

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), is leading **Children and Young People's Services Committees for national and local interagency working to improve outcomes for children and young people**. Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) are local/county level structures for bringing together a diverse group of agencies in **local county areas** to engage in **joint planning and co-ordination of services for children and young people**.

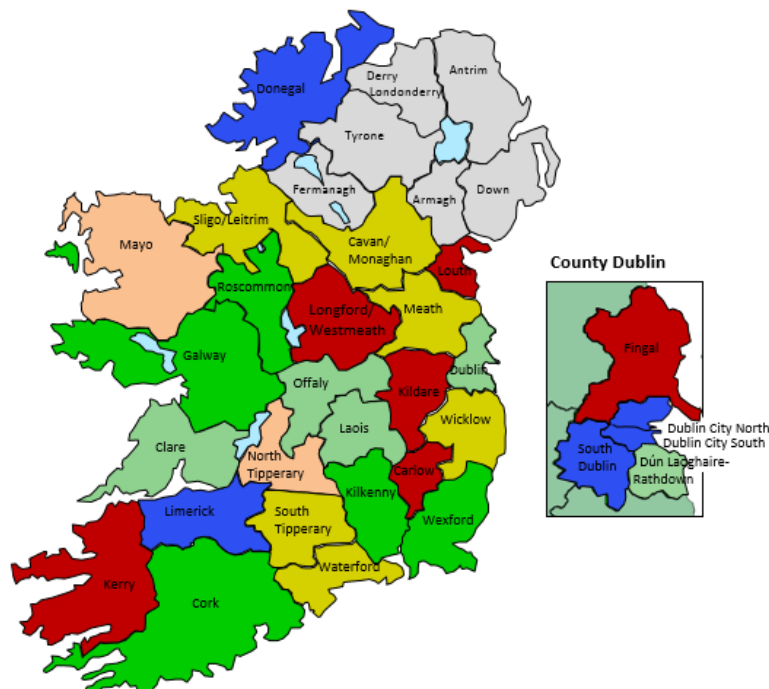
NATIONAL PICTURE OF CYPSC

Since 2007, CYPSC have been established in Carlow, Cavan Monaghan, Cork, Donegal, Dublin City North, Dublin City South, Fingal, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Limerick, Longford Westmeath, Louth, Meath, Roscommon, Sligo Leitrim, South Dublin, South Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow. A CYPSC in Mayo is currently in development. All are at differing stages of development and operation.

A national roll out of CYPSC to remaining counties (Phase 6) is ongoing.

National Picture: Children and Young People's Services Committees

- 2007-2010 Phase 1 ■
- 2010-2011 Phase 2 ■
- 2011-2013 Phase 3 ■
- 2014 Phase 4 ■
- 2015 Phase 5 ■



MEMBERSHIP

CYPSC members include **senior managers from the major statutory and voluntary providers** of services to children, young people and families so that issues and needs that arise can be addressed. CYPSC membership includes:

- Tusla Child and Family Agency
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Education and Training Board (ETB)
- Social Inclusion partners e.g. Local Development Companies
- An Garda Síochána
- Health Service Executive (HSE)
- Department of Social Protection (DSP)
- Probation Service
- National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)
- City or County Childcare Committee (CCC)
- Local Authority (City and / or County Council)
- Third level institution
- Young Person (18 - 24 years)
- Community and voluntary organisations

EVIDENCE ABOUT THE IMPACT OF INTERAGENCY WORK

Child death and serious case reviews both national and internationally have highlighted the importance of interagency working and information sharing to protect children and young people. The international literature tells us that where evidence of the impact of interagency working does exist, it is mostly positive although it takes time to become embedded in practice. When implemented well, interagency working achieves changes in the way agencies work. These changes happen at four different levels:

- Level 1** - Changes to inputs/processes such as the introduction of new tools and management structures
- Level 2** - Changes to routines, experiences and practices of practitioners and service managers (based on professional perceptions)
- Level 3** - Changes to outcomes for children, young people and families
- Level 4** - Institutional/systematic embedding of the changes across organisations.

Effective interagency working, therefore, acts to create the 'permitting circumstances' for better functioning of front-line services and front-line staff. It is a vitally important part of improving outcomes for children and their families, by means of its potential to improve all the front-line services that support them.

However it is also acknowledged that there are challenges to interagency working such as commitment obstacles, organisational challenges and contextual barriers or political climate. Some negative impacts of interagency working have been reported, such as increased workload (at least in the initial stages) and increased demand for services as the needs of children, young people and families are identified earlier when a joined-up approach is used.

The development of Children and Young People's Services Committees in Ireland has been informed by and reflects evidence from similar interagency structures in other jurisdictions such as Regional Implementation Groups in New South Wales, Children's Trusts in England, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership in Northern Ireland and Getting it Right for Every Child in Scotland. **Changes as a result of interagency working have been reported for agencies, for professionals and for service users.**

OPERATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEES

Each CYPSC is required to develop a 3 year **Children and Young People's Plan**. The plan is a systematic and comprehensive plan for services for children and young people in each county.

Each plan includes a

- socio demographic profile,
- audit of services,
- needs analysis and
- action plan.

CYPSC INTERAGENCY WORK

Through their structured planning process Children and Young People's Services Committees develop a comprehensive picture of the needs of children, young people and families in the county area. From this the CYPSC can identify appropriate evidence informed and /or evidence based responses. Examples of where Children and Young People's Services Committee projects and initiatives have contributed to improving outcomes for children and young people are presented below under the following themes:

1. Identification and assessment of the needs of children and young people
2. Youth Mental Health
3. Literacy
4. Delivering parenting supports
5. Leveraging funding
6. Consultation with children and young people

1. Identification and assessment of the needs of children and young people

Children and Young People's Services Committees have been to the forefront of ensuring that the needs of children and young people are identified and accurately assessed and that appropriate and integrated supports are put in place to meet those needs. They have worked to develop, evaluate and proliferate the standardisation of approaches to needs assessment across multiple disciplines. This work has influenced and informed the Service Delivery Framework of the new Child and Family Agency. (**Limerick CYPSC, South Dublin CYPSC, Waterford CYPSC, Dublin City CSC, Fingal CYPSC, Kerry CYPSC, Kildare CYPSC**).

2. Youth Mental Health:

Children and Young People's Services Committees have responded to the widely identified need to promote youth mental health. A number of CYPSC have provided the local interagency foundation on which innovative projects like the Jigsaw model of community based youth mental health supports have been successfully established in a county, community or as a whole school approach. (**Donegal CYPSC, Fingal CYPSC, Meath CYPSC**). Other CYPSC have developed Critical Incident Protocols to enable a co-ordinated response by community and voluntary services alongside state services to serious incidents affecting children and young people. (**South Dublin CYPSC, Carlow CYPSC**). In 2013 such a protocol was enacted in response to three youth suicides over a 4 month period in one county. Additionally CYPSC have developed accessible, youth-friendly information resources such as the *Teenage Health in Kerry / THINK Booklet* that provides information on youth mental health and issues that affect young people. (**Kerry CYPSC**).

3. Literacy:

CYPSC have sought to address low literacy levels of children and young people by developing interagency approaches to literacy development across a range of settings. An evaluated literacy programme that brought HSE speech and language therapeutic supports into the school classroom resulted in positive impacts on children's language and literacy attainment and also impacted positively on the professional practice of HSE staff and School Teachers. (**Dublin City CYPSC**). A family literacy project involves the County Childcare Committee working with the Education and Training Board to up skill early childhood care and education professionals in literacy development skills that they then integrate into their daily work with children, young people and families. (**Wicklow CYPSC**).

4. Delivering Parenting Support:

There is growing evidence of the importance of effective parenting in generating positive outcomes for children and young people. Children and Young People's Services Committees have worked to maximise parenting support provision in their county / area through interagency co-ordination and collaboration. This has included delivery of evidence based programmes such as Triple P, The Incredible Years Programme, Strengthening Families Programme, Parents Plus, Lifestart and Marte Meo. (**Longford Westmeath CYPSC, South Tipperary CYPSC, Kildare CYPSC, Fingal CYPSC, Carlow Kilkenny CYPSC, Donegal CYPSC**).

5. Leveraging funding:

Children and Young People's Services Committees have proved to be effective interagency structures through which funding can be successfully leveraged into a county or area to support tailored responses to the needs of children and young people as identified through the Children and Young People's Plan. Financial investment has been secured from the National Early Years Access Initiative (NEYAI), the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme and Philanthropic Organisations. (**South Tipperary CYPSC, Limerick CYPSC**).

6. Consultations with children and young people:

Involving children and young people in decision-making is national policy. As part of their planning process Children and Young People's Services Committees consult extensively with children and young people including using the national Comhairle na nÓg child and youth councils. (**Louth CYPSC**).

EVALUATION OF THE CYPSC INITIATIVE

Children and Young People's Services Committees develop a body of county level evidence and information about the lives of children and young people. In order to support this, a Task Group comprising DCYA research unit and Centre for Effective Services staff, is working on *County Level Data Analysis to Support CYPSC*.

This will produce county level data centrally that will then be made available to all CYPSC. It will assist CYPSC in their work to produce local plans and to then monitor and evaluate any changes and progress for children and young people at a county level. Approaches to an evaluation of CYPSC have been explored and an evaluation framework will be developed in 2015 taking into account the differing development stages of CYPSC and the county level data analysis work.

CONCLUSION

Children and Young People's Services Committees have created exciting and effective synergies between member organisations harnessing commitments to and strengths arising from interagency working for the benefit of children and young people living in their county. Their work illustrates a breadth of successful interagency innovations and interventions at both strategic and operational level with tangible positive impacts for the children and young people growing up in their county.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Colma Nic Lughadha, National Co-ordinator for Children and Young People's Services Committees.

Email: CYPSC@effectiveservices.org

Website: www.cypsc.ie and visit www.cypsc.ie/contact to sign up to our mailing list