

**Joint Committee on Health and Children
Thursday 10th December 2015**

Opening Statement by Gordon Jeyes, Chief Executive Tusla

1. Introduction

I am pleased to have the opportunity to update the committee on Child and Family Agency activity in 2015 and to describe our key priorities for 2016.

I am joined by my colleagues Fred McBride Chief Operations Officer, Tusla, Pat Smyth Director of Finance and Cormac Quinlan Director of Policy and Strategy.

2015 Activity

In accordance with the terms of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 Tusla published a Corporate Plan for the period 2015 – 2017. The 2015 Business Plan was the first detailed statement to meet the overall core outputs and strategic objectives of that Plan. This report describes performance for the first three quarters of 2015 describing progress and areas for further attention/development.

1.1 Output 1: Tusla's child protection processes and systems are responding to children at risk in a timely manner

- a) The Child Protection Notification System (CPNS) is now available to external services requiring access to this information, specifically An Garda Síochána, the Tusla out of hours emergency service, GP services and hospital accident and emergency departments.
- b) The National Out of Hours Service is now operational providing an emergency advice and support service to An Garda Síochána regarding the operation of protecting children under section 12(3) of the Childcare Act 1991.
- c) Integrated performance reports are being published quarterly on the website covering the full range of performance information, finance, HR, quality and risk and service delivery data.
- d) The early warning Need to Know system has been refined and agreed with DCYA. The incident management policy will be finalised shortly to include an electronic incident management process. A revised complaints and feedback policy has been approved and is in final discussion with the Trade Unions.

1.2 Output 2: All services, processes and systems underpinning children and family policy are evidence informed

- a) The National Policy catalogue has been developed and is currently accessible by all staff through the Tusla hub.

- b) Each of the 17 areas has a manager dedicated to Participation, Partnership and Family Support and the arrangements for coordinating welfare support, Meitheal, are being rolled out.
- c) A draft Quality Assurance Framework has been developed and will be piloted in quarter 1 of 2016.
- d) A research strategy has been approved by the Board and a National Operating model for the research team has been agreed.

1.3 Output 3: Provision of a targeted range of family orientated supports

- a) A resourcing framework for supporting parents has been agreed, coordinators are in place and a major conference took place to launch support material on 8th December 2015.
- b) The Assessment Consultation and Therapy Service (ACTS) has been further developed and taken on the remit to support young people who exhibit sexually abusive behaviour. This will supplement the work of inter-agency treatment teams.
- c) An alternative care strategy is being refined and will be a major undertaking in 2016.
- d) There has been substantial work to move from a grants system into a commissioning strategy.
- e) There is now a system of national oversight of all services relating to domestic, sexual and gender based violence.
- f) Participation of Family Resource Centres in the service delivery framework is recognised, audited on an ongoing basis and described in quarterly reports.

1.4 Output 4: Attendance, participation and retention in full time education is embedded in service delivery

- a) An integrated management structure has been designed and approved and appointments for national lead managers are underway.
- b) There has been a complete review of the School Completion Programme to ensure that the strengths of local initiatives are supplemented by good governance. There have been detailed conversations with School Completion chairs and coordinators which will result in strengthened governance for 2016.
- c) Early years inspection registration managers are in place. A national governance structure is established. The backlog of gaps between inspections has been addressed.

1.5 *Output 5: Tusla is a fit for purpose organisation*

- a) An estates strategy has been developed and a property audit and validation of estates inventory completed. A programme of major / minor capital works has been prioritised and the major activity to modernise the special care estate has commenced.
- b) A risk register has been developed, approved by management team and given initial consideration by the Board.
- c) There has been a revision and full review of existing financial controls and governance arrangements with externally funded agencies.
- d) A training needs analysis has been completed with mid-level managers and performance management, legal framework and leadership development programmes are underway.
- e) An evaluation and revision of a recruitment strategy has been completed with the establishment of Tusla Recruit.
- f) A Head of legal services has been appointed and a business case submitted to DCYA to take forward the establishment of a more cost effective Tusla legal.

2. Matters of development arising from 2015

- 2.1 The National Childcare Information System is now fully operational within the pilot area and discussion regarding a rollout continues with ICT control in DPER.
 - 2.2 Ongoing work is taking place to ensure that all historical adoption records are being secured and safeguarded into the future. Work has also begun on the development of a fostering to adoption handbook to support and promote more permanent and stable family placements for children in care.
 - 2.3 Discussions continue with the HSE regarding Tusla's legal responsibilities for a psychology service for which there has, as yet, been neither a resource transfer nor a binding service level agreement.
 - 2.4 Additional external support including a strategic partner for ICT is currently being procured. There are still matters of essential dependency on HSE arrangements not least as they relate to networking and hosting. These issues of co-dependency remain underfunded and ill defined.
- 3.** On the back of an improved financial settlement for 2016 which addresses some of the inherited legacy deficits, a Business Plan for 2016 is under preparation. This will be year 2 of the 2015-2017 Corporate Plan. Among the key issues which will be addressed and set out in detail in the Business Plan for submission to the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs by the end of the year are:-

3.1 *Output A: Tusla's child protection processes and systems are responding to children at risk in a timely manner.*

- a) In preparation for commencement of the legislation and implementation of the revised Children First Guidelines a National Implementation Team has been established under the Director of Policy and Strategy which is currently focused on the development of key requirements including mandated reporting systems and responses, information and guidance on mandating assisting, training and e-learning, and the information and advice on the development of safeguarding statements and a register of non-compliance.
- b) Confirming the strategic response to aftercare and support for all young persons in education and training and advice and advocacy for all. This will include revising our National Aftercare Policy and preparing for new statutory provisions that will ensure that all eligible young people will have a statutory right to an aftercare plan.
- c) Preparation is also occurring in advance of proposed legislative amendments under the Adoption Information and Tracing Bill 2015. Three working groups have been established to prepare for the public awareness campaign, the assessment of compelling reasons and the establishment of an adoption information register.
- d) A detailed plan will address the resource deficits in certain areas regarding the time it takes to allocate referrals to social workers for assessment and support.
- e) Implementation of the Tusla's incident management policy and full roll out of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) module throughout the Agency.
- f) The Quality Assurance directorate will ensure the full implementation of Tell Us at Tusla and the NIMS complaints module including training for staff. Innovative methodologies for service users to provide feedback will be developed and a national service user survey will be conducted. This work will be complemented by the roll-out of the Tusla specific protected disclosure and good faith policies.

3.2 *Output B: All processes and systems underpinning children and family policy and services are evidence informed.*

- a) Standardisation of policy development through the establishment of a National Policy Oversight Group and policy submissions on new and emerging legislation. The Child Protection and Welfare Handbook will be reviewed and updated.
- b) Family Support Services will be further developed through the recruitment to additional posts in Prevention, Partnership and Family Support, the provision of additional training in Meitheal and the implementation of an audit tool for family support.
- c) Research will continue to inform the provision of services across Tusla and the Agency's research capacity will be enhanced through the establishment of a Research Ethics Committee and the completion of a Research Needs Analysis.
- d) Implementation of Tusla's Quality Assurance Framework, including a full self-assessment cycle for all services. An outcomes based review of Child Protection and Welfare and Children in Care Services will be undertaken as well as themed audits.

3.3 *Output C: A targeted range of family and parenting supports*

- a) Through the network of Children and Young People Services Committee, local needs and priorities will inform the allocation of funding streams to align need to Tusla commissioning priorities.
- b) The Children in Care multi-disciplinary teams will be expanded to provide for 4 regional teams with enhanced capacity to support children in care with challenging behavior.
- c) The Alternative Care Strategy will be developed and a working group with DCYA will be established to define new metrics as outlined in the performance statement. A Children in Care to Adoption Handbook will be developed.
- d) A Commissioning Support Unit and an annual commissioning cycle will be developed.
- e) The priorities for Domestic Sexual Gender based Violence services include the implementation of governance and oversight with standard reporting framework for funded DSV services and the development of information capability to support the delivery of services. A National Practice Guide and Training pack will be developed to support the work in this sector.

3.4 *Output D: Attendance, participation and retention in fulltime education is embedded in service delivery for all children.*

- a) The outcomes from the review of the school completion programme will be implemented and an integrated approach to service management adopted.
- b) The work commenced in 2015 in respect of aligning Educational Welfare Services with the Service Delivery Framework will be progressed.
- c) The Early Years Inspectorate will develop and implement new processes and systems in respect of the new regulations for the sector. A Central Registration Office will be established and an ICT system developed to support intelligence driven inspections.
- d) A review of Section 14 assessments for children educated elsewhere, including at home, according to their parents' wishes will be completed.
- e) The participation and achievement in education of all children in care will be the focus of specific monitoring in order to monitor and record educational progress and identify the support needs of children in care.

3.5 *Output E: A fit for purpose organization to deliver on our strategic intent.*

- a) The establishment of Tusla legal to introduce contestability to the system and to promote more cost effective working between social workers and lawyers in the interests of children and the efficient and effective operation of the court system.
- b) The corporate infrastructure will be strengthened to ensure Tusla is an effective, efficient and responsible organization with particular attention to the ICT strategy and HR.
- c) Discussions with the HSE in partnership with DCYA regarding Tusla's statutory commitments to psychological services will continue.
- d) Tusla's Estates Strategy will continue to be implemented and the programme of major and minor capital works will be undertaken.



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- e) A strategic partner to work with Tusla to establish its Value For Money Strategy will be procured.
- f) The Risk Management Policy for Tusla will be rolled out with training in 2016 and a national review of the Risk Register will be conducted.
- g) A Resource Allocation Model will be developed. Further all recommendations of C&AG and Internal Audit Reports will be fully implemented and enhanced governance arrangements with grant recipients will be introduced.
- h) The HR Directorate will continue to align agency objectives with training requirements using the training needs analysis undertaken in 2015. The Working Group established within the National Joint Council will continue its work on establishing a strategy to embed values and behaviors set out in the Corporate Plan and to develop a culture and code of behavior document.

Gordon Jeyes

Chief Executive

Tusla, Child and Family Agency

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