering where time has gone. For all of us working to support children and families and to reform and regenerate services the answer is simple: time was absorbed by the enormity of the task. Whether in frontline services or in supporting corporate structures I hope that you have found the task a rewarding one. Your contribution has made a difference.

Year end is an appropriate time to reflect on our work and to remind ourselves of the many successes that there have been throughout the year. There have been strides made in organisational development, significant improvements in service delivery, a strengthening of supports. There have also been the successes of

individual children whose lives are immeasurably better this Christmas because of interventions made by Tusla staff throughout the year.

The Child and Family Agency was born at a time of crisis and uncertainty. Important initial steps have been taken to restore confidence, to increase capacity and to improve practice. Progress has proven challenging against a background of financial restrictions but reforms have been introduced, services have improved and Tusla is proving responsive to the needs of children, building on the strengths of families and communities.

At times, the demands on all of us have been overwhelming. Throughout, the professionalism, commitment, resilience and sheer determination shown by Tusla staff has kept a small ship afloat on an often treacherous sea. Thank you for the support and the forbearance which you have shown towards each other and towards me. Ireland's children are the beneficiaries of your hard work.

Next year Tusla will move to a new phase of its development as the organisation moves from survival to sustainability. I have no doubt that you will prove equal to that task. In the meantime I do hope that you and your families have a relaxing and peaceful break and a new year filled with energy and hope.

**Gordon Jeyes**

**Chief Executive**

## Tusla's Response to the Recent ESRI Publication

On 7th October, the ESRI published its 'Review of the School Completion Programme'. The report on the School Completion Programme (SCP) which provides in-school and out-of-school supports for children and young people at risk of disengagement and early school leaving.

Made up of 124 clusters (or projects), SCP consists of a group of primary and second-level schools within a local area. With a focus on mainly DEIS (designated disadvantaged) schools, a range of criteria is used to select target children and young people based on school attendance, family circumstance and their socio-emotional health and wellbeing. With an emphasis on this criteria, flexible interventions are provided to tailor provisions towards the exact needs of the children and young people.

Overall, the report highlights the importance of early intervention and the flexibility of supports in preventing early school leaving. It found that since the inception of SCP, there has been an improvement in primary attendance and an increased number of young people staying in school until the Leaving

Certificate. While SCP cannot be attributed solely to the increased numbers, it has undoubtedly played an important role.

Gordon Jeyes, Tusla's Chief Executive stated *"Tusla's work is about the child and family: about ensuring that supports are available and that the needs of the child are met. Education is an essential aspect of a child's welfare and Tusla's focus is on providing the most appropriate services along the continuum of educational welfare which will best support attendance, retention and participation in education."*

A comprehensive review of Educational Welfare Services was undertaken in January, whereby a number of actions were taken and are actively being implemented. Some of those actions include a new structure ensuring integration of educational welfare services, creation of an Attendance Strategy to give guidance to schools, a revised retention plan and new Educational Welfare posts have been granted this year.



Gordon Jeyes, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr James Reilly, TD and Norah Gibbons

## Tusla Announces Details of Significant Early Intervention and Prevention Programme

On Monday 13 April 2015, Tusla publicly announced details of the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme to an audience of Tusla staff and partners from the community, voluntary and academic sectors at Dublin Castle.

Speaking at the announcement, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr James Reilly, TD said: *"This extensive programme builds on the change of emphasis in the development of child welfare and protection services over recent years. It constitutes a significant step in achieving the policy objective of moving towards a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention rather than crisis management. This was a key rationale for the Government's establishment of the Child and Family Agency at the beginning of 2014 and is clearly reflected*

*in the statutory responsibilities it has been assigned."*

*"I commend Atlantic Philanthropies for the substantial support it is providing to the programme and thank it for the very considerable investment it has made to the cause of developing parenting and family support services in Ireland over many years. I wish Tusla well in the important and challenging work that lies ahead."*

A parenting website, called [www.parenting24seven.ie](http://www.parenting24seven.ie), and a suite of information materials on parenting support and Meitheal, including the Meitheal toolkit for practitioners, were launched at the event. These documents were prepared in conjunction with our partners in the PPFS grant, NUI Galway. The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre is playing a central role in the research and evaluation of the PPFS programme.

You can download the PPFS literature at <http://www.tusla.ie/news/tusla-announces-details-of-a-comprehensive-programme-of-early-intervention>.



## PPFS Publications

[www.parenting24seven.ie](http://www.parenting24seven.ie)

### Meitheal Toolkit



### Meitheal Parents Information



### Parenting Support Strategy



### Meitheal Children and Young Person's Information Leaflet



### Parenting24Seven - Top Tips for Family Wellbeing



### Participation of Children and Young people - Our Approach



## Leadership Development Programme 2014

The effectiveness of first line leadership is critical to the success of any organisation. In the work of Tusla, first line leaders have to combine high standards of professional capability with a range of leadership skills to direct, develop and motivate others including staff, peers and parents.

These leadership skills include:

1. the competencies of empowering staff;
2. holding others to account;
3. leading change through people;
4. collaborative working and strategic influencing.

Personal qualities such as self-belief, self awareness, self management, a drive for improvement and personal integrity are essential to leadership in terms of emotional resilience, relationship development and motivating staff.

Recognising this, during 2014 Tusla Workforce Development entered into an agreement with each of the four regions to provide a leadership development programme for first line leaders. The chosen model was developed with Anne McMurray, independent organisational development consultant, based on a similar programme that she delivered for the Cooperation and Working Together Initiative (CAWT) for Social Work Team Leaders

*"I really enjoyed the training and feel it was one of the most valuable and thought-provoking we have been on."*

in the border regions during 2011. The programme was open to attendance by social care managers and other relevant roles although most regions prioritised the attendance of social work managers given the demand for the programme within this group.

One programme was delivered in each of the four regions. A total of 86 first line managers attended the four-day programme. A significant benefit was the bringing together of managers from various settings and roles e.g. Social Work Team Leaders, Social Care Managers, Project Managers, Family Support Coordinators etc. Workforce Development Managers and Training and Development Officers have also attended, along with one of our HR Managers. The involvement of Workforce Development and HR is important for the long term goal of developing internal capacity for future delivery of this programme.

The programme aims to deliver a range of benefits:

- At an individual level: increased confidence and more effective performance of the team leader role through the development of "leader as coach" skills and tools.
- At a service level:

increased ability of first line managers to combine their professional accountability and developmental role with staff to improve service delivery and decision making.

- At organisational/system level: the creation of a supportive peer leadership network which crosses professional, service and organisational boundaries to accelerate the sharing of knowledge, experience and ideas.

Feedback from attending managers has been overwhelmingly positive about the content, model and facilitation style:

*'Excellent development opportunity. Definitely need regular opportunity to engage in development like this. Thanks for the Oxygen!!'*

*'Really beneficial – I feel the organisation has invested in me as a manager in a meaningful way'*

*'I haven't had training that challenged me or made me think so much in a while'*

An evaluation of the programme will be available in early 2015.



Mayo's Community Based Family Support Service recently launched their new brochure. The Community Based Family Support Service is a partnership between various strands within Tusla providing supports for families in FRCs and other community organisations. This in-home programme operates the Mol an Oige ecological teaching model of family support.



## The Role of the Public Health Nurse in a Child Protection Team

**The South Lee area is the only Tusla child protection team to include a dedicated Child Protection Public Health Nurse. An evaluation of the role was undertaken in 2013 by the post-holder, Sheila Cahalane; Susanne Pelican Kelly, Principal Social Worker and Patricia O'Dwyer, independent public health nurse consultant. Evaluation of the contribution of the child protection public health nurse to inter-professional working in child protection - An integrated health and social care model of child protection was launched in Rochestown Park Hotel on 14 May.**

The research revealed that social workers considered that a referral to the Child Protection Public Health Nurse (CPPHN) brings a multi-disciplinary focus to the case and that they valued the continuity of input with an on-site health professional. Other public health nurses valued the CPPHN also for her support and accessibility as well noting the time that she can devote to families. Key stakeholders in the voluntary sector also appreciated the strengths of such a role

Launching the research, Barry Murray, Tusla Area

Manager for Cork, said: *"I would like to congratulate the South Lee team and the researchers. This integrated model brings benefits to children, their families and the professionals. The experience in South Lee is a blueprint which could be replicated across the country. I hope this report and its recommendation will form a basis for discussion about a more integrated model of working."*

The CPPHN role was introduced in 2001 with the aim of improving communication between social work and public health nursing. The CPPHN carries a caseload and works primarily with children under five years old and their families, with a particular focus on supporting families with children under one year old. Cases are generally referred to the CPPHN where there are young children involved; where there is a medical concern; where families are vulnerable; or where neglect is suspected.

***Evaluation of the contribution of the child protection public health nurse to inter-professional working in child protection - An integrated health and social care model of child protection*** is available at <http://www.tusla.ie/research/links-to-research/>



**Launch of *Evaluation of the contribution of the child protection public health nurse to inter-professional working in child protection, an integrated health and social care model of child protection.***

Present in the photo are (L to R): Susanne Pelican Kelly Principal Social Worker South Lee, Sheila Cahalane Child Protection Public Health Nurse, Barry Murray Area Manager TUSLA Cork and Patricia O'Dwyer independent Public health Nursing Consultant

## The Empowering Practitioners and Practice Initiative (EPPI)

**EPPI is a project developed and implemented by Tusla with the support of the Centre for Effective Services (CES). It is being led by Cormac Quinlan, Interim Director of Policy and Strategy and Fred McBride, Chief Operating Officer.**

The main goal of this initiative is to help social workers make the best decisions for and improve the outcomes of the children and families in their care. By utilising the knowledge and experience of the social worker and combining it with the most up-to-date evidence based practice and research, this initiative will provide them with the tools and confidence to do just that.

As part of an extensive survey, the social workers were asked to identify the theories and techniques

that they regularly use. Together with a series of discussion groups, this allows the initiative to respond to their real needs.

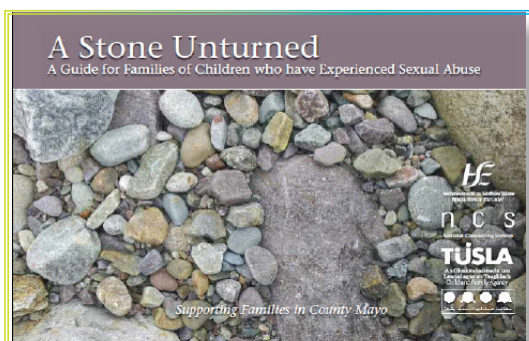
The initiative involves three elements:

1. A **Professional Development Plan** that will act as a road map for social work that is aligned with the CPD, the requirements for professional registration and overall policy development. It will be a guide for social workers, informing them of what is expected and what they can expect from the Agency.
2. There will also be an evidence-informed and outcomes-focused therapeutic intervention **Toolkit** for social workers. Strengths-based, it

## Mayo Child Protection and Welfare Team Win Award

**Congratulations to Mayo Child Protection and Welfare Team who were awarded best Social Work Team at the inaugural IASW Social Work Awards in June. All three finalists in the Best Social Work Team category were Tusla teams. The finalists were: West Central Team Child and Family Agency in Donegal; Child Protection and Welfare Team in Mayo and the Dublin North City Fostering Social Work Team.**

Paddy Martin, Tusla Area Manager for Mayo, said: *"I am delighted and proud that the Mayo Child Protection and Welfare Team were the first recipients of the IASW, Team of the Year Award. This award is a recognition of the commitment and innovation that the team have demonstrated over the years. I hope this award provides a much needed platform for other Social Work Teams to highlight their initiatives and achievements."*



The Mayo Child Protection and Welfare team was nominated for providing a high quality service and their creative and dynamic response to client needs. The judges were particularly impressed by the team's guide for families whose children have



experienced sexual abuse. The team comprises of three offices based in Swinford, Castlebar and Ballina.

The judging panel was comprised of Paula Donohoe, director IASW, Hilda Loughran, UCD; Senator Jillian Van Turnout and Norah Gibbons. The ceremony was a very positive experience and the dedication and positive initiatives of Social Workers all over the country was recognised.

The Social Work Awards are a celebration of Social Work Practice. For the first time in the history of Social Work in Ireland the Irish Association of Social Workers has created a space where all areas of Social Work practice are not only acknowledged, but celebrated.

will build on existing therapeutic interventions in use throughout the country and will act as a resource to help social workers deliver evidence-informed interventions in practice. Social workers were consulted on the format of the toolkit so that it would be accessible, practical and easy to use.

3. The **Evidence Informed Practitioner (EIP)** programme, where staff from all four regions are currently taking part, uses real life cases throughout the programme. Therefore, the material is practical and relevant to the daily challenges that social workers face.

### Timeframe

Work on design and delivery of EPPI began in

August 2014 and will continue through 2017 as the initiative is implemented across the Agency.

Some staff will be invited to complete a survey for the Empowering Practitioners project. The project teams are compromised of representatives from workforce development, policy and research as well as social work practitioners across the four regions.



# update



## Anam Cara Resource Pack for Newly Bereaved Parents and Families

The Irish charity Anam Cara, which provides support services

Challenges, Self-Care and Supporting My Family.

*"Our newly launched resource packs address the shortfall in formation and are a powerful resource for any family experiencing the death of a child, irrespective of whether their child was a baby or a grown adult," says Sharon Vard, Anam Cara CEO.*

*"We know bereaved Mums and Dads are very fragile in the first few months after the death of their son or daughter and may not have the energy to pick up the phone or actively look for help. The seven booklets on different topics were written by mums, dads and siblings who have gone through a similar experience and learned to cope again."*

*"Understanding the importance of getting information to families at an early stage of their journey through grief, giving families some reassurance that there is light at the end of the tunnel, that they too will be able to emerge from the depths of despair and start living their life again."*

In September, Anam Cara also launched five videos that complement the resource packs and can be accessed from Anam Cara's YouTube Channel and include interviews with bereaved parents who share their experience and offer advice on surviving the intense grief after the death of their child, and also outline Anam Cara bereavement support services.

to bereaved parents and families, has launched a resource pack that focuses on supporting newly bereaved parents. Aiming to offer a sense of hope at the start of their tough and difficult journey, each resource pack contains specific information on what helped other bereaved parents to get through the first weeks and months of bereavement.

Anam Cara is urging front line professionals, including Tusla staff, that come into contact with newly bereaved parents to get in touch with them to request a delivery of the free resource packs, so they will always have information on hand when it is needed most. Packs can be requested by emailing [info@anamcara.ie](mailto:info@anamcara.ie) or calling Anam Cara at 01 404 5378. The information packs can also be downloaded from Anam Cara's website at <http://anamcara.ie/resources/resource-pack>.

There are seven booklets in the resource pack - *A Dad's Grief, A Mum's Grief, Adult Siblings, Coping with the Sudden Death of My Child, Milestones and*

## Teagasc and Tusla Team up to Promote Child Safety on Farms

Teagasc and Tusla - Child and Family Agency have teamed up to provide the first farm safety training specifically for foster carers from farming backgrounds in the Galway, Roscommon and Mayo areas.

The first Farm Safety for Foster Carers course took place on 22nd October in the Teagasc offices in Ballinasloe. The foster carers learned about carrying out a Farm Safety Risk Assessment and how to make sure that everyone on the farm understands and follows the Farm Childhood Code of Practice.

Michelle Grimes, Social Work Team Leader with Tusla says: *"In most cases, the best place for a child in care is in a foster placement in their own community, where they can maintain relationships with friends, schools, and extended family. We are fortunate that so many farming families throughout Galway, Roscommon and Mayo have opened their homes to a child in care and enabled the children to stay in their own localities.*

*"However, the farm can be a completely new and strange environment for some of our children in care. This is why we are delighted to be partnering with*



*Teagasc to help our foster carers to ensure that the children stay safe and well in their new homes."*

Commenting on the initiative, Teagasc Health and Safety Officer, John McNamara stated: *"Growing up on a farm has many positive attributes. However, ongoing vigilance and motivation is required to ensure that farm health and safety of all parties is secured. A key starting point for any parent or guardian is to be familiar with the safety codes of practice."*





## First Student Graduation for Ballydowd

**If you are a parent of a Leaving Cert age student, you know all too well what an achievement it is to survive the Leaving Cert and graduate from school. That achievement is even more impressive for young people who have experienced great challenges and difficulties, as the young people in Ballydowd Special Care Unit have. So it was a proud and special day, when the staff of Ballydowd SCU held the unit's first ever school graduation for a student who had completed the Leaving Cert.**

The young people requiring Special Care typically have complex and challenging histories and present with acute EBD [emotional and behavioural] conditions. Tusla Special Care Units, such as Ballydowd, endeavour to address these issues by providing education, therapy and care to the young people in an enlightened, holistic, therapeutic and restorative way. Each Special Care Unit has its own on-campus school where students are provided with an education programme that will help address the young person's acute needs with the objective of transitioning them to a better place in their challenging and developing lives.

Commenting on the first ever graduation from Ballydowd school, Dr Michael J. Dayton, Principal, Ballydowd Special Care School says: *"The educational challenge for a Special Care facility such as Ballydowd, is to give young people the best possible chance of achieving a successful outcome and transitioning them to a better place in their developing lives."*

*"To see the joy on a young person's face when they see and realise that they can achieve within a Special Care setting is to experience and witness the true autonomy and power that education provides. This is especially evident at examination time when examination results are published and the young person experiences the joy of achieving success as a result of their own work, determination and effort, and indeed that of their teachers and care staff."*

*"I am incredibly proud of our first young student to complete the Leaving Cert in the Ballydowd school."*

## Retirement of Paul Harrison, Director of Policy and Strategy

Mr. Paul Harrison, Director of Policy and Strategy retired on 22 May 2015 after over 30 years of service in child protection and welfare.

During his career within statutory social services, Paul held a number of practitioner and management positions in areas such as child protection and welfare, alternative care, family support, homelessness, mental health and addiction. He was appointed as Tusla's first Director of Policy and Strategy in January 2014.

We would like to wish Paul every success and happiness in this next stage of his life and career.



## NRP Learning Event

**On the 26th March, at a seminar in the Chartered Accountants House in Dublin, Tusla published the reports of the National Review Panel (NRP) in relation to the deaths of 12 children and young people.**

This seminar explored the learning from the National Review Panel process in relation to deaths and serious incidents of children known to child protection services. For those professionals working with children, it is important that the sense of loss after the death of a child is accompanied by a review of supports offered and an honest appraisal of their adequacy. The purpose of the seminar was to further develop best practice and, in addition, expand the learning by looking at comparable international experience.

Speaking at the event were Tusla staff, Dr. Helen Buckley, Chair of the National Review Panel and



Professor Andy Pithouse, former Director of Research and Deputy Director in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University.

The reports and the NRP Annual Report 2013 are available on Tusla's website <http://www.tusla.ie/publications/national-review-panel-reports>.

## SORAM Pilot Project

**SORAM (Sex Offender Risk Assessment Management) is a multi-agency pilot project governing the management of convicted sex offenders in the community who are subject to supervision by the Probation Service.**

An Garda Síochána and the Probation Service established SORAM in June 2010. In October 2010, the Child and Family Agency joined SORAM at National Steering Group level and then commenced operation in the local SORAM teams from October 2012. The Irish Prison Service is also represented at the SORAM National Steering Group.

There are 28 local SORAM teams nationally. Each local SORAM team

has a permanent representative from An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and Tusla. Tusla is represented by a Principal Social Worker or Social Work Team Leader. The primary function of the local SORAM Team is to develop a risk management plan for every convicted sex offender in its area who is subject to probation supervision. Tusla contributes to the SORAM process by receiving information from and providing information to the SORAM partner agencies. Information sharing in this context enhances child protection planning and sex offender risk management planning.

The development of SORAM is managed by the National Steering Group and the National SORAM

Office. The National SORAM Office commenced operation in October 2013, which includes a Social Work Team Leader from Tusla, Detective Garda, Senior Probation Officer and a representative from the Housing Authority.

Information regarding SORAM is now available on the Tusla hub. This information includes SORAM policy documentation, research and contact information. The risk assessment management plan (RAMP) used in SORAM will be added shortly. A Tusla protocol on how to process convicted sex offender notifications will be included when arrangements are finalised with the Irish Prison Service. Further information relating to SORAM will be added on an ongoing basis.