



An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

CORPORATE PLAN 2015-2017





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CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction	8
2. Context for the Corporate Plan, 2015 - 2017	12
3. Process for developing the Corporate Plan	14
4. Pathway to achieving desired long-term outcomes	18
5. Vision	19
6. Mission	20
7. Values and Behaviours	21
8. Strategic Objectives	22
9. Key Risks	32
10. Implementation	34
Appendix 1: Relevant legislation currently underway as at December 2014	36
Appendix 2: Stakeholder Consultation Feedback	38
Appendix 3: Social Change Model	44



FOREWORD

I have great pleasure in presenting this, the first Corporate Plan for Tusla. The plan covers the period 2015-2017 and sets out not only the values espoused by Tusla but the manner in which those values can be translated into good quality services for children and families.

It is less than a year since the Child and Family Agency was established. Much has been achieved in the laying down of structures that will support the development of the organisation. The bringing together of the key services of Child Welfare and Protection, Family Support Services, including the Family Resource Centres and Education Welfare Services has been challenging. This Corporate Plan recognises the individual strengths of each of these strands of service and builds on their combined contribution.

Key to the success of Tusla's work will be its willingness and capacity to work in a collaborative fashion with all its stakeholders. This Corporate Plan is built on widespread consultation. Staff and key stakeholders were invited to give their input to its development. Their views were welcomed and listened to and I hope that those who contributed will find in the plan a reflection of their very valuable contribution.

Tusla does not operate in a vacuum. It is part of a complex and ever-changing legislative and national policy framework, which seeks to integrate a whole-of-government approach to improving children's lives. While conscious of Tusla's unique role in this framework, the Corporate Plan seeks to ensure that the Child and Family Agency's priorities and outcomes are fully integrated with national priorities.

With the child at the centre, our mission is *'to design and deliver supportive, coordinated and evidence-informed services that strive to ensure positive outcomes for children, families and communities'*. In response to identified challenges facing families and communities, eight strategic objectives have been identified in this plan. When linked to measurable outcomes, they provide a clear basis on which to develop business and work plans for Tusla over the period 2015-2017.

I believe that the Tusla Corporate Plan is a realistic, while also aspirational, plan for the Agency. I look forward to working with Gordon Jeyes, Chief Executive of Tusla, and staff to ensure the full implementation of the objectives set out in this document.

I intend, with the Board, to ensure the highest level of corporate governance and accountability. There will, no doubt, be many challenges during the period 2015-2017, but this Corporate Plan represents a clear commitment by the Child and Family Agency to work in a responsive and transparent way to promote collaboration and connected working in the interests of children and communities.

Norah Gibbons

Chairperson

Tusla — Child and Family Agency

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The formation of Tusla in January 2014 offers an excellent opportunity to establish and progress modern and appropriate services for children and families in Ireland. This is the Agency's first Corporate Plan, spanning the period 2015-2017, and sets out how it plans to achieve this, as well as identifying the pathway to longer term outcomes beyond the lifetime of this plan.

Stakeholder consultation

To inform the planning process, Tusla engaged and consulted with a wide range of stakeholders in order to better understand the various challenges, issues and requirements involved. In a consultation process with over 450 people, a number of key themes emerged and these have helped to shape the development of this Corporate Plan. They were:

1. National agency and children's champion

- Stakeholders would like Tusla to be a truly national agency and children's 'champion'.

2. Shaping the system

- Tusla has an important role to play in helping to shape the system and to coordinate a collective response to service requirements.

3. Staff capacity

- A crucial task for Tusla in the formative years is to build the capacity and capability of staff members who directly deliver the services and touch the lives of children and families.

4. Quality of service and experience

- Tusla should provide services that make life better, safer and happier for the children and young people who need Tusla in their lives and to do so sensitively, consistently and responsively.

5. Engagement and co-production

- Stakeholders welcomed the opportunity to engage with Tusla and would like to see this process being continued in order to build relationships and mutual respect as a basis for productive working relationships.

6. Internal unity and effectiveness

- External stakeholders working with Tusla emphasised the need for internal coherence and, in particular, the provision of reliable information, consistent application of protocols and clarity about roles and responsibilities.

Social Change Model

Taking the stakeholders' feedback into account and ensuring that Tusla's statutory requirements and obligations under the DCYA performance framework are met, the Social Change Model was used to map out the pathway to Tusla's desired long-term outcomes. The Social Change Model is a process used to identify the social problem that needs to be addressed and the various levers within an organisation's control that can be used to affect the change.

The social problem identified is as follows:

‘A lack of long-term, evidence-informed planning and insufficient resources leads to disjointed services and inadequate supports for children and families.’

Having defined the problem, the Social Change Model is then used to identify the long-term outcomes that Tusla seeks to achieve for children and families over the next seven to ten years. Given that Tusla is a new organisation, the first three years will be broadly focused on putting in place the foundation stones to enable the medium and longer term outcomes to be achieved (see below). However, there are a number of initiatives underway that will deliver specific improvements for targeted groups within the first three years. The pathway to long-term outcomes are also illustrated below.

Pathway to achieving desired long-term outcomes

Short-term Outputs (1-3 years)	Medium-term Outputs (4-6 years)	Long-term Outputs (7-10 years)
A. Tusla's child protection processes and systems are responding to children at risk in a timely manner.	A. Revised systems are significantly reducing the numbers of children at risk.	A. All children are safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
B. All processes and systems underpinning children and family policy and services are evidence-informed.	B. Children and family services are more user-friendly, strengths-based and co-produced.	B. All children and families are capable of making informed decisions about their health and lifestyles.
C. A targeted range of family and parenting supports.	C. Children and family services are properly coordinated and aligned.	C. All parents are providing stable and loving home environments in which children thrive.
D. Attendance, participation and retention in full-time education is embedded in service delivery for all children.	D. The benefits of increased child and family participation in education is acknowledged across all sectors of society.	D. All children and their families are actively engaged in their education.
E. A fit-for-purpose organisation to deliver on our strategic intent.	E. The Agency is a responsive partner, collaborator and leader in cross-sectoral and interagency activities.	E. The full support of society and the community to support children in their transition to adult life.

Vision

In order to achieve our long-term outcomes, we have developed a stretching vision for Tusla:

**All children are
safe and achieving
their full potential.**

This is an ambitious vision and one which Tusla is fully committed to delivering.

Mission

Tusla has defined and developed its core purpose and reason for being, which is now encapsulated in its Mission Statement:

**With the child at the
centre, our mission is
to design and deliver
supportive, coordinated
and evidence-informed
services that strive
to ensure positive
outcomes for children.**

Values and Behaviours

The vision and mission are not just statements; they outline what Tusla wants to be, how it wants to act and what it wants to deliver. To help achieve this, Tusla has developed a set of values and behaviours that set out a firm commitment to service users and stakeholders about how the Agency will act and interact with children, families and other stakeholders. These values and behaviours are:

COURAGE AND TRUST

- Reliable, committed and accountable
- Professional, ethical and responsible
- Willing to stand up for our values

RESPECT AND COMPASSION

- Putting the individual at the heart of our services
 - Protecting the most vulnerable
 - Respectful and considerate towards all

EMPATHY AND INCLUSION

- Fair, responsive and transparent
- Promoting collaboration and connected thinking
 - Taking a long-term, whole system view

Strategic objectives

The outcomes that Tusla is aiming to achieve, which are informed by its vision, mission, values and behaviours, cannot be realised without delivering on a number of key strategic objectives over the lifetime of this Corporate Plan. Tusla has developed a number of strategic objectives, each underpinned by a series of actions, key performance indicators and targets in order to track and measure progress. Tusla's strategic objectives are:

- 1. Improve the quality and focus of the delivery of services for children and families.**
- 2. Develop the governance structures, processes and supporting infrastructure to ensure that Tusla is in a position to carry out its functions in an effective and efficient manner.**
- 3. Establish a new and distinct values-based culture that empowers children and families through high-quality services.**
- 4. Develop an organisation that lives within its means and utilises its resources in an efficient and cost-effective manner.**
- 5. Develop a workforce that is valued and supported within a learning organisation.**
- 6. Position the Agency as a responsive, trustworthy and respected body with its own unique identity.**
- 7. Build on our research strategy to develop policy and enable evidence-based decision-making and high-quality service delivery.**
- 8. Ensure a strategic approach to quality assurance, information management and risk management that supports continuous improvement and good governance.**

Tusla believes that it will achieve these objectives and in doing so will be able to provide the best services possible to children and families in Ireland.

The Agency will be relying on the ongoing commitment of its dedicated and skilled staff, as well as collaboration with other provider organisations, agencies and Government departments.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The establishment of Tusla

On 1st January 2014, Tusla — Child and Family Agency became an independent legal entity, merging:

- HSE Children and Family Services;
- Family Support Agency; and
- National Educational Welfare Board.

In addition, some psychological services and a range of services pertaining to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence were also integrated under Tusla's remit.

Tusla is the dedicated State agency in Ireland responsible for improving the wellbeing of and outcomes for children. Its establishment involves the most comprehensive reform of child protection, early intervention and family support services ever undertaken in Ireland. The Agency brings together some 4,000 staff and an operational budget of €609 million in 2014.

Tusla has significant challenges to overcome given the scale of the Agency's operations. While still in its early phase of development, Tusla needs to ensure that its services can function in a cohesive manner. This can be achieved through the establishment of accountable reporting relationships and compliance with the wider policy context. While recognising the previous work of child and family services in Ireland, one of the challenges in the formative phase of development is to establish a unique organisational identity, reflecting Tusla's values and commitment to providing services to children and families.

1.2 Tusla's services

Underpinning the delivery of Tusla's services is the commitment to these being safe and of high quality. Tusla's remit includes a range of broad-based and targeted services, as follows:

- Child Welfare and Protection Services, including Family Support Services;
- Family Resource Centres and associated national programmes;
- Early Years (pre-school) Inspection Services;
- Educational Welfare responsibilities, including statutory education welfare services, the School Completion Programme and the Home School Community Liaison Scheme;
- Alternative Care Services, including foster care, residential care, special care and aftercare;
- Domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services;
- Services related to the psychological welfare of children;
- Assessment, consultation, therapy and treatment services;
- Adoption services, including domestic and intercountry adoptions, and information and tracing.

1.3 Tusla's challenges

Service improvements will be realised through the alignment of services in Tusla and across other providers, public sector agencies and Government departments throughout the country. The Agency relies on key external agencies for the delivery of specific services in the context of

overall Agency objectives. These include key State agencies and Government departments as well as certain services in the community, voluntary and private sectors. A key partnership also exists between the Agency and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in relation to policy development, research and evaluation.

One of the challenges Tusla faces is the rebalancing of resources throughout its services, ensuring that available resources are allocated to areas where the need is greatest. It can overcome this by ensuring that there is an integrated approach to service delivery at central and local level.

Tusla needs to ensure that integrated structures are in place to enable multidisciplinary engagement at the service user interface. This requires a collective, shared responsibility among all professionals working with children, including teachers, social workers, child care workers, youth workers, family support workers, public health nurses, speech and language therapists, general practitioners, psychiatrists and psychologists. Tusla will collaborate and coordinate with Government departments, statutory agencies and non-statutory agencies in the provision of universal or targeted services for children and families.

1.4 Development of Child and Family Services in Ireland

In 2000, the National Children's Strategy (2000-2010), *Our Children – Their Lives*, was launched. It was a landmark achievement that enabled policy progression and development over subsequent years. This strategy required the Government to coordinate Government departments and agencies providing services to children in order to operate a cohesive approach that valued and respected the rights of children in Ireland. The strategy created the impetus for a shift in attitudes towards children and young people, and a wider recognition of the importance of a more integrated, lifecycle approach to policy development.

The current National Policy Framework, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, builds on the previous National Children's Strategy, with an emphasis on transforming policies and services through stronger implementation and coordination across Government.

In the period following 2007, Ireland experienced an economic recession during which all areas of public expenditure were reduced. Despite this, a free pre-school year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) was introduced in 2010. This ECCE programme has ensured that almost all children attend pre-school regardless of their background and has allowed the State to promote higher standards in that sector, as well as assisting parents with childcare at a key point in the economic cycle of the family.

In 2011, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs was established, with a full Cabinet Minister for the first time. In July 2012, the report of the Task Force on the establishment of the Child and Family Support Agency was delivered, which recommended the introduction of legislation to establish the Child and Family Agency. The Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 led to the establishment of Tusla – Child and Family Agency in January 2014.

Under the Child and Family Agency legislation, a Board is the governing body with authority to oversee the development of corporate strategy, risk policy, annual budgets and business plans. The Chief Executive is responsible to the Board for the performance of the Agency's functions. The Chair of the Board must inform the Minister of measures taken to achieve determined priorities and performance targets.

2. CONTEXT FOR THE CORPORATE PLAN, 2015-2017

2.1 Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures

The environment in which Tusla is developing is complex and ever-changing. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020*, published in March 2014, sets out the Government's agenda and priorities in relation to children and young people over the next seven years. It integrates a whole-of-Government focus and emphasises the importance of shared responsibilities in achieving improved outcomes for children and young people. It is rooted in Ireland's commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The aim of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* policy framework is to 'move policy development and service delivery beyond the present scenario – where children and young people are viewed primarily within narrow organisational responsibilities – to a whole of Government response and a clear picture of overall need and the progress required to achieve improved outcomes'. This paradigm shift is intended to lead to a more integrated approach between a range of child, youth and adult services, and to deliver a combined policy focus on children and young people.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures has adopted an outcomes approach based on five national outcomes for children and young people. The achievement of each of the outcomes, and the associated transformational goals, is a long-term aspiration that will be delivered over a longer period than the three years of this Corporate Plan. Tusla will play a key role in contributing to the achievement of these outcomes. The Corporate Plan will highlight the required corporate development objectives that will be critical for Tusla to become the effective functioning agency it needs to be for children and families across Ireland.

Over the three year period of the Corporate Plan, there are significant areas that require investment. In the first years of Tusla's existence, it is vital that certain aspects of the organisational infrastructure (workforce development, quality, governance, financial and IT systems) are prioritised to ensure the smooth delivery of services to children and families.

The *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* policy framework strongly supports *Europe 2020*, the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade, and the European Commission's *Recommendation on Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage*, in which the three pillars of investment identified are:

- Access to adequate resources;
- Access to affordable quality services;
- Inclusion of children and young people.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is also aligned to the Irish Government's *Strategy for Growth, 2014-2020*, which aims to aid the country's development following the devastating economic recession, from which the country is only beginning to recover. This includes 'giving opportunities to our children to live and work at home, including those who had to emigrate'. This strategy

aspires to support the economic security of families through increasing the number of parents in employment. It also notes that Ireland's increasing child and youth population is a significant resource for the country and highlights the clear international evidence that investing in children during their early years pays significant dividends for individuals and society as a whole. An important element in Ireland's future economic planning will be ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and young people. The overarching ambition is for Ireland to be *'the best small country in the world in which to bring up children'*.

Healthy Ireland (2013) and *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (2014) are complementary policy frameworks. *Healthy Ireland* addresses the determinants of health across the population, while *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* reflects this vision with an emphasis within and across the population of 0-24 year olds. These two policies can achieve shared goals through improved coordination and collaboration, better supports for parents, and ensuring that the Government reform agenda is implemented and that investment is made in quality early years care and education.

2.2 Additional policy and legislative background

Several key strategic documents lay out in greater detail the programme of work for particular areas. These include the publication of the *Youth Justice Action Plan, 2014-2018: Tackling Youth Crime*. This plan outlines a range of actions to create a safer society by working in partnership to reduce youth offending through appropriate interventions and linkages to services. The Children First Bill, 2014, published in April 2014, will put elements of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2011) on a statutory footing. The enactment of this legislation will be a key Programme for Government commitment and will form part of a suite of child protection legislation, which already includes the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, 2012 and the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, 2012. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Justice and Equality have worked together to ensure that the respective legislative provisions are well integrated and complementary.

2.3 Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

Tusla operates under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, which regards the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration. The legislation views families as the foundation of strong healthy communities where children and young people can flourish and achieve their potential. Partnership and cooperation with families is essential in the delivery of seamless services to children.

The specific functions of the Child and Family Agency, as set out in the legislation, can be summarised as follows:

- Support and promote the development, welfare and protection of children, including the provision of 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.
- Support and encourage the effective functioning of families, to include the provision of preventative family support services aimed at promoting the welfare of children; care and protection for victims of domestic, sexual or gender-based violence, whether in the context of the family or otherwise; and services relating to the psychological welfare of children and their families.

- In accordance with the provisions of the Education Welfare Act, 2000, ensure that every child in the State attends school or otherwise receives an education and provide educational welfare services to support and monitor children's attendance, participation and retention in education.
- Maintain and develop support services, including in local communities.
- Undertake or commission research relating to its functions.
- Facilitate and promote enhanced interagency cooperation to ensure that services for children are coordinated and provide an integrated response to the needs of children and their families.
- Collaborate with any person that the Agency considers appropriate to the discharge of its functions.
- Provide information or advice, or make proposals, to the Minister on matters relating to its functions.
- Demonstrate high standards of performance, transparency and accountability.
- Use the resources available to it in the most beneficial, effective and efficient manner.
- Ensure robust and transparent inspection arrangements for pre-school services.
- Provide national oversight of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services.

In making decisions in relation to these functions, have regard to the best interests of the child in all matters and in performing its functions in respect of an individual child under the Child Care Act, 1991 or the Adoption Act, 2010, regard the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration.

Currently, there are a number of legislative issues at various stages of progression. These are outlined in Appendix 1. Some of this legislation will have significant implications for Tusla in terms of service delivery and resources. The Children First Bill, 2013, in particular, will require Tusla to support external agencies in respect of their obligations to child protection. Other Bills, such as the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill, will require the establishment of a comprehensive records management system. It is hoped that the Child Care (Amendment) Bill, 2014 will address current difficulties within the legal system particularly in relation to the oversight of the Guardian ad Litem system, as well as providing a legislative basis for aftercare services.

2.4 Performance framework

Section 41 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 states that the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs shall develop a performance framework to provide Tusla with policy guidance, direction and prioritisation parameters for the preparation of the three year Corporate Plan.

The performance framework has been developed alongside the range of performance and accountability functions outlined in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013. As the performance framework will be developed triennially, it seeks to accommodate and account for the establishment and evolution of the Child and Family Agency in its first three years and beyond. It will also provide the backdrop to annual performance statement/business planning and reporting processes.

2.5 Accountability and funding framework

Sections 41-48 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 prescribe the accountability framework for the Agency's strategic plan.

The legislation states that the Corporate Plan shall:

- 1. Include the Agency's key objectives, outputs and related strategies;**
- 2. Except in the case of the first such plan, include a review and evaluation of the work of the Agency in the performance of its statutory functions in the previous three years;**
- 3. Be prepared in a form and manner in accordance with any directions issued from time to time by the Minister;**
- 4. Be prepared and submitted to the Minister no later than:**
 - a. In respect of the first corporate plan, three months after the receipt of the Performance Framework, developed in accordance with Section 41;
 - b. In respect of each subsequent corporate plan, three months from the receipt of the relevant Performance Framework; and
 - c. Accord with the policies and objectives of the Minister and the Government as they relate to the functions of the Agency.

2.6 Strategic planning and implementation context

With the commencement of Tusla's operations in 2014 and in accordance with Section 46 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, Tusla published its Business Plan 2014 in January 2014. It set out 16 priority areas and identified outputs with associated timelines for each area.

Also in January 2014, Tusla published its initial Statement of Purpose, entitled *Ireland's Child and Family Agency: Towards a Shared Purpose* and informed by a wide-ranging consultation conducted by the Tusla management team.

As part of the corporate planning process, a further and wide-ranging consultation took place in September and October 2014 with key stakeholders to inform the Corporate Plan and its key priorities.

3. PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THE CORPORATE PLAN

The Tusla Corporate Plan development process consisted of a comprehensive stakeholder consultation process and the utilisation of the Harvard Social Change Model to identify the social problem to be addressed and the outcomes to be achieved. This process also consisted of a number of interactive working sessions with the management team.

3.1 Stakeholder consultation

An extensive stakeholder consultation was undertaken in the preparation of the Corporate Plan. During this consultation, a number of key themes emerged:

1. National agency and children's champion

- Stakeholders would like Tusla to be a truly national agency and children's 'champion'.

2. Shaping the system

- Tusla has an important role to play in helping to shape the system and to coordinate a collective response to service requirements.

3. Staff capacity

- A crucial task for Tusla in the formative years is to build the capacity and capability of staff members who directly deliver the services and touch the lives of children and families.

4. Quality of service and experience

- Tusla should provide services that make life better, safer and happier for the children and young people who need Tusla in their lives and to do so sensitively, consistently and responsively.

5. Engagement and co-production

- Stakeholders welcomed the opportunity to engage with Tusla and would like to see this process being continued in order to build relationships and mutual respect as a basis for productive working relationships.

6. Internal unity and effectiveness

- External stakeholders working with Tusla emphasised the need for internal coherence and, in particular, the provision of reliable information, consistent application of protocols and clarity about roles and responsibilities.

Further details on the stakeholder consultation are provided in Appendix 2.

3.2 Social Change Model

The concept of the Social Change Model originated at Harvard Business School. It is used primarily in the non-profit or voluntary sector, and is used as a strategy development tool for articulating:

- An organisation's understanding of, and hypothesis about, the **social problem** that the organisation is trying to solve;
- The **symptoms** of the problem, i.e. how the problem manifests itself (*see Appendix 3 for examples*);
- The **barriers** that are stopping us from addressing the problem (*see Appendix 3 for examples*);
- The **levers** necessary to implement change against this social problem;
- The **organisation's role** in using these levers to help solve the social problem.

3.3 Levers for change

There are three overarching levers that can be used to cause a positive social change for children and families. These are:



This was the overall framework and allowed Tusla to develop:

- The **pathway** to achieving desired long-term outcomes;
- **Vision**;
- **Mission**;
- **Values** and **Behaviours**;
- A set of **Strategic Objectives**, each of which underpins the levers for change;
- **Actions** aimed at improving the lives of children and families in Ireland.

Each of these elements is set out in the sections below.

4. PATHWAY TO ACHIEVING DESIRED LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

The process undertaken with the Social Change Model identifies the problem to be addressed, which is as follows:

‘A lack of long-term, evidence-informed planning and insufficient resources leads to disjointed services and inadequate supports for children and families.’

The Social Change Model is also used to identify the long-term outcomes that Tusla seeks to achieve for children and families over the next seven to ten years. Given that Tusla is a new organisation, the first three years will be broadly focused on putting in place the foundation stones to enable the medium and longer term outcomes to be achieved, as depicted below. However, there are a number of initiatives underway that will deliver specific improvements for targeted groups within the first three years.

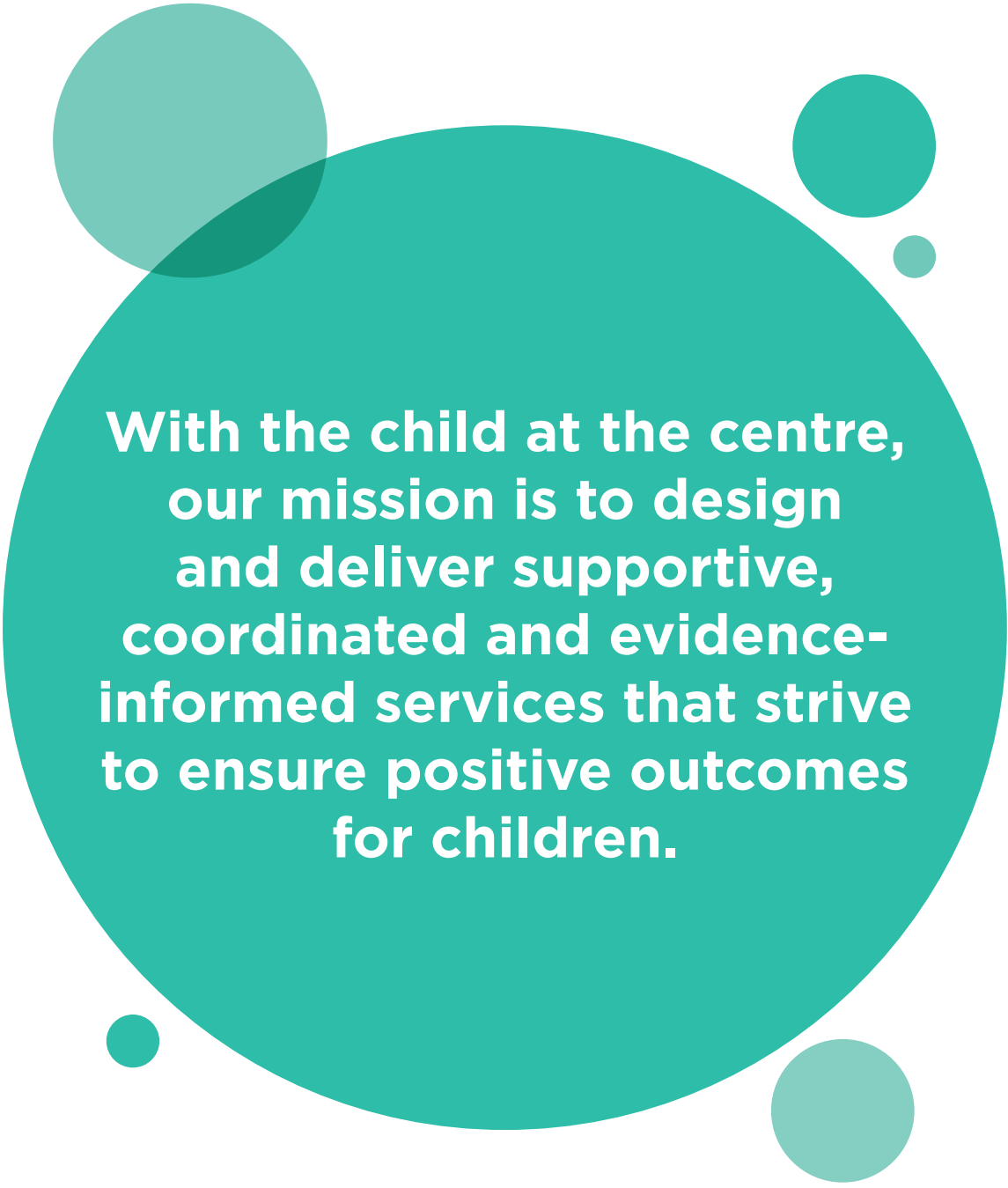
Short-term Outputs (1-3 years)	Medium-term Outputs (4-6 years)	Long-term Outputs (7-10 years)
A. Tusla's child protection processes and systems are responding to children at risk in a timely manner.	A. Revised systems are significantly reducing the numbers of children at risk.	A. All children are safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
B. All processes and systems underpinning children and family policy and services are evidence-informed.	B. Children and family services are more user-friendly, strengths-based and co-produced.	B. All children and families are capable of making informed decisions about their health and lifestyles.
C. A targeted range of family and parenting supports.	C. Children and family services are properly coordinated and aligned.	C. All parents are providing stable and loving home environments in which children thrive.
D. Attendance, participation and retention in full-time education is embedded in service delivery for all children.	D. The benefits of increased child and family participation in education is acknowledged across all sectors of society.	D. All children and their families are actively engaged in their education.
E. A fit-for-purpose organisation to deliver on our strategic intent.	E. The Agency is a responsive partner, collaborator and leader in cross-sectoral and interagency activities.	E. The full support of society and the community to support children in their transition to adult life.

5. VISION



**All children are
safe and achieving
their full potential.**

6. MISSION

A large teal circle is centered on the page, containing the mission statement. It is surrounded by several smaller teal circles of varying sizes, some overlapping the main circle. The background is white with a dark grey header at the top.

**With the child at the centre,
our mission is to design
and deliver supportive,
coordinated and evidence-
informed services that strive
to ensure positive outcomes
for children.**

7. VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

COURAGE AND TRUST

- Reliable, committed and accountable
- Professional, ethical and responsible
- Willing to stand up for our values

RESPECT AND COMPASSION

- Putting the individual at the heart of our services
 - Protecting the most vulnerable
 - Respectful and considerate towards all

EMPATHY AND INCLUSION

- Fair, responsive and transparent
- Promoting collaboration and connected thinking
 - Taking a long-term, whole system view

8. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

8.1 Strategic Objectives

The development of Tusla's strategic objectives is based on a detailed SWOT and PESTEL analysis, key messages from stakeholder consultation, the utilisation of the Social Change Model and significant input from the management team.

The Social Change Model identifies the key levers to enable the achievement of the short-term outputs and the medium and long-term outcomes.

We have developed a series of high-level strategic objectives, each underpinning one of the three levers for change, as detailed below.

LEVER	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE
System delivery change	1. Improve the quality and focus of the delivery of services for children and families.
Building knowledge, skills and capacities	2. Develop the governance structures, processes and supporting infrastructure to ensure that Tusla is in a position to carry out its functions in an effective and efficient manner.
Building knowledge, skills and capacities	3. Establish a new and distinct values-based culture that empowers children and families through high-quality services.
Building knowledge, skills and capacities	4. Develop an organisation that lives within its means and utilises its resources in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
Building knowledge, skills and capacities	5. Develop a workforce that is valued and supported within a learning organisation.
Building knowledge, skills and capacities	6. Position the Agency as a responsive, trustworthy and respected body with its own unique identity.
Service design and planning	7. Build on our research strategy to develop policy and enable evidence-based decision-making and high-quality service delivery.
Building knowledge, skills and capacities	8. Ensure a strategic approach to quality assurance, information management and risk management that supports continuous improvement and good governance.

The actions underpinning the strategic objectives are described in the following pages.

1.

Improve the quality and focus of the delivery of services for children and families.

Actions

1. Implement the Meitheal Model to enable integrated service delivery through Prevention, Partnership and Family Support.
2. Develop and implement national out-of-hours emergency service.
3. Implement Children First policy internally and externally on a consistent basis.
4. Support parents through active interventions, cross-sectoral activities and an integrated service delivery model.
5. Develop the provision/commission of a psychology service.
6. Further develop and expand Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service (ACTS).
7. Develop revised Alternative Care Strategy.
8. Develop and implement a Commissioning Strategy.
9. Develop a cohesive suite of services to support victims of sexual and domestic violence.
10. Ensure the full participation of Family Resource Centres in the Service Delivery Framework.
11. Develop the statutory educational welfare service in partnership with schools and parents, and in the context of an evolving educational environment.
12. Firmly establish education welfare interventions within the Service Delivery Framework.
13. Support schools, parents and children effectively in relation to engagement in education, whether school-based or otherwise.
14. Support the effective participation and achievement in education of all children in care.
15. Contribute to the reform of the Guardian ad Litem system.

2.

Develop the governance structures, processes and supporting infrastructure to ensure that Tusla is in a position to carry out its functions in an effective and efficient manner.

Actions

1. Implement an integrated information system covering referral, assessment and children in care.
2. Develop and maintain the Child Protection Notification System to secure the safety of children at risk of harm.
3. Develop integrated reporting for Tusla, incorporating finance, HR and operational data suitable for management team, Board and the Minister.
4. Develop organisation structures and processes to support the achievement of Tusla's corporate objectives.
5. Develop an ICT Strategy, including the utilisation of a Managed Service.
6. Develop and implement a National Estates Strategy.
7. Enhance financial and governance processes.
8. Establish an office of legal services to provide/procure good quality legal advice and support, which is cost-effective, consistent and accessible.
9. Develop the capacity to assess needs, plan services strategically and monitor and evaluate outputs and outcomes.

3.

Establish a new and distinct values-based culture that empowers children and families through high-quality services.

Actions

1. Develop and embed a code of behaviours at all levels and within all of our policies, plans and procedures.
2. Develop the appropriate mechanisms to engage with children and key partners effectively.
3. Enhance participation and personalisation of children and families in policy formulation and review.
4. Develop and implement a Parenting Support Strategy to ensure accessible and friendly access to services.

4.

Develop an organisation that lives within its means and utilises its resources in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Actions

1. Develop an evidence-based resource allocation model.
2. Develop a value-for-money strategy.
3. Develop effective reporting processes to provide information on financial, HR, risk and operational performance.
4. Devolve decision-making responsibility to the most appropriate level.
5. Advocate for resources and appropriate funding to enable children and families to be properly supported.

5.

Develop a workforce that is valued and supported within a learning organisation.

Actions

1. Develop and implement a performance management system to align Agency and individual objectives and to inform training and development requirements.
2. Support, encourage and facilitate staff through structured professional and career development.
3. Strengthen leadership capacity and capability at all levels.
4. Reform recruitment and retention policies and processes to ensure that they are responsive to organisational needs.
5. Develop a learning culture by supporting participation of staff in a broad range of applied learning and development activities, including formal training courses, mentoring, e-learning and research opportunities.
6. Develop a Professional Development Plan for Social Workers in order to foster greater self-regulation, accountability and professional leadership.
7. Design and deliver associated training as part of the overall recruitment and retention strategy.
8. Design, develop and launch an annual staff survey in order to strengthen staff engagement and consultative networks.

6.

Position the Agency as a responsive, trustworthy and respected body with its own unique identity.

Actions

1. Develop an internal and external communications strategy.
2. Embed a culture of effective communications throughout the organisation, supported by appropriate multi-media and other tools.
3. Establish a protocol for the branding of estates and all Tusla-associated activities.
4. Conduct regular stakeholder engagement surveys.
5. Plan and support a number of key events throughout the year.
6. Publish and promote key documents relating to Tusla-led activities.
7. Lead a proactive media campaign to assist information dissemination and crisis management.

7.

Build on our research strategy to develop policy and enable evidence-based decision-making and high-quality service delivery.

Actions

1. Establish and maintain a standardised National Policy Catalogue.
2. Operationalise Government policy and legislation and its integration into service delivery.
3. Develop a capability to capture, share and disseminate research on national and international best practice.
4. Enhance our knowledge management systems and capability to support the development of our services and our people.

8.

Ensure a strategic approach to quality assurance, information management and risk management that supports continuous improvement and good governance.

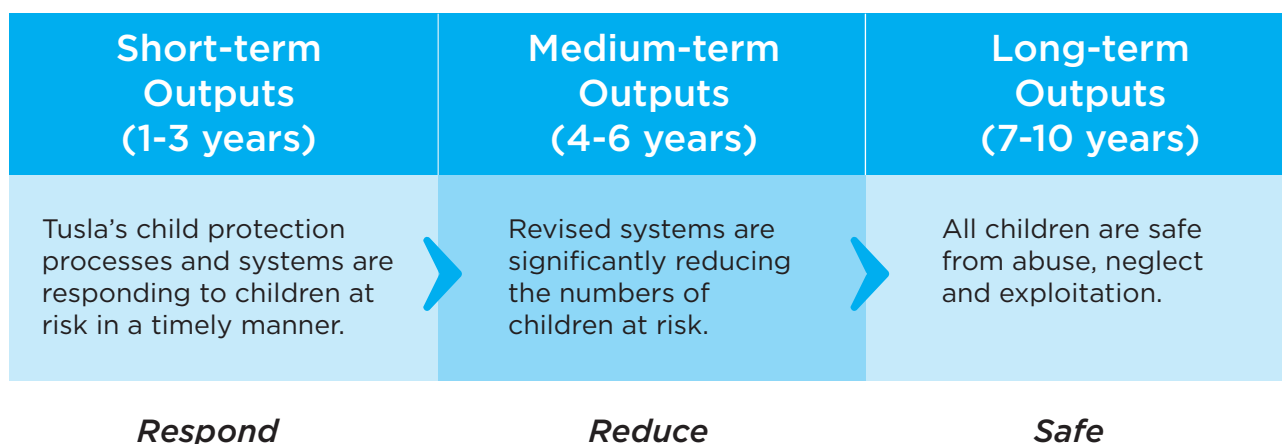
Actions

1. Develop a strategic approach to quality assurance that supports continuous improvement and positions Tusla as a self-evaluating organisation that meets its regulatory compliance requirements.
2. Introduce a registration and standards-based Early Years Inspectorate, supported by systems that are intelligence-driven.
3. Develop a systematic approach to managing risk within a defined risk appetite.
4. Implement an integrated system to manage and learn from incidents and complaints.
5. Develop metrics that demonstrate how Tusla is performing and to measure the impact it is having on children, families and communities.
6. Generate evidence to support learning, continuous improvement, service design and decision-making.
7. Ensure that Tusla has the appropriate business continuity plans in place, including a framework for major emergency management.

8.2 Linking Strategic Objectives and Actions to Outputs and Outcomes

The purpose of this section is to ensure that there is a clear link between the actions supporting the achievement of the strategic objectives, and the pathway to achieving the short-term outputs, and medium and long-term outcomes (as illustrated in Section 4).

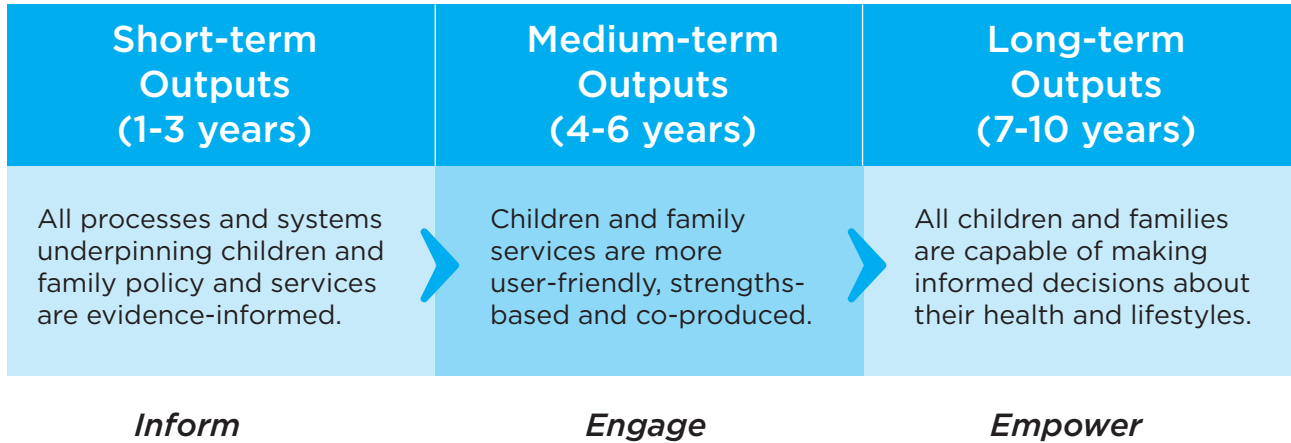
A



Actions

- Implement an integrated information system covering referral, assessment and children in care. (*Strategic Objective 2*)
- Develop and maintain the Child Protection Notification System to secure the safety of children at risk of harm. (*Strategic Objective 2*)
- Develop and implement national out-of-hours emergency service. (*Strategic Objective 1*)
- Implement Children First policy internally and externally on a consistent basis. (*Strategic Objective 1*)
- Develop integrated reporting for Tusla, incorporating finance, HR and operational data suitable for management team, Board and the Minister. (*Strategic Objective 2*)
- Implement an integrated system to manage and learn from incidents and complaints. (*Strategic Objective 8*)
- Contribute to the reform of the Guardian ad Litem system. (*Strategic Objective 1*)

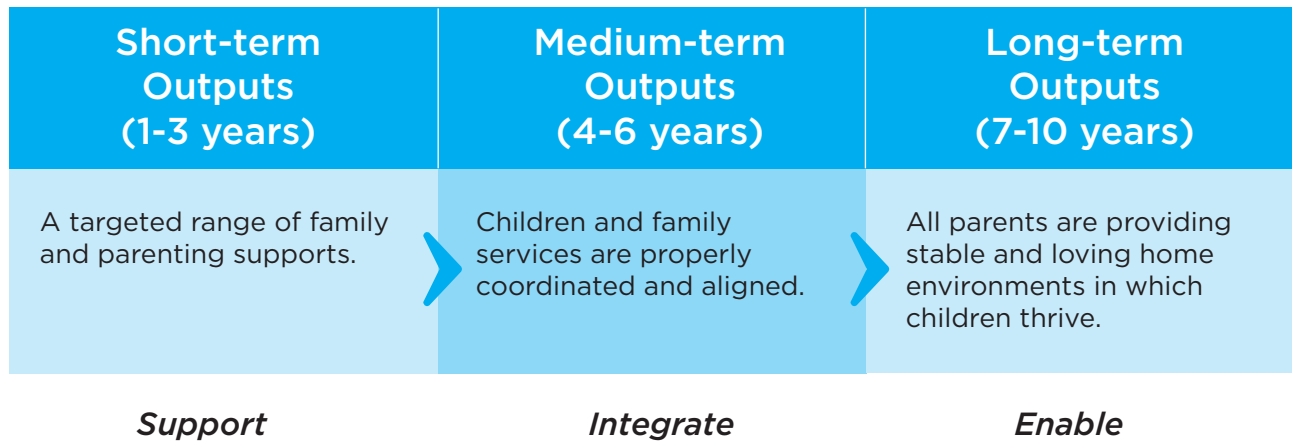
B



Actions

- Establish and maintain a standardised National Policy Catalogue. (*Strategic Objective 7*)
- Implement the Meitheal Model to enable integrated service delivery through Prevention, Partnership and Family Support. (*Strategic Objective 1*)
- Operationalise Government policy and legislation and its integration into service delivery. (*Strategic Objective 7*)
- Develop a strategic approach to quality assurance that supports continuous improvement and positions Tusla as a self-evaluating organisation and meets its regulatory compliance requirements. (*Strategic Objective 8*)
- Generate evidence to support learning, continuous improvement, service design and decision-making. (*Strategic Objective 8*)
- Develop the appropriate mechanisms to engage with children and key partners effectively. (*Strategic Objective 3*)
- Develop a capability to capture, share and disseminate research on national and international best practice. (*Strategic Objective 7*)
- Enhance our knowledge management systems and capability to support the development of our services and our people. (*Strategic Objective 7*)
- Develop metrics that demonstrate how Tusla is performing and to measure the impact it is having on children, families and communities. (*Strategic Objective 8*)
- Enhance participation and personalisation of children and families in policy formulation and review. (*Strategic Objective 3*)

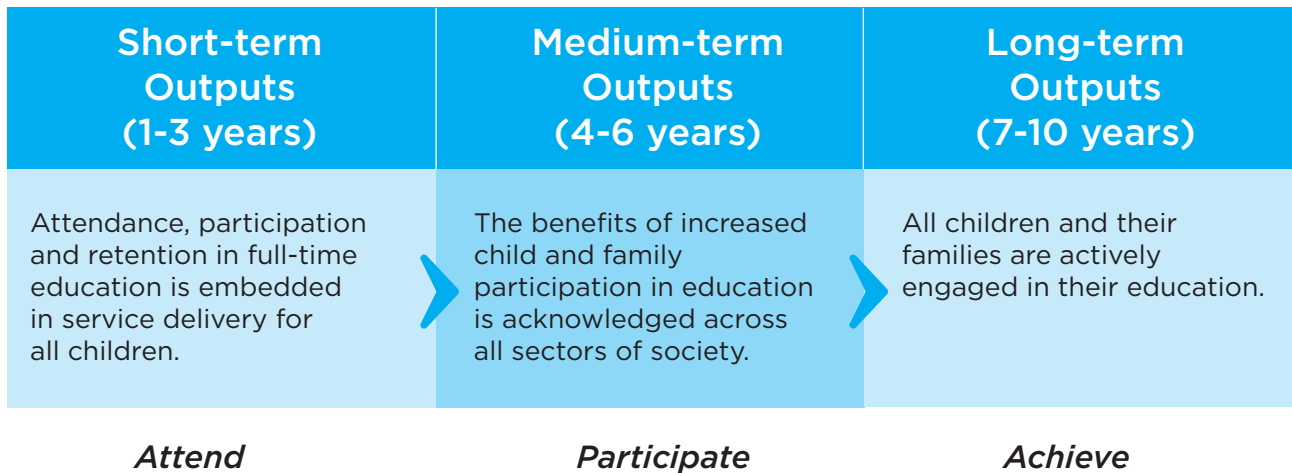
C



Actions

- Support parents through active interventions, cross-sectoral activities and an integrated service delivery model. *(Strategic Objective 1)*
- Develop the provision/commission of a psychology service. *(Strategic Objective 1)*
- Develop and expand Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service (ACTS). *(Strategic Objective 1)*
- Develop revised Alternative Care Strategy. *(Strategic Objective 1)*
- Develop and implement a Commissioning Strategy. *(Strategic Objective 1)*
- Develop a cohesive suite of services to support victims of sexual and domestic violence. *(Strategic Objective 1)*
- Ensure the full participation of Family Resource Centres in the Service Delivery Framework. *(Strategic Objective 1)*
- Develop and implement a Parenting Support Strategy to ensure accessible and friendly access to services. *(Strategic Objective 3)*

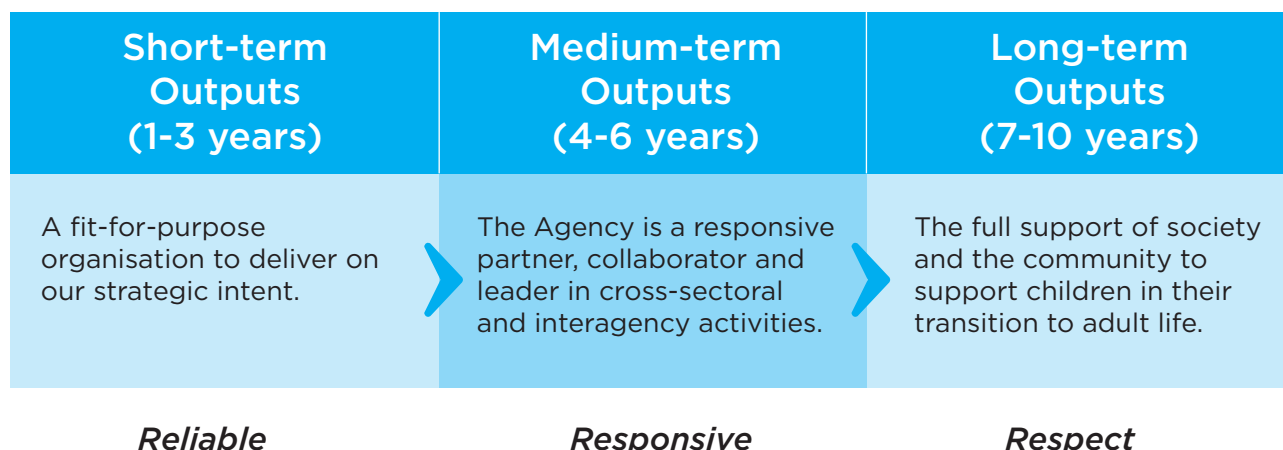
D



Actions

- Develop the statutory Educational Welfare Service in partnership with schools and parents, and in the context of an evolving educational environment. (*Strategic Objective 1*)
- Firmly establish Educational Welfare interventions within the Service Delivery Framework. (*Strategic Objective 1*)
- Support schools, parents and children effectively in relation to engagement in education, whether school-based or otherwise. (*Strategic Objective 1*)
- Introduce a registration and standards-based Early Years Inspectorate, supported by systems that are intelligence-driven. (*Strategic Objective 8*)
- Support the effective participation and achievement in education of all children in care. (*Strategic Objective 1*)

E



Actions

- Develop organisation structures and processes to support the achievement of Tusla's corporate objectives. *(Strategic Objective 2)*
- Develop an ICT Strategy, including the utilisation of a Managed Service. *(Strategic Objective 2)*
- Develop and implement a National Estates Strategy. *(Strategic Objective 2)*
- Develop an evidence-based resource allocation model. *(Strategic Objective 4)*
- Develop a value-for-money strategy. *(Strategic Objective 4)*
- Develop a systematic approach to managing risk within a defined risk appetite. *(Strategic Objective 8)*
- Enhance financial and governance processes. *(Strategic Objective 2)*
- Develop and implement a performance management system to align individual and Agency objectives, and to inform training and development requirements. *(Strategic Objective 5)*
- Support, encourage and facilitate staff through structured professional and career development. *(Strategic Objective 5)*
- Develop and embed a code of behaviours at all levels and within all of our policies, plans and procedures. *(Strategic Objective 3)*
- Reform recruitment and retention policies to ensure that they are responsive to organisational needs. *(Strategic Objective 5)*
- Establish an office of legal services to provide/procure good quality legal advice and support, which is cost-effective, consistent and accessible. *(Strategic Objective 2)*
- Develop an internal and external communications strategy. *(Strategic Objective 6)*
- Embed a culture of effective communications throughout the organisation, supported by appropriate multi-media and other tools. *(Strategic Objective 6)*
- Establish a protocol for the branding of estates and all Tusla-associated activities. *(Strategic Objective 6)*
- Conduct regular stakeholder engagement surveys. *(Strategic Objective 6)*
- Plan and support a number of key events throughout the year. *(Strategic Objective 6)*
- Publish and promote key documents relating to Tusla-led activities. *(Strategic Objective 6)*

- Lead a proactive media campaign to assist information dissemination and crisis management. *(Strategic Objective 6)*
- Develop the capacity to assess needs, plan services strategically, monitor and evaluate outputs and outcomes. *(Strategic Objective 2)*
- Design and deliver associated training as part of the overall recruitment and retention strategy. *(Strategic Objective 3)*
- Design, develop and launch an annual staff survey in order to strengthen staff engagement and consultative networks. *(Strategic Objective 3)*
- Develop effective reporting processes to provide information on financial, HR, risk and operational performance. *(Strategic Objective 4)*
- Devolve decision-making responsibility to the most appropriate level. *(Strategic Objective 4)*
- Advocate for resources and appropriate funding to enable children and families to be properly supported. *(Strategic Objective 4)*
- Strengthen leadership capacity and capability at all levels. *(Strategic Objective 5)*
- Develop a learning culture by supporting participation of staff in a broad range of applied learning and developmental activities, including formal training courses, mentoring, e-learning and research opportunities. *(Strategic Objective 5)*
- Develop a Professional Development Plan for Social Workers in order to foster greater self-regulation, accountability and professional leadership. *(Strategic Objective 5)*
- Ensure that Tusla has the appropriate business continuity plans in place, including a framework for major emergency management. *(Strategic Objective 8)*

9.0 KEY RISKS

9.1 Introduction

Tusla's Corporate Plan will be implemented in an environment and context where funding is limited, the profile and expectations of the organisation are increasing, and the risks associated with service delivery remain high.

In recognition of the risks associated with these, the Agency is committed under Strategic Objective 8 to set up effective risk management structures to manage and mitigate these risks. This process includes the establishment of an integrated risk register. At the time of publication of this Corporate Plan, a corporate risk register was under development. Initial work on this has influenced the selection of priority actions in this Corporate Plan.

9.2 Summary of risks

A number of risks have been identified that could affect the successful implementation of the Corporate Plan. For each of the risks identified, a number of mitigating actions are outlined (see below).

Operational risk

Key risks	Mitigating actions
Delays in the implementation of critical infrastructure, e.g. ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective project management methods to support change management and delivery.
Inadequate data to manage the operations of the business and to provide input into policy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an information strategy. • Improved systems to support timely data collection. • Develop outcomes-based metrics.
Inability of HSE/Tusla to track clients as they pass between the two organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop further the joint protocol and formal arrangements and systems with HSE.
Failure to meet our statutory obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure service delivery model is fully implemented across the Agency. • Implement Quality Assurance Framework.

Management and Governance risk

Key risks	Mitigating actions
Ineffective governance and management structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the organisational review findings.
Failure to develop the appropriate culture, with the consequent impact on morale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear programmes to develop a values-based culture. • Implement staff development programmes.
Inability to implement and manage the Corporate Plan successfully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a project management office. • Effective business planning and project management.

Financial risk

Key risks	Mitigating actions
Services cannot be delivered within allocated budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a resource allocation model. • Effective financial reporting and accountability processes.
Litigation from adverse events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop integrated risk and incident management systems. • Develop quality assurance procedures.

Reputational and Profile risk

Key risks	Mitigating actions
Reputational damage from adverse events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop integrated risk and incident management systems. • Ensure timely and accurate information to inform service improvement.
Ineffective communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communications and positioning strategy. • Take a proactive approach to media and stakeholder engagement.

9.3 Next steps

As part of the delivery structure, a full risk register will be developed and the risks outlined in this section will be reported to the Board as part of the quarterly reports. In addition, risk management will be fully integrated into the annual business planning process.

10. IMPLEMENTATION

10.1 Implementation management

The oversight of the implementation of the actions set out in this Corporate Plan will ensure that resources are focused against key priorities, organisation learning is supported and embedded, and the timely achievement of outcomes is measured.

The Director of Quality Assurance will have responsibility for the following:

- Liaising directly with the Heads of the Directorates to receive quarterly reports on progress against their particular responsibilities in the Corporate Plan;
- Working with the Heads of the Directorates to discuss key variances against the plan and recommendations on how to address any adverse variances;
- Developing a quarterly report for the Board and Chief Executive on progress against the plan, key learnings, measurement of organisation culture, challenges and changes required, their implications and any specific recommendations.

10.2 Implementation monitoring

We have developed a suite of key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets for each of the outputs in Years 1-3. These are detailed below.

A. TUSLA'S CHILD PROTECTION PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS ARE RESPONDING TO CHILDREN AT RISK IN A TIMELY MANNER

KPIs	Year 1 targets	Year 2 targets	Year 3 targets
1. Percentage of referrals of child abuse where a preliminary enquiry took place within 24 hours.	75%	95%	95%
2. Percentage of referrals of child abuse which required an initial assessment following a preliminary enquiry.	70%	90%	95%
3. Percentage of these initial assessments completed within 21 days of receipt of the referral.	50%	70%	80%
4. Targeted reduction of cases previously listed as 'active' on Child Protection Notification System within prescribed timeline.	Baseline to be established in 2015	10%	15%

B. ALL PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS UNDERPINNING CHILDREN AND FAMILY POLICY AND SERVICES ARE EVIDENCE-INFORMED

KPIs	Year 1 targets	Year 2 targets	Year 3 targets
1. Percentage of recommendations from Regulators and other oversight bodies implemented within a specified timeframe.	Baseline to be established in 2015	80%	95%
2. Percentage of functions/services conducting a full self-assessment against the Tusla Quality Assurance framework.	60%	95%	100%

C. A TARGETED RANGE OF FAMILY AND PARENTING SUPPORTS

KPIs	Year 1 targets	Year 2 targets	Year 3 targets
1. Evidence of improved well-being for target groups of children.	50%	75%	90%
2. Numbers of children/families diverted from social work to family support services.	Baseline to be established in 2015	10%	20%
3. Number of children/families referred to family support services.	Baseline to be established in 2015	10%	20%
4. Number of children/families in receipt of family support services.	Baseline to be established in 2015	10%	20%

D. Attendance, participation and retention in full-time education is embedded in service delivery for all children

KPIs	Year 1 targets	Year 2 targets	Year 3 targets
1. Percentage of Early Years services re-registered.	20%	60%	100%
2. Percentage of children/families supported by educational welfare service interventions to address school attendance/placement.	60%	70%	80%
3. Percentage of children/families supported by educational welfare service interventions to address serious/chronic school attendance.	70%	80%	90%
4. Percentage of children in care in full-time education.	95%	100%	100%
5. Percentage in aftercare in full-time education.	60%	70%	75%

E. A fit-for-purpose organisation to deliver on our strategic intent

KPIs	Year 1 targets	Year 2 targets	Year 3 targets
1. Staff who had a performance appraisal.	50%	70%	80%
2. Outcome of staff satisfaction survey.	50%	70%	90%
3. Responding to complaints within specified timelines.	Baseline to be established in 2015	70%	80%
4. Agency has standalone ICT infrastructure.	70%	80%	95%
5. Organisational structure, roles, responsibilities and capacity aligned to corporate objectives.	70%	80%	100%

Appendix 1: Relevant legislation currently underway as at December 2014

Children First Bill – Committee Stage in Dáil Éireann awaited	The Children First Bill puts elements of <i>Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children</i> on a statutory basis. In particular, it provides that certain categories of persons will be required to report concerns of child abuse above a specified threshold to the Child and Family Agency.
Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill – General Heads and Scheme yet to be approved by Government	The development of a statutory scheme for information and tracing.
Children (Amendment) Bill, 2014	The General Scheme of the Children (Amendment) Bill was published in September 2014. The proposed Bill is intended to provide for the amalgamation of the detention schools, remission of sentences in the detention schools and a revised policy approach for children reaching the age of 18 in the detention schools.
Amendments to the Child Care Act, 1991	<p>Draft Heads and General Scheme submitted to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children in April and associated report completed in July. It is proposed that the provisions will place a statutory duty on the Agency to provide an aftercare plan to eligible young people.</p> <p>The DCYA has indicated that a number of aspects of the Child Care Act, 1991 are under review.</p>
Adoption (Amendment) Bill, 2012 – Awaiting outcome of appeal to the Supreme Court in relation to the result of the Children Referendum	The Adoption (Amendment) Bill, 2012 provides for changes to the adoption laws, which will allow for new arrangements for adoption of a child of marriage.
Pre-School Regulations	The revision of the Pre-School Regulations will introduce a system of registration for Early Years services. This will change the way in which Inspectors work – from inspection after the fact to a pre-inspection model. New inspection tools and reports will complement the regulations.
Special Care Regulations	The Special Care Regulations will provide for the registration of Special Care Units, as well as for the care and welfare of children detained in Special Care Units.
Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, 2014	It is proposed that the Bill include a power for the Child and Family Agency, through its statutory educational welfare service, to designate a school or centre for education for a child where no school place can be found and where the child does not have a special educational need.

Appendix 2:

Stakeholder Consultation Feedback

Stakeholder themes

There was a high level of agreement across the stakeholder groups in response to the consultation. Six strategic themes emerged, encompassing the range of stakeholders' perspectives. The key messages under each of these themes are summarised below.

1. NATIONAL AGENCY AND CHILDREN'S 'CHAMPION'

The establishment of Tusla as the national agency with statutory responsibility for child welfare and protection is welcomed by stakeholders, with all relevant services for children and families being brought together under one umbrella. Goodwill exists to see Tusla succeed and offer a better model for providing child and family services in Ireland.

Stakeholders see Tusla's role as being the children's 'champion' and acting as a focal point for all national policy and strategy relating to children. There are a number of activities that stakeholders would like to see Tusla perform to this end, including:

- **Advocacy:** Tusla to ensure that children are at the centre of Government policy and to bring a 'children's lens' to policy implementation. This may also require Tusla to lobby for legislative changes to make the necessary systemic changes happen across those sectors that impact most directly on children's lives and development, including education, health, justice, welfare and employment.
- **Accountability:** Tusla to keep everyone, including itself, 'honest' in relation to following through on decision-making and to take responsibility for delivering on commitments. Tusla has a national role in holding itself, Government departments, service providers, other public agencies, communities and parents accountable for putting children first by delivering child-centred services – whether at the level of policy-making, service planning and delivery, multi-agency partnering and Children's Services Committees, as well as in community and family life.
- **Challenge:** Tusla has a challenge function on behalf of children and young people, particularly those who the system may have failed.
- **Planning:** Tusla is seen as the agency best placed to lead on the development of an Ireland-specific proactive long-term plan for children's services. This should be evidence-informed, based on reliable data and future forecasts, as well as drawing on evaluation and knowledge about what interventions are effective. The time horizon for a long-term plan would reach beyond election cycles, representing a national commitment rather than a political one.
- **Investment:** Linked to all of the above, it is Tusla's role to seek the resources necessary to provide the services required. Stakeholders' views are that Tusla is under-resourced at present and that it needs to secure the resources required and then ensure that there is allocation of those resources in a coordinated way, which is targeted at need.
- **Communication:** Tusla should lead the national 'conversation' and raise public awareness about the issues relating to child protection and welfare. This requires regular communication about Tusla's role, as well as highlighting that responsibility for addressing the issues that impact on children and young people is shared by everyone, not just health professionals. This point was emphasised many times by the full range of stakeholders.

2. SHAPING THE SYSTEM

The system of services in Ireland for children and families was described as an incomplete 'jigsaw', with different shapes and sizes, pieces lost and missing the overall picture of what the joined parts could look like.

In reality, the supports and services currently being provided to children and families are fragmented. This is due in part to structures that perpetuate silos, with a range of separate Government departments, policies, budgets, agencies, professionals and providers who have no statutory mandate to collaborate. The result is duplication and gaps in services, uneven distribution, confusion of roles, conflict and competition between different parts of the system.

There was agreement across stakeholders that Tusla could play an important role in facilitating the 'right-shaping' of the system of service and in coordinating the collective response. The priorities for Tusla doing this, in the stakeholders' views, include the following:

- **Alignment:** Tusla to create a better alignment of the system of services and supports across the continuum, with the profile of known need based on existing demographic information. Tusla can bring focus by coordinating the collective response to target resources effectively, so that children and families can quickly access the services and supports that are best placed to respond to their needs.
- **Balance:** Tusla to ensure that there is balance of provision and support from early years and early intervention, targeted preventative services to providing safe and effective services for those children most in need of protection. The message from stakeholders was for Tusla to hold the balance of how resources are targeted and avoid creating disequilibrium. This requires a service delivery model that ensures a coherent accessible service that has both a high-quality early intervention approach and service, as well as a safe and high-quality service for those children most at risk.
- **Commissioning:** This is seen as an important lever for shaping the system of services. It requires Tusla to use its commissioning powers, as well as service level agreements and grant awards, to provide incentives to the provider system to adapt and change, based on evidence and information about what is most effective in improving the experience and outcomes for children and families.
- **Cross-boundary connections:** Working effectively across boundaries in partnership with other professionals, Government departments, communities and cultures are critical competencies that Tusla management and staff at all levels need to develop. In addition, Tusla must proactively foster critical connections to make it as easy as possible for different parts of the system to work together and to share information. Examples are between welfare and school non-attendance; public health nursing and Early Years development; joint investigative protocols between social workers and An Garda Síochána; the legal system and care proceedings; mental health services and social work.
- **Systemic:** Support and service provision for children and families in need requires the ability to plan and act in a systemic way along dimensions of time, place, relationship and roles. Tusla can lead the way in this approach by ensuring it underpins decision-making and planning at all levels to avoid short-term or 'piecemeal' solutions that add to the disruption and difficulties children face.

3. STAFF CAPACITY

An important message from stakeholders was the importance of Tusla ‘ramping up’ the front line, i.e. building the capacity and supply of staff who directly deliver the services and touch the lives of children and families. The following issues were raised:

- **Capacity:** Tusla to advocate for adequate number of staff.
- **Caseloads:** Tusla to focus on staff retention, knowledge and information transfer between staff and to provide job support tools and access to technology to increase efficiency and reduce non-value-added activities.
- **Capability:** Tusla to increase the capability of the workforce by ensuring supervision, training and continuing professional development are in place. This will increase performance of staff, reduce costs and reliance on external ‘experts’, improve the quality of decision-making and enable the application of evidence and professional standards to practice.
- **Leadership:** Tusla to promote and support strong leadership, which will develop Manager’s Teams and implement change, working with others in partnership and applying evidence-informed decision-making.
- **Practice models:** Tusla to define a range of evidence-informed models of practice and ensure that staff are trained in those relevant to their areas of work.
- **Pathways:** Tusla to define quality standards, role, information requirements and standards of pathways of intervention that enhance the experience of the child or family using the services.
- **Partnering:** Tusla to develop skills around the support of children and services.
- **Skills mix:** Tusla to take a fresh look at the inputs required for services, such as the inclusion of youth work within Tusla’s remit. New roles are required by new models of practice and pathways, and this would create a wider skills and experience base within the Agency.
- **Structure:** Clarify structure, reporting lines, roles and responsibilities, reporting arrangements and accountability for both internal and external stakeholders.
- **Subsidiarity:** Working with a strong well-resourced centre, Tusla should facilitate decision-making at local level. To enable this to happen coherently across departments, internally in Tusla as well as in other agencies, requires a strong centre with standardised national policies and procedures delivered locally.

4. QUALITY OF SERVICE AND EXPERIENCE

Perhaps the most important issue for many of the service providers (ranging from education to residential providers) who took part in the stakeholder consultation was the need to improve the outcomes and experience of children and young people who come into contact with the formal child welfare and protection system.

The overall message is for Tusla to provide services that make life better, safer, happier for the children and young people who need help in their lives and to do so sensitively, consistently and responsively. The following issues were highlighted:

- **Accurate information:** Tusla to ensure that it has accurate up-to-date records of the children and young people with whom it is involved (e.g. where they are, for how long and what are the plans to support them).
- **Access:** A faster response to referrals, a reduction in waiting lists and prompt follow-through on assessment, planning and action are all required to achieve improved outcomes and avoid delays and inability to access services when they are needed.

- **Feedback:** Tusla to facilitate children and young people to express their wishes and concerns and have these taken into account, including feedback on the quality of the services received, so that change and improvements can be made. Children and young people have views on the quality of service they receive and their feedback should inform professional training and performance review.
- **Permanency:** The evidence base about how to achieve better outcomes for children and young people should be adhered to in all aspects of service delivery, including planning for permanency and minimising disruption for children.
- **Aftercare:** Support through the transition to independent living is necessary for all young people leaving care. Tusla has a responsibility to ensure that young people leaving care are not disadvantaged.
- **Commitment:** Tusla to put in place quality standards for services so that children and young people can determine what to expect and assess the service they receive, particularly in regard to alternative care settings.
- **Independent adjudicator:** It was suggested by a range of stakeholders that Tusla appoint an independent adjudicator who can deal with complaints from children and young people in the system without fear of this affecting the service they receive.
- **Cross-cutting:** The absence of child and adolescent mental health services, as well as the exclusion of children with disabilities, is seen as anomalous in Tusla's remit. It prevents a holistic and responsive range of services being provided.
- **Prevention and early intervention:** Tusla to take a lead in advocating for resources to promote prevention and early intervention in the lives of families experiencing difficulty.

5. ENGAGEMENT AND CO-PRODUCTION

As the response to the consultation indicates, stakeholders welcomed the opportunity to engage with Tusla. They would like to see this process continue so that relationships and mutual respect can be developed as a basis for productive working relationships.

Child care and child protection is a shared responsibility and involves many people. Better outcomes are achieved when all of the agencies and practitioners who make decisions that impact on the lives of children work together on a basis of understanding and mutual respect. Sharing and collaboration is critical when resources are scarce. The following issues were raised:

- **Consultation:** Tusla to encourage ongoing regular engagement with stakeholders at all levels to share information, develop networks, stimulate innovation, build trust and share future service commissioning and delivery.
- **Buy-in:** The reform of the system is accepted as necessary. There is an opportunity to build a collaborative culture rather than an 'us and them' relationship. Tusla can generate buy-in and commitment to change in the way it manages relationships with its network of stakeholders.
- **Transformation:** Many stakeholders would like to see a transformation of the system of services based on a shared vision of the future, as opposed to a transactional approach driven by Tusla on its own as the commissioner. Tusla needs a strong, capable provider system that will share the responsibility for the quality of services and support.
- **Think tanks:** There is value in convening 'thinking' opportunities to plan how to apply knowledge and evidence. Tusla can facilitate engagement with national and international thought leadership to co-create a future vision.

- **Empowerment:** Tusla to partner with parents, families and communities, and take a strengths-based approach to build resilience and capacity for caring and nurturing their young people, rather than taking responsibility away.
- **Protocols:** Stakeholders welcome clarity about agreed protocols for formal engagement and joint working, and support rigorous compliance.
- **Training:** Opportunities for joint training and structured engagement would be welcome, especially where co-working at service delivery level is critical (e.g. with family resource centres, Gardaí, teachers).

6. INTERNAL UNITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

A priority for Tusla as it develops as an organisation is to unify and strengthen the organisational culture, operational processes and support systems. External stakeholders working with Tusla emphasised the need for internal coherence and in particular the provision of reliable information, consistent application of protocols and clarity about roles and responsibilities. The areas highlighted included:

- **Culture:** Tusla to create a positive internal culture and external brand, image and reputation. Service users and stakeholders should experience 'the Tusla culture' through every point of contact and interaction with Tusla staff and management at all levels. Each employee of Tusla is a 'brand ambassador' and the Tusla culture is conveyed through its staff. Now is the time for leadership at all levels to shape the culture and model the way.
- **Information management:** Reliable up-to-date information to support decision-making, monitor performance and plan future targeting was repeatedly highlighted as a priority.
- **Data:** Evidence-informed reporting and performance monitoring based on facts will enable Tusla to make an effective business case for the resources necessary to deliver efficient services.
- **Systems:** Tusla to streamline, standardise and simplify work processes and remove unnecessary duplication, paperwork and bureaucracy.
- **Openness:** Tusla to ensure transparency and accountability with regard to procurement of services.
- **Measurement:** Tusla to develop meaningful longitudinal quantitative and qualitative measures of impact, based on the emerging knowledge base of outcomes for children and young people.
- **Success:** Tusla to celebrate and acknowledge achievements, share 'good news' stories and demonstrate what best practice looks like.
- **Improvement:** Tusla to develop a learning organisation approach by facilitating critical reflection, service improvement and innovation, and recognition of achievement. Also, Tusla to foster a commitment to continuous improvement, remove fear or blame and provide staff with methods and techniques to assist in the implementation of change.

Conclusions from stakeholder engagement

In total, over 415 people actively participated in the external consultation, across the country at venues in Galway, Kildare Tipperary and Dublin. Over 800 staff and managers responded to the internal survey or participated in the corporate plan workshops. This widespread and valuable consultation built on a previous round of informative consultation sessions carried out in the previous months.

The findings from the stakeholder consultation have provided Tusla with a deeper understanding of the views of all stakeholders:

‘To understand how the service users, staff and stakeholders perceive the Agency and what it could do to serve them better in the future, in the context of resource capacity.’

In conclusion, the consultation held with stakeholders has provided Tusla with a number of important insights and these will assist in the development and implementation of its Corporate Plan for 2015-2017. Key points include:

- Stakeholders welcomed the opportunity to engage with Tusla and are keen to continue the ‘conversation’ and support the Agency now and in the future.
- The response rate from stakeholders indicates the level of interest and importance being attached to Tusla’s role.
- The response is an endorsement of Tusla’s role and gives ‘permission’ for the Agency to be the children’s ‘champion’ and take leadership in that space.
- The consultation process has validated the strategic priorities being addressed in the Corporate Plan.
- The high level of commonality across the stakeholder system helps Tusla to focus on issues.

Appendix 3: Social Change Model

The concept of the Social Change Model originated at Harvard Business School. It is used primarily in the non-profit or voluntary sector, and is used as a strategy development tool for articulating:

- An organisation's understanding of, and hypothesis about, the **social problem** that the organisation is trying to solve;
- The **symptoms** of the problem (i.e. how the problem manifests itself);
- The **barriers** that are stopping us from addressing the problem;
- The **levers** necessary to implement change against this social problem;
- The **organisation's role** in using these levers to help solve the social problem.

Some key elements of the Social Change Model that Tusla has adapted for the development of its Corporate Plan are outlined below.

Symptoms of the problem

In order to identify the symptoms of the problem to be solved, a number of working sessions were held, aimed at identifying how the problem manifests itself. Below is the composite list of the symptoms identified:

- Health, education, social and well-being inequalities;
- Impoverished communities;
- Less developed parenting skills;
- Disengagement with education;
- Lack of resilience;
- Inequality of ideation and opportunity;
- Substance misuse;
- Abuse/neglect;
- Domestic and other forms of violence;
- Family breakdown.

Barriers

Once the symptoms are identified, the next step is to ascertain what are the barriers that are stopping the problem being rectified and thus addressing the symptoms. Once again, working sessions were held in order to tease out the main barriers:

- Poor multi-agency working and responsibility;
- Short-term planning is the default option;
- Investment deficit;
- Mixed levels of understanding regarding usable evidence;
- Absence of shared budgets;
- Societal detachment from issues;
- Design of services can be self-serving;

- Spheres of influence are typically too narrow to generate real systemic change;
- System is slow to change and embrace change;
- Lack of strategic planning and accountability;
- Constitutional restrictions;
- Poor alignment of resources (e.g. finance, staff, infrastructure);
- Decreased capacity to deal with issues;
- Services not targeted at key at-risk groups;
- Gaps in service provision/linkages;
- Previous mistakes from policy and practice are not learned from;
- Poor decision-making;
- Lack of factual information regarding Agency's performance;
- Informing the public about what we do;
- Concentrating on managing supply rather than containing demand;
- Risk aversion;
- Over-bureaucratic procedures;
- Workable Court system/youth justice.

Key problems

We then considered the key problems to which we are responding. Once again, a number of workshops and meetings were held to work out the crux of the social problems. These are outlined below:

- There is a **lack of awareness** in society to recognise the extent of issues and an **unwillingness to engage** to rectify problems.
- **Crisis management, later interventions** and **short-term planning** are the norm due to **resourcing and workforce constraints**, leading to **excessive political involvement**.
- **Application of individual services on a siloed basis and limited multi-agency working** restricts whole system change and the delivery of real child-centred services.
- Policies are **not adequately informed by evidence** and therefore previous initiatives have had **limited implementation success**.
- Service provision can be disjointed and lack adequate cohesion due to **limited sharing of data and experience across services**.
- Policies and services established to support families and redress inequalities have delivered limited benefits and resulted in many cases with people **choosing not to engage with services and/or with society refusing to engage with the issues**.
- The **lack of appropriate supports** for disadvantaged children and families perpetuates many of the issues.

Once the key problems were identified, a ‘Problem Statement’ was developed, whereby all of the issues are summarised into one overarching statement:

‘A lack of long-term, evidence-informed planning and insufficient resources leads to disjointed services and inadequate supports for children and families.’

Levers for change

The next stage in the Social Change Model identifies the factors within our control that we can use to address the issues and the symptoms, thus reducing or nullifying the problems. These are known as the ‘levers for change’. There are three overarching levers that can be used to cause a positive social change for children and families. These are:



These levers, or a combination of them, allowed us to address each of the problems, barriers and symptoms outlined above.



An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency