



An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

# Ireland's Child and Family Agency

**Towards A Shared Purpose**

2014

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## Introduction: A statement of purpose and a direction of travel.

The purpose of this document is to enable a wide ranging debate regarding the priorities and key objectives for the **Child and Family Agency** in its first three year plan to be published in the summer of 2014.

As set out in an appendix to this document, the **Child and Family Agency** has direct responsibility for a very specific range of services. The Agency will wish to work with partners and stakeholders advocating for children to ensure equitable access to services across the full range of statutory provision. To do this, the Agency is determined to be an utterly reliable and dependable partner.

As has been stated many times a **Child and Family Agency** cannot fulfil Ireland's aspiration to provide a world class childhood for all its children citizens without effective joint working and partnership arrangements with other services, particularly health, education, justice and local government.

During the period covered by the Agency's first three years plan, Children Services Committees will attain full national coverage. The **Child and Family Agency** is committed to taking advantage of this governance opportunity. It is recognised that children can most effectively fulfil their potential when they are safe,

healthy, learning and loved. By sharing our resources and aligning our objectives, the impact that we can make on the lives of children can be greatly enhanced.

Therefore please read, consider and critique this document. It is essential that our priorities are the top priorities for Ireland's children. It is crucial that our priorities are your priorities. There is a determination that the Agency will celebrate and benefit from partnership work. Thus all views are welcome as we strive to be inclusive, outward looking and ultimately responsive.

Accompanying this booklet is a questionnaire which should be returned to [emma.dodrill@tusla.ie](mailto:emma.dodrill@tusla.ie) by 25th April 2014. Your assistance with this and your commitment to work for Ireland's children is greatly appreciated. During the course of this consultation I look forward to meeting many of you.



**Gordon Jeyes**  
Chief Executive  
Child and Family Agency  
30th January 2014

We are committed to putting the needs of children first by:

Keeping children and families safe from harm

Enabling children and families to make good decisions about their health and lifestyles

Helping children and families to engage in education

Helping children to develop as active citizens, capable of economic independence.

# THE VOICE OF A CHILD

WHEN CONSULTED  
WITH RESPECT, THE  
INSIGHT AND THE  
VIEWS OF CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
ARE INVALUABLE.

On behalf of the Board of the  
Child and Family Agency I  
am pleased to present our  
initial Statement of Purpose.

The Purpose Statement is part of the wider development agenda to set out the strategic direction, operational plan and performance measures by which the Agency will be judged.

In order to ensure that the **Child and Family Agency** is at the centre of service delivery and is fully aligned with key partnerships to deliver on a wide range of services based on the needs of children and strengths of families, we are working simultaneously on four interconnected layers of planning.

- Creating positive child and family experiences.
- Delivering services that are of the highest possible quality
- Developing teamwork, partnerships and working environments that are fit for purpose
- Living within our means and ensuring the most effective impact for taxpayer investment.

All of this should contribute to:

- Safe environments
- Active and healthy lifestyles
- Children and young people supported

to achieve their potential

- Partnerships developed to sustain family economic security
- Children and families in their communities who are connected, respected and participating.

This brief initial statement — this Statement of Purpose — is based on detailed discussions led by the Management Team during 2013.

The Board of the **Child and Family Agency** hopes that the Statement of Purpose serves as a useful prompt for debate about the Agency's vision and its future direction. Over the next six months a full strategic plan will be developed and views are welcomed on all of the issues raised.



**Norah Gibbons**  
Chairperson  
Child and Family Agency  
30th January 2014

# THIS INITIAL STATEMENT OF PURPOSE PROVIDES STAFF WITH A ROAD MAP TO ENCOURAGE US ALL TO BE CREATIVE, CONSTRUCTIVE AND PART OF A COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP.

The establishment of the **Child and Family Agency**, presents an opportunity to think differently, where appropriate to behave differently and to seek a wide range of views regarding the most effective way of working together to deliver a wide range of services for children and for families. It is an opportunity to meet the challenge to develop an approach that is responsive, inclusive and outward looking.

The past decade has seen a plethora of analysis and a tsunami of recommendations. Much of the analysis has been incisive and each recommendation has been well-intentioned. During the past two years of the Reform Programme, work has

been undertaken to rationalise the approach to specific key themes. The **Child and Family Agency** is an organisation en route to becoming a learning organisation. The journey involves working closely with clients and partners, consulting with children and young people on all decisions that affect them and, importantly, consulting young people about policy and implementation in order that we benefit from their practical wisdom.

Each skill, qualification and professional discipline contributes to developing services for children that are as effective as possible. Each contribution needs to

reflect a professionalism that is outward looking, theoretically grounded, based on evidence, clear in its values and above all on the side of the public, particularly the side of the child.

Commitment to our professional peer group and immediate work colleagues and commitment to children, families and communities must have equal status.

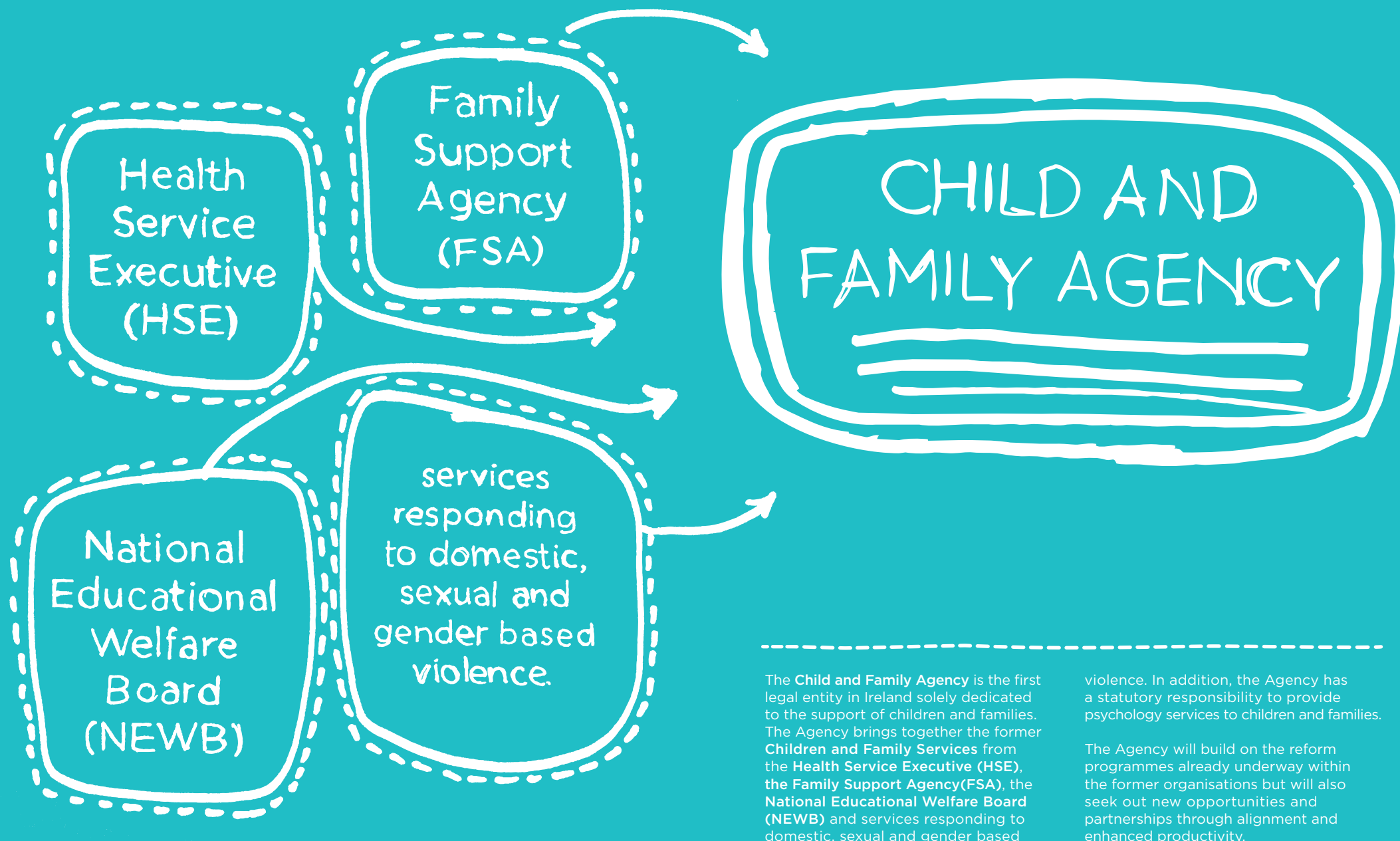
As Chief Executive I am determined to work with staff, and for staff, to ensure that the **Child and Family Agency** seizes the opportunity to pioneer services with the interest of children at the heart of all activity. I look forward to collaborating

with partners, clients and other key stakeholders in creating a more seamless and integrated response to meeting the needs of children and their families. The **Child and Family Agency** cannot do this alone. It has very particular responsibilities and accountabilities but it is working with others to ensure that more children enjoy the world class, high quality childhood enjoyed already by many in Ireland today.

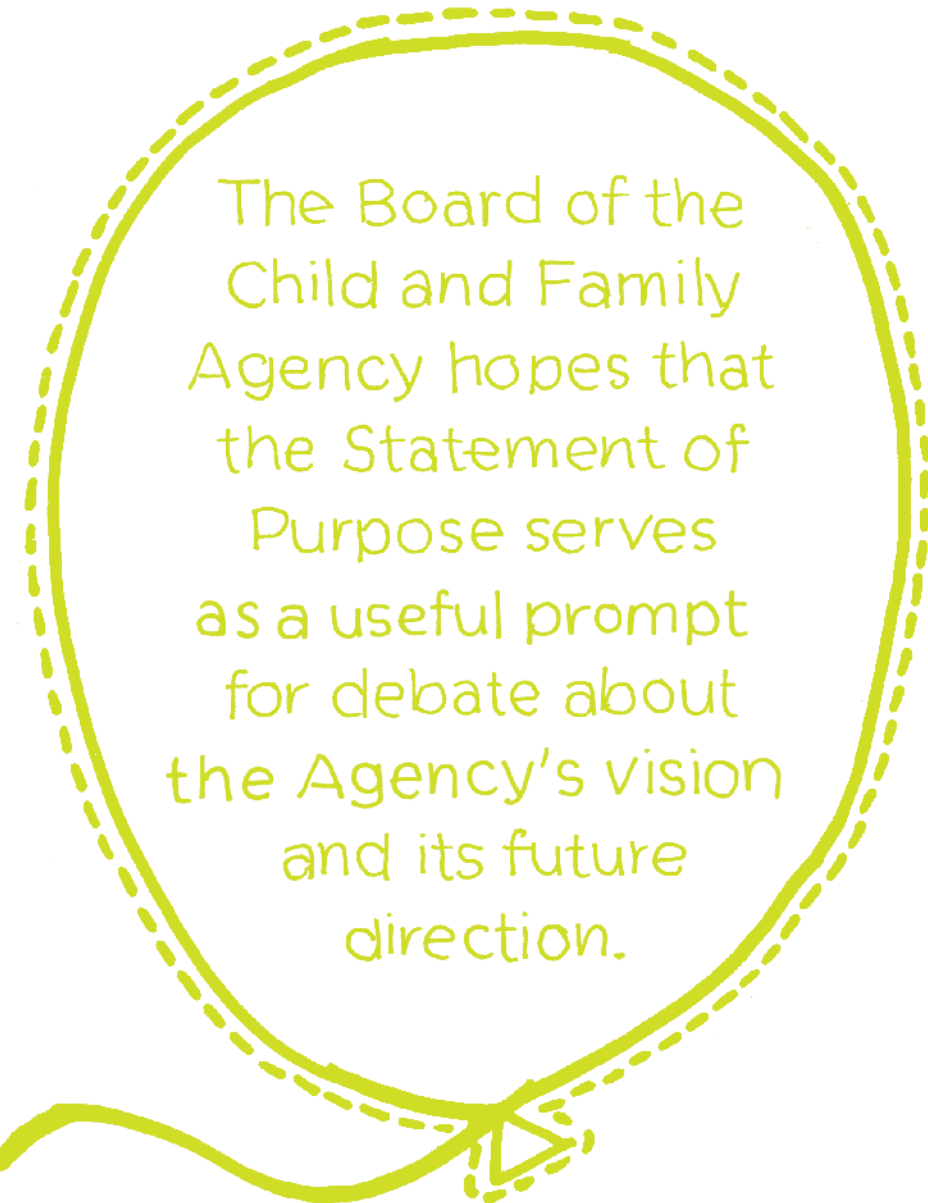
The statement of purpose outlined overleaf is not a strategic plan. That will follow. It is a statement of purpose and a direction of travel. It is about change and continuity.



## Statement of Purpose



# Statement of Purpose



The Board of the Child and Family Agency hopes that the Statement of Purpose serves as a useful prompt for debate about the Agency's vision and its future direction.

## The Agency will seek an improvement in the areas of:

- Policy, procedures and practice
- Workforce development
- Service enhancements
- Partnership working
- Quality assurance
- Resource allocation

Although small by comparison with the HSE, the **Child and Family Agency** constitutes one of the largest public sector agencies within the State with 4,000 employees and a budget in excess of €600 million.

The new Agency, with its roots in the community through the involvement of the Family Support Agency and the educational perspective of the National Educational Welfare Board, and working along side social work and psychology, will be uniquely placed to offer a comprehensive range of services along the continuum of care. The approach will recognise the strengths and contributions of children, families, schools and communities. One child, one plan, many perspectives.

The next three years will bring changes, difficulties and opportunities for children and families across Ireland. This plan sets

out how the Agency will address these potential issues and challenges. This plan contains ambitious targets, not only to ensure the continued delivery of existing services but also the development of those services.

A more constrained public finance environment means that the scope to significantly increase resources is limited and there is more emphasis on value for money. The Agency will have less scope to resource and will have to focus on other ways to strengthen services. However at all times the Agency will aspire to high standards for all and will promote positive action for the most vulnerable of children.

## The voice of the child

When consulted with respect, the insight and the views of children and young people are invaluable. In contemporary Irish society, building on the amendment to the constitution, the voice of children will be heard. The interests of children will be paramount. Balanced with the right of children to be heard will be a recognition that children remain dependants. The Agency will seek to support, reinforce and complement the work of loving families who set clear boundaries — boundaries within which all children can be safe, make good decisions and engage constructively with learning.

# Statement of Purpose

## Our Purpose

### Why we are here

We are committed to putting the needs of children first by:

Keeping children and families safe from harm.

Enabling children and families to make good decisions about their health and lifestyles.

Helping children and families to engage in education.

Helping children to develop as active citizens, capable of economic independence.

## What we value

The day to day commitment of the Agency will be judged on the capacity to translate values into behaviours demonstrating unity of purpose, loyalty to the needs of children, courage in the pursuit of values and open minded innovation to identify the most effective approach.

## Core Values

### Respect

We will always treat everyone — children, families and colleagues — with dignity and consideration.

### Integrity

We will be reliable and trustworthy in the way we carry out our work by:

Adhering to the highest standards of professionalism, ethics and personal responsibility.

Placing a high value on the importance of confidentiality.

Acting with conviction and taking responsibility for our decisions.

### Fairness

We commit to creating an environment where the voice of the child and young person is cherished and the family supported, sensitive always to circumstances.

### Collaboration

We will foster integrated working by:

Recognising and valuing the contribution that children, families, staff and carers can make.

Fostering a culture of agencies working together.

### Compassion

Children, families and colleagues will be treated with care and supported when needed.

## Our Vision

### We aspire to the development of services that ensure:

- Children and families are integral to and valued in the communities and by all agencies with whom we will work in partnership.
- Children and families are consulted on decisions that affect them and will influence policy development.
- Families are supported to set clear boundaries and maintain loving environments.

- Evidence based support services are available ranging from early intervention to more intense services in environments and premises fit for purpose.
- Staff feel valued and contribute to the development and delivery of services of the highest possible quality.
- Staff will be reflective and self evaluating professionals with opportunities to shape best practice.
- Decisions and authority operate at the most local practical level.

## Our focused area of work

### Our focused areas of work

#### Focus 1:

Ensuring all professionals are working to a shared vision and philosophy for supporting children's outcomes and working within the emerging multi agency Service Delivery Model.

#### Focus 2:

Put the participation of children, young people and families at the forefront of planning so that their voice is heard and incorporated into service development.

#### Focus 3:

Develop, lead and promote a culture that embodies strong collaboration, mutual understanding and trust amongst partner agencies.

#### Focus 4:

Create a work environment where people fulfill their potential, culture is value based and the service is responsive and inclusive.

#### Focus 5:

Streamline and quality assure services so they represent clear continuums of support based on analysis of need and providing a response which is efficient, effective and proportionate.

#### Focus 6:

Live within our means and thus prioritising, managing and allocating resources and assets to maximum impact.



# Statement of Purpose

## Towards an Operational Performance Framework

The key contributions to achieving the above strategic focus areas will involve effective performance planning and measurement. The focus will be on outcomes and this will involve some new measures as well as the rationalisation of existing data collections. In overall terms the planning and performance function will seek to inform across all work streams including:

- Governance and organisational arrangements
- Finance & procurement arrangements
- ICT
- Staffing
- Corporate Services
- Performance Planning and Measurement
- Services Delivery
- Quality and Risk

## Some Criteria for Deciding Key Strategic Action

1. Potential for impact and improving services for children in Ireland.
2. Capacity to build on existing reform programmes within the former Children and Family Services of the HSE, the Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board, maximising staff capacity and strengths, promoting decision making at the most local, practical level and giving staff the freedom to seek new, leaner local ways of working.
3. Promotion of an identity for the Agency based on the agreed values and reflected in day to day behaviours.
4. Delivery of improvement on the day to day realities of service delivery throughout Ireland making them more accountable, consistent and transparent.

## Proposed Key Purpose Statements

1. A consistent and structured continuum of intervention for those at risk.
2. Proactive management of referral, diversion and assessment.
3. Timely, early and appropriate interagency support to children and families who may be vulnerable.
4. A strong partnership with children, parents and communities.
5. Effective participation by all children in learning.
6. A child centred, responsive alternative care system including enhanced aftercare arrangements, with full commitment across all government departments.
7. Improved data quantity and quality.
8. Working to ensure all commitments to Children First are met and enhanced in line with public expectations in advance of proposed statutory change.
9. Consistent records management.
10. Development of an out of hours service.
11. Adherence to stated national standards and policies across all services.
12. Strong and open governance arrangements.
13. Improved public communications and Agency identity.
14. Strong workforce development with an emphasis on recruiting and retaining a highly skilled, engaged and diverse workforce.
15. Ensure value for money is maximised and cost minimised.
16. Resources and services prioritised and allocated according to need.
17. Full compliance with statutory requirements.

## What's next?



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The test of this statement of purpose will be the extent to which action results and services are improved. Each of us will have a key role to play in the delivery of continued and improving services. The continued leadership and support from the Board and Senior Management Team is critical.

A debate about collective values and the role of children's services as core priorities will be important. This will be fundamental in developing and delivering a full strategic plan for the Agency which will be underpinned by a new performance management framework as agreed with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

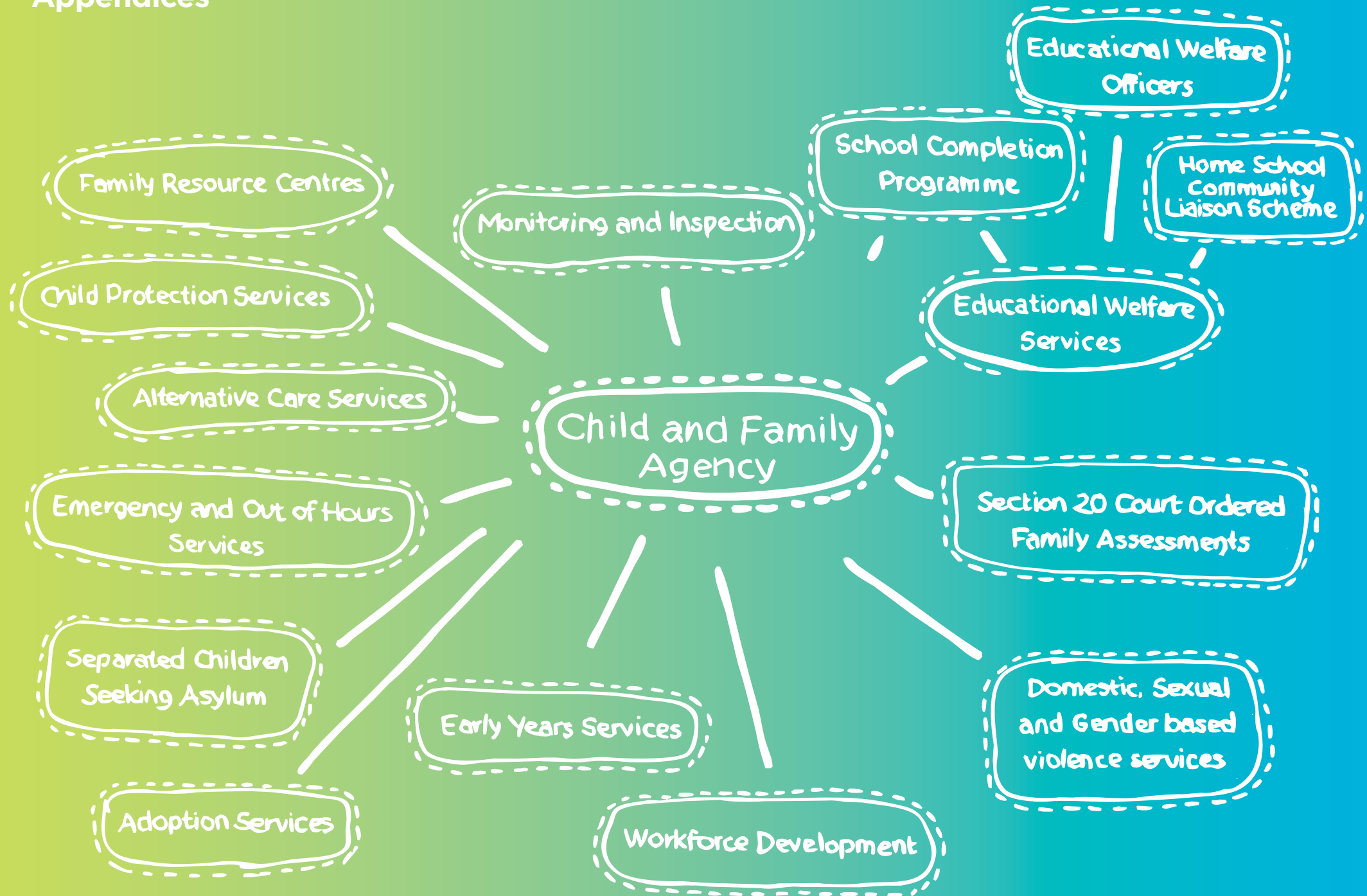
The creation of the **Child and Family Agency** represents a unique opportunity. Resource constraints and recruitment delays remain a feature of the working environment in Ireland's public services in 2014. This is a challenging and uncertain context. Nevertheless, the creation of this Agency provides an enormous opportunity to maximise the contribution of each member of staff as we learn, improve and become a stronger more effective team, translating positive individual behaviours into a child centred culture that we can all be proud of.

*We are determined to advocate and act in the best interest of children at all time.*

*We look forward to working with you in this exciting venture now and into the future.*

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## Appendices



## Appendix 1

### Summary expenditure 2014

At present there is considerable activity regarding the modernisation of the *Child and Family Agency* cost centre arrangements. Coding variations within the larger organisation of the Health Service Executive were acceptable as a consequence of devolved management and an integrated approach. The intention is to provide far more detailed descriptions of spend with a view to, in due course, an exact financial costing for each intervention broken down between frontline costs and corporate overhead.

While this work is in progress, it is still advantageous to illustrate the broad components of the *Child and Family Agency's* gross annual expenditure of €602 million. Please note that the figures have been rounded for ease of description and do not represent the full detail of expenditure.

#### General Budget Build

Category	€
Staffing	€235 million
Foster care	€110million
Grants to the community sector including grants to provide services responding to	
Domestic Sexual Gender based Violence	€100 million
School completion grant	€25 million
Grants to family resource centres and associated national programmes	€21 million
Educational Welfare Services	€3 million
Legal costs	€18 million
Residential centres and other associated costs	€90 million
Total	€602 million

## Appendix 2

### Service Activity

The *Child and Family Agency* is responsible under the Child and Family Act, 2013 for a wide range of services. In particular it has specific duties under the Child Care Act, 1991 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. Under the legislation, which came into effect 1st January 2014, the Agency is charged with:

Supporting and promoting the development, welfare and protection of children, and the effective functioning of families.

Offering care and protection for children in circumstances where their parents have not been able to, or are unlikely to, provide the care that a child needs. In order to discharge these responsibilities, the Agency is required to maintain and develop the services needed in order to deliver these supports to children and families, and provide certain services for the psychological welfare of children and their families.

Responsibility for ensuring every child in the State attends school or otherwise receives an education, and for providing educational welfare services to support and monitor children's attendance, participation and retention in education. Ensuring that the best interest of the child guides all decisions affecting individual children.

Consulting children and families so that they help to shape the Agency's policies and services

Strengthening inter-agency co-operation to ensure seamless services, responsive to needs.

Undertaking research relating to its functions, and providing information and advice to the Minister regarding those functions.

This wide range of service duty is fulfilled by a range of current services including:

#### 1. Family Support Services:

##### 1.1 *Child and Family Agency provided services;*

Community Child Care Worker services  
Family Support Worker services  
Marte Meo Programme  
Family Welfare Conference Service  
Family Resource Centre Programme  
Counselling Services  
Marriage and Relationship Counselling  
Marriage Preparation Courses  
Child Counselling in relation to parental separation  
Bereavement Counselling and support on the death of a family member  
Rainbows

##### 1.2 *Non-statutory agency services;*

The *Child and Family Agency* commissions family support services from a wide range of non-statutory agencies on a local, regional and national basis.

#### 2. Child Protection Services:

National Child Protection Notification System (CPNS)  
Child Protection Referral and Assessment services  
Child Protection Case Conference services  
Sexual Abuse Service co-ordination

#### 3. Alternative Care Services:

##### *Fostering Services;*

Fostering services (recruitment, assessment, training, and supervision and support);  
Fostering Care review services.  
Foster families

##### *Special Care;*

Special Care Centres

ACTS Therapy and support for children in Special Care or on detention and at risk of placement in Special Care

##### *Residential services;*

General Residential Care (Statutory and non-statutory)

##### *Aftercare;*

Aftercare workers  
Foster care  
Drop in centres

#### 4. Emergency and Out of Hours Services:

Youth Homeless services  
Crisis Intervention Service  
Emergency Place of Safety Service  
Emergency Out of Hours Social Work Service

#### 5. Separated Children Seeking Asylum:

Social work Team Short-term, intake residential units  
Longer-term residential unit  
Foster family placement service

#### 6. Adoption Services:

Adoption assessment and placing  
Inter-country adoption services  
Tracing and Information services

#### 7. Monitoring and Inspection:

Monitoring and Inspection teams

#### 8. Early Years Services:

Pre-School Inspections services  
Childminder Advisory services

#### 9. Workforce Development:

Leadership Development Programme for First Time Managers  
Induction  
Supervision  
Children First Basic Level Training

Agency/An Garda Síochána Children First 2011 Joint Training  
Practice Development and Support  
Court room skills  
Domestic, sexual and gender-based violence

#### 10. Section 20 Court Ordered Family Assessments

#### 11. Educational Welfare Services:

Statutory services and services under the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Action Plan for Education Inclusion.

#### 12. Domestic, Sexual and Gender based violence:

Crisis Refuges  
Rape Crisis Centres  
Support Services.  
Network organisations



# Notes

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