

# Children and Young People's Services Committees National Seminar - 18th June 2015



**Achieving together for children and young people**  
*A bhaint amach le chéile do leanaí agus do dhaoine óga*

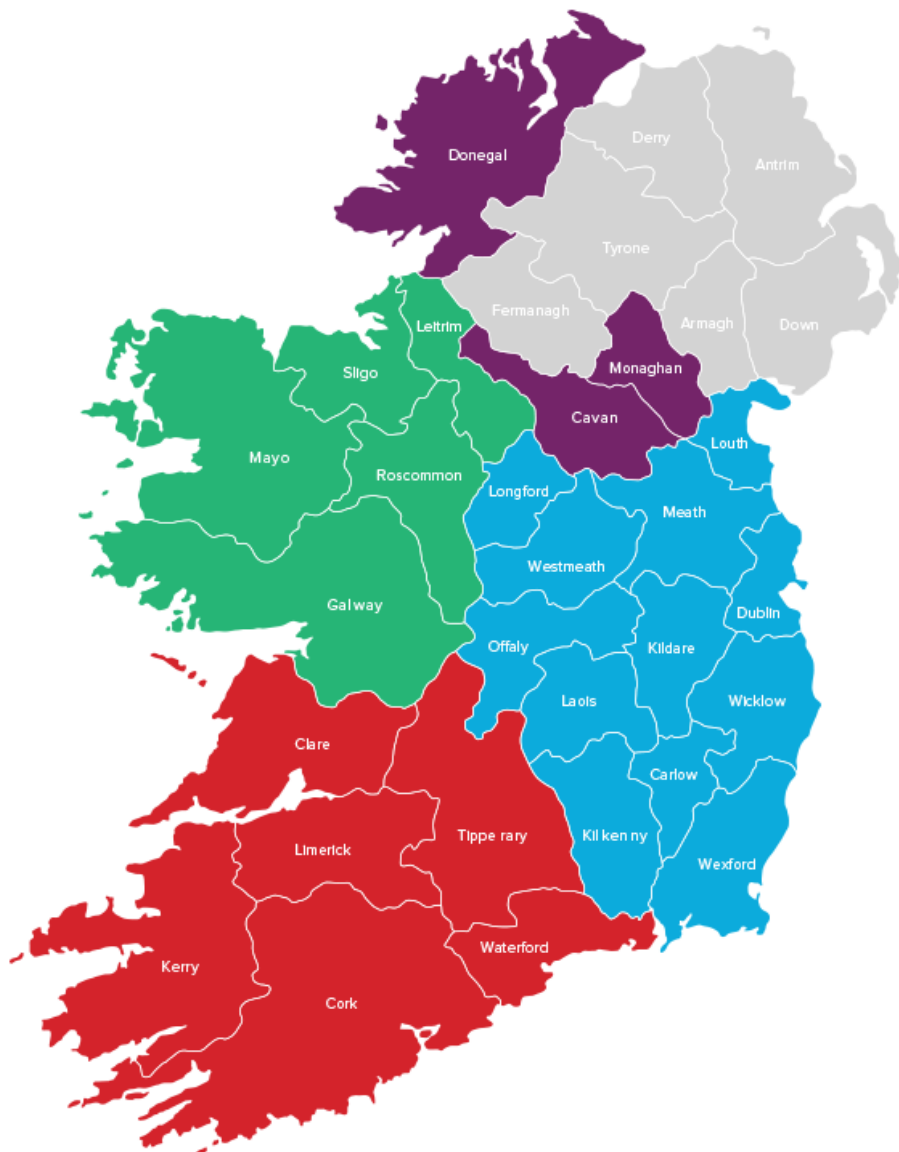


## SEMINAR REPORT

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# INTRODUCTION



This report captures the proceedings and learning from the CYPSC National Seminar held on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015 in Dublin, Ireland. It has been prepared by the National Co-ordinator for Children and Young People’s Services Committees for the attention of the CYPSC National Steering Group and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to inform the work plan of the Steering Group and contribute to the development of CYPSC nationally.

The Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) National Seminar – 'Achieving together for children and young people' took place on the 18th June 2015 at the Griffith Conference Centre, Griffith College, Dublin. 'A bhaint amach le chéile do leanaí & do dhaoine óga' is the Irish translation for this gathering that focussed on the development of interagency working for children and young people across Ireland. One hundred and forty nine people attended from across Ireland from 20 CYPSC and a range of other stakeholder organisations. See the full programme at [www.cypsc.ie/nationalevent/2015-seminar.1450.html](http://www.cypsc.ie/nationalevent/2015-seminar.1450.html).

The overarching purpose for the day was to profile CYPSC as a key interagency structure for realising the five national outcomes for children and young people in Ireland; embracing all sectors and levels in policy implementation. The event aimed to:

- Promote and showcase the work of the local committees in alignment with the five national outcomes for children and young people.
- Outline the relationship between CYPSC and new Government policy, and reinforce connections between local CYPSC and national policy implementation.
- Create a space for knowledge exchange between local CYPSC.
- Disseminate best practice of CYPSC.
- Facilitate networking between CYPSC, and between CYPSC and other stakeholders.
- Surface key issues and key learning from CYPSC for presentation to local and national partners.

Proceedings were opened by Elizabeth Canavan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs James Reilly TD officially launched the new national website [www.cypsc.ie](http://www.cypsc.ie) and the *Blueprint for the development of Children*

*and Young People's Services Committees* (available to download on [www.cypsc.ie/resources.7.html](http://www.cypsc.ie/resources.7.html)).

The morning comprised of national inputs on Irish Government policy and implementation, with a specific focus on the strong mandate for CYPSC as the local vehicle for planning and co-ordination of services for children and young people.

Presentations on real world implementation from around Ireland followed the national inputs, with CYPSC presenting on their work to improve outcomes for children and young people through interagency working; informed by evidence of what works and in alignment with the five national outcomes for children and young people. A question and answer session with a panel comprising of the local presenters closed the morning session. All presentations are available at <http://www.cypsc.ie/nationalevent/2015-seminar.1450.html>.

In the afternoon seminar attendees convened in facilitated roundtable discussion on the inter-relationship between CYPSC and Policy, Provision and Practice for children and young people in Ireland. Ideas generated through these discussions were shared in an open plenary, facilitated by the Centre for Effective Services (CES), recorded and compiled and are presented in this report for consideration by the CYPSC National Steering Group and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

CYPSC National Steering Group Chairperson Dr. Sheelah Ryan provided closing remarks acknowledging the work of CYPSC to date and completing the day's proceedings.

## MINISTERIAL ADDRESS

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs James Reilly TD addressed CYPSC stakeholders assembled to attend the CYPSC National Seminar. During his address the Minister officially launched the national website [www.cypsc.ie](http://www.cypsc.ie) and the *Blueprint for the development of Children and Young People's*

*Services Committees*. The following is an extract from the Minister's speech which provides an illustration of clear and comprehensive support for Children and Young People's Services Committees.

"I am pleased to be here today at this National Seminar to launch two new supports for Children and Young People's Services Committees. The first is a new website, the second is the Blueprint for the Development of Children and Young People's Services Committees. This event is critically important. It affords us the opportunity to reflect, to take stock, and to chart the path for the on-going development of CYPSCs.

We are at a key period of development. Our drive to improve outcomes for children and young people has been focused through Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. We have adapted how we work to transform our services to better achieve those outcomes: spanning the age range from birth to 24 years and covering the range of the 5 national outcomes.

We have in the Children and Young People's Services Committees a prime opportunity to harness the myriad services working to improve the lives of children and young people. I am fully confident that CYPSCs can rise to this challenge. I am also acknowledging the call for more support from the centre to meet this challenge and my Department has taken a clear lead on this. The Blueprint and the Website are key steps, but they are not the end of the road. Rather, they are sign posts to guide our work.

This is a collective ask requiring a collective answer. Agencies, Departments, and the wider sector delivering services for children and young people will all need to collaborate in CYPSCs.

The end product of this work needs to be focused on securing better outcomes for children and young people.

Those of us at the centre must work to ensure the path is clear for CYPSCs to do their work effectively and efficiently and as Minister I am fully committed to forging this path.

Effective inter-agency working is not a simple task. It requires the full engagement and investment of all concerned. Combining our efforts to make something greater than the sum of its parts.

I am aware of pressures on all services for children and young people. CYPSCs are a vehicle to deliver on our individual and common goals and I would like those of you representing organisations to push the message within your respective organisations that CYPSCs are vehicles for change. And that we have a role in delivering upon such change. There is collective benefit, and there are individual benefits for all our organisations, and in turn, and most importantly, clear benefits for children and young people.

We have the opportunity and we have the potential to contribute to the realisation of our vision to make Ireland one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family.

My final ask: Take these resources [[www.cypsc.ie](http://www.cypsc.ie) and Blueprint] away and use them."



## NATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

A range of presentations were made during the morning of the national seminar. A summary of these is provided below spanning inputs from the national policy and implementation perspective to real world

implementation in the community context. It is recommended that readers visit the national website [www.cypsc.ie](http://www.cypsc.ie) to view all presentations.

### Irish Policy Context and a Blueprint for the development of Children and Young People's Services Committees



Presented by: Conor Rowley, Principal Officer, Policy Innovation Unit, Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Conor Rowley's presentation set the scene from a national policy perspective and encompassed:

- The background to the development of Children and Young People's Services Committees
- The changing landscape in Irish policy and provision
- *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* National Policy Framework for Children and Young People
- An overview of the *Blueprint for the development of CYPSC*
- Observations on the development and implementation of cross-government and interagency working and the key challenge now is to twin "joined up thinking" with "joined up doing"

### National Overview of CYPSC Implementation



Presented by: Colma Nic Lughadha, National Co-ordinator for Children and Young People's Services Committees, Centre for Effective Services.

Colma Nic Lughadha's presentation provided a helicopter view of prominent aspects of CYPSC implementation from a national standpoint including:

- A quick look back at the evolution of Children and Young People's Services Committees
- What informs the CYPSC approach to interagency working and improving outcomes for children and young people in Ireland?
- New developments in CYPSC implementation infrastructure
- Progress towards national commitments in *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* National Policy Framework for Children and Young People
- Development of responses under national Outcome 4 – Economic security and opportunity
- Developments in CYPSC communications including a new national website [www.cypsc.ie](http://www.cypsc.ie)

## LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION PRESENTATIONS BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEES

Five Children and Young People's Services Committees made presentations on real world implementation in a community context. Each presentation focussed on the work of that CYPSC to improve outcomes for children and young people, in alignment with one of the five national outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. These presentations represent tangible examples of effective work being carried out throughout the country in response to the needs and aspirations of children and young people across the 0 – 24 age continuum aligned to the 5 national outcomes and their respective policy domains. The presentations also illustrate clear examples of effective interagency working between key agencies represented on CYPSCs.

Each presentation outlined

- The particular national outcome being addressed
- A description of the CYPSC's innovation including:
  - how it relates to the CYPSC's local priorities and objectives;
  - target group(s), implementation partners and how it is implemented;
  - Learning and results of the innovation including outcomes achieved, challenges and benefits;
  - Details of any evaluation of the innovation.

### Outcome 1: Active & healthy; physical & mental wellbeing



#### ***Increasing Play Infrastructure in County Wicklow, Wicklow CYPSC***

Presented by: Deirdre Whitfield, Administrative Officer, Wicklow County Council

Deirdre Whitfield's presentation related how play and recreation was identified as a priority area in Wicklow CYPSC's work plan 2013-2015 with the objective of ensuring that there would be adequate play and recreation infrastructure for children and young people in the county. A commitment to create six new playgrounds/multi use games areas was made in the plan and that has been far exceeded.

### Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in all areas of learning & development



#### ***South Tipperary and the Incredible Years Programme, South Tipperary CYPSC***

Presented by: Ruairí Ó Caisleáin, CYPSC Co-ordinator, South Tipperary CYPSC and Phil Shanahan, Social Inclusion Manager, South Tipperary Development Company

Ruairí Ó Caisleáin and Phil Shanahan explained that implementation of their chosen programme could address two needs namely 'increasing the number of children who are supported to remain in school', and 'increasing awareness and take-up of supports by families'. Their CYPSC took a dual approach proposing that implementation to address one need in their localities would reinforce actions taken in addressing the other need and vice versa.

### Outcome 3: Safe & protected from harm



#### ***Co. Kildare Strengthening Families Programme, Kildare CYPSC***

Presented by: Emma Berney, CYPSC Co-ordinator, Kildare CYPSC and Debbie Garry, Project Worker, Foróige

Emma Berney and Debbie Garry related how their CYPSC's programme is delivered on a multi-agency basis in alignment with Kildare CYPSC's stated objective of increasing the range of supports available to children, young people and families affected by substance misuse. It is the only programme in the county that takes a whole family approach and in so doing contributes to addressing the identified service gap in relation to family support in the county.

### Outcome 4: Economic security & opportunity



#### ***Outcome 4: Economic security & opportunity***

Presented by: Mark Harding, Development Officer, City of Dublin Youth Service Board and Louise Fitzpatrick, Liaison Officer, City of Dublin Youth Service Board

Mark Harding and Louise Fitzpatrick outlined how a multi-agency employment support programme, informed by a Youthwork approach is addressing youth employability. It is supporting young people not in education, training or employment to access and succeed in education and training and to develop competencies and skills that are attractive to employers and transferrable into any work place setting.

### Outcome 5: Connected, respected & contributing to their world



#### ***Celebrating and Supporting Young Carers, Donegal CYPSC***

Presented by: Orla O'Reilly, Youth Worker, Donegal Youth Services

Orla O'Reilly described how the Young Carers Project addresses the needs of marginalised and "invisible" young people. It seeks to give them a voice to identify their needs and to raise awareness with key agencies and organisations that could support them. The programme works to ensure that Young Carers are connected in their schools and communities and respected for the role that they play. It is helping them develop a strong sense of identity and linking them in to a positive network. Long-term Young Carers will be better supported to achieve in education thus protecting them from the risk of future poverty and social exclusion.



## ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Roundtable discussions were facilitated by local CYPSC Co-ordinators and were guided by a set of three prescribed questions:

- How can CYPSC best support POLICY implementation in achieving outcomes for children and young people?
- How can CYPSC best support PROVISION in achieving outcomes for children and young people?
- How can CYPSC best support PRACTICE in achieving outcomes for children and young people?

Each roundtable facilitator recorded discussion points from their table, provided feedback from their table during the open plenary session and

submitted their records to the National Co-ordinator for CYPSC for compilation and analysis. The following provides a précis of the opinion and ideas emanating from this section of the national seminar for consideration by the CYPSC National Steering Group and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It comprises direct responses to the three predetermined questions and also presents issues seminar attendees wished to flag and suggestions that they proffered for action to strengthen and develop CYPSC and to improve outcomes for children and young people. A bullet pointed summary of these facets is presented. Further detail behind each pointer is available upon request.

### CYPSC can support POLICY implementation in achieving outcomes for children and young people through

- Dissemination of national policy locally.
- Policy translation - identifying relevant policy and interpreting the messages that are in the policy documents for local service providers.
- Lead local implementation of national policy.
- Data collection on service provision and outcomes for children and young people to inform national planning.
- Capacity building of CYPSC members to implement policy.

### CYPSC can support PROVISION in achieving outcomes for children and young people

- As an interagency forum for collective discussion by service providers of local issues, needs, service responses, joint planning and action.
- Through data collection and identification of needs in the county to ensure data driven local decision-making.
- By informing resource allocations through having an influencing role in determining where resources and funding are invested locally or regionally and by informing national resource allocation.
- By supporting member agency agendas such as supporting the roll-out of Tusla - Child and Family Agency's Prevention Partnership and Family Support approach.
- Reducing service duplication by managing locally any overlap of service responses and sharpening the scope and impact of provision.

### CYPSC can support PRACTICE in achieving outcomes for children and young people by

- Developing interagency working practice.
- Promoting best practice in working with children and young people.
- Organising training and capacity building opportunities for practitioners and managers.

## Suggestions for the development of CYPSC and for improving outcomes for children and young people

- **Whole of Government recognition of CYPSC** as valuable and reinforcement of this by parent departments to delivery agents.
- **Co-ordination of national funding streams:** National funding needs to coalesce around the national vision. The five national outcomes for children and young people haven't translated into a co-ordination of national funding streams.
- **CYPSC as a stakeholder in funding decisions** by having a role in the design of programme funding, and in funding allocation, distribution, oversight and management.
- **Data systems, standards and training:** a need for standardisation in data collection and a pursuant need for training for those involved in data collection and analysis.
- **Evaluation of CYPSC** – an external evaluation of the work of the CYPSC is needed to learn from experiences and ensure that CYPSC is fulfilling its role in supporting national policy.
- **Synergy between CYPSC and local authorities/LCDCs.**
- **Synergy between CYPSC and implementation of the Disability strategy.**
- **A recognition to the bottom-up-approach** by allocating funding and resources to CYPSC to be managed locally.
- **Home-grown innovation:** support and resource the development of Irish evidence-based programmes.
- **Parent involvement** in CYPSC.

## Issues highlighted as requiring attention, response or resolution

- The inter-relationship between Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) and CYPSC.
- Extension of the CYPSC age range and concern that this may diminish CYPSC focus to activate around this age extension.
- Policy profusion and overload - the multitude, diversity and overlap of policies giving rise to the question how do the policies all sit together and which national policy is the overriding one?
- Youth representation on CYPSC - how will the 18-24 year old CYPSC member be selected and be representative of their age cohort?
- An absence in some CYPSC of appropriate and effective high level stakeholder engagement from some sectors.
- Policy implementation gap - a disconnection between national strategy and the local work force; many front line staff without knowledge of *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* and the five national outcomes for children and young people.
- Inclusion of the Disability sector - a disconnection between policies, structures and agencies around disability.
- Risks associated with placement of the CYPSC Co-ordinator post within Tusla-Child and Family Agency.
- Data collection - difficulties in sharing data across agencies.

## SUMMATION

Dr. John Bamber of the Centre for Effective Services was present throughout the entire seminar capturing the overarching themes emanating from presentations and discussions. Following facilitation of the open plenary discussions Dr. Bamber addressed the seminar and delivered a summation

of the CYPSC National Seminar to assist attendees digest materials presented; encapsulating those significant challenges and opportunities lying ahead. His summation is presented below.

What is the purpose of a day like today?

Liz Canavan, Assistant Secretary General of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs told us that it is to “appraise, refresh the vision and strengthen the mandate of CYPSC.”

The Minister answered this question in a different way stating that it is a “Wonderful opportunity and a challenge.” The opportunity is to tackle the big issues affecting the life chances and the quality of life of children, young people and families. The challenge is about how best to do it; deciding, for example, on the right mix between universal, targeted, or thematic approaches. Within all of this, what is the space for innovation, and in this regard, it is interesting to see how policy is being interpreted and developed across the CYPSCs.

As all of the local implementation examples presented here today show, CYPSCs can operate as a highly informed and deliberative fora for considering local needs and responses with regard to children and young people. Though local, these needs are often manifestations of large and complex socio-economic forces, with overlapping historical and cultural elements.

The response to needs can and does come in a wide variety of forms and ways, including specific evidence-based programmes, such as the one presented by South Tipperary CYPSC, services for young people supported by Donegal CYPSC, and changes to the social environment through Wicklow CYPSC. Where an evidence base is lacking, more experimental approaches can be supported such as youth employment supports offered by the City of Dublin Youth Service Board.

Whatever the response, it is essential to be clear about what are you trying to improve and about what needs to change.

Wicklow CYPSC’s work is a good example of how a needs analysis reveals a major societal issue. In this case, the reduction of freedom to play in uncontrolled environments for children and young people. An example of change for individuals was given in Kildare CYPSC’s family based work, where raising expectations and breaking self-limiting perceptions supported people to change their perceptions of what was possible for them.

All social policy involves making the most of the oscillation between the centre (the state and its agencies) and localities. The centre must play its part in setting the framework, providing guidance and support, and the necessary resources. We see this in the way that CYPSCs have become a cornerstone of emerging national policy, and in how they are connected in to the new *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* implementation structures via the CYPSC National Steering Group. As we heard, the resources are a work in progress. In any case, localities must take up the reins (and sometimes the cudgels), to engage in what our colleague from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs referred to as “aligning policy at local level, by involving and mobilising the allies and key players at local level.” One example of this came with regard to the support surrounding the Incredible Years Programme in South Tipperary.

Obviously all initiatives are stronger when they clearly relate to national policy. It is striking how all of today’s contributors from local CYPSCs could unambiguously relate their work to the five national outcomes for children and young people. It is not just about showing a connection, but about how

the work gives life and meaning to policy. Going forward, and this is an important point for the centre, it is also about how the results and the learning from this work can feed up to and inform national policy development, so that it is possible to enhance over time what is seen to work.

Much is made of the need for inter-agency working, based on a collaborative and collective approach. This applies within and beyond the CYPSC, where local authorities have been engaged, for example. It also calls for new partnerships. The City of Dublin Youth Service Board presentation highlighted involvement of the private sector with a focus on employment issues. In this scenario, everybody has to bring something to the table, and every partner has to get something from it. The State Street instance about training opportunities for middle managers is a good example of this. The coming of the Local Community Development Committees and the Local Economic and Community Plan pose new questions for everyone about partnership and planning.

Speaking of partners, children and young people are not just recipients, beneficiaries or clients. They can also contribute to understanding the issues and also what needs to be done. More than this they can also assist through peer learning, which is something that the Donegal CYPSC touched upon during the Questions and Answers session.

Going forward it is crucial to build on strengths and to optimise learning. The advent of the website, [www.cypsc.ie](http://www.cypsc.ie), is potentially an important tool in this regard. Learning from each other can also serve to inspire, and refresh, as well as to make more widely available resources that have been developed, and practices that have been perfected in one place.

The dictum *Know Thy Outcome* is exemplified by the Wicklow CYPSC play space example. They also showed the importance of developing indicators to map progress, and to enable thinking about development.

There were many other examples of the use of and the value of data, which is an essential part of being evidence-informed. It allows for better measurement and assessment, which encouragingly is seen in our examples, particularly from Kildare CYPSC, not in terms of accountability, though this is important, but as a feedback mechanism for recognising achievement, identifying gaps, and professional learning and development.

Leadership has been obvious throughout the day; people are being thought leaders, champions, and risk takers. The importance of effective management in terms of organisation, systems and, communication have also featured prominently. Don't forget that the way in which meetings are conducted can enable or disable effective contributions!

Added value has been a key concept, with gains in one area having positive effects in others. For example, the young people referred to in the CDYSB presentation, develop competencies in youth work settings that are relevant to the requirements of the labour market.

In the end, the prize is better outcomes based on evidence informed national and local policy. This is not necessarily about new and more funding, but about improving and sometimes redirecting the existing effort.

You are achieving this and you deserve the Minister's praise for your work.

## CLOSING REMARKS



Dr. Sheelah Ryan brought the national CYPSC seminar proceedings to a close with a message of thanks and of encouragement to all those who have journeyed with CYPSCs and continue to be committed to interagency working to improve outcomes for children and young people. She acknowledged the national leadership being provided by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to firmly position CYPSC as the local interagency vehicle at the centre of national policy to improve outcomes for children and young people. Dr. Ryan noted the continued local leadership provided by CYPSC Chairpersons and Co-ordinators and the energetic leadership of the National Co-ordinator for CYPSC as a strong advocate for the CYPSC initiative and on behalf of local CYPSCs.

Dr. Ryan noted positive developments in the re-configuration of the CYPSC National Steering Group, the publication of the *Blueprint for the development of CYPSC* and the new national website [www.cypsc.ie](http://www.cypsc.ie) all supporting the local implementation at county level. She recognised that there are also challenges remaining which are being actively managed “behind the scenes” including resourcing of CYPSC to ensure the work is sustained and can grow.

Finally Dr. Ryan thanked all present for their evident active participation at the national seminar urging all stakeholders to “stay the course” and to continue to work in an interagency fashion to achieve that common goal of better outcomes for all children and young people in Ireland.