

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEES NETWORKING EVENT
PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION – ACROSS THE YEARS**

ION AS A MODEL OF INTER-AGENCY WORKING



ion – supporting children and families

Local structure

- Children and Families Network – inter-agency grouping – practitioners and managers
- Working groups:
 - Domestic Violence
 - Education
 - Asylum seekers and refugees
 - Mental Health
 - **ION** – cross sectoral Advisory Group / Managers – also likely to report to Children’s Services Committee

What is ION -?



A process which:

- results in an inter-agency response for children and families who may be experiencing difficulties
- is initiated by any practitioner who works with children and families, resulting in an inter-agency response for that child / family
- identifies and responds to needs at an early stage, prior to families reaching the Social Work duty system
- is family led requiring the consent of the family at each stage in the process

Key principles



- **Early intervention:** need is identified and met at an early stage
- **Simplicity:** the process matches needs to existing services
- **Holistic:** the family engage in a holistic appraisal of their lives; the family, their school, their community, their environment
- **Trusted relationships:** the family is assisted by a practitioner who knows them and whom they trust

Key principles



- Partnership approach: the voices of parent and child (if old enough) are heard and privileged *as experts*
- Parental control: actions and information sharing are agreed by the parents/children
- Strengths based: the ION process takes into account strengths as well as difficulties
- Care and welfare of children and families is everyone's business: any service can activate an ION network – no wrong door

key process stages



- ❑ Lead practitioner involved with family suggests ion to parents/carers
- ❑ Parents/carers complete *ion Request Form*
- ❑ Social work check conducted – no parallel process
- ❑ Lead practitioner assists parents to ‘tell their story’ – completes *ion Record Form*
- ❑ Independent Chair appointed
- ❑ Inter-agency meeting convened reflecting particular needs of family
- ❑ Number of review meetings may be required depending on complexity
- ❑ Process ends when objectives have been achieved

Key roles



- Lead practitioner – initiates the process
- Independent Chair – manages the process
- Sector convenors – advise on agencies
- ION office – administration and coordination functions

Examples of inter-agency groups



Chair:

Director Sligo Education Centre

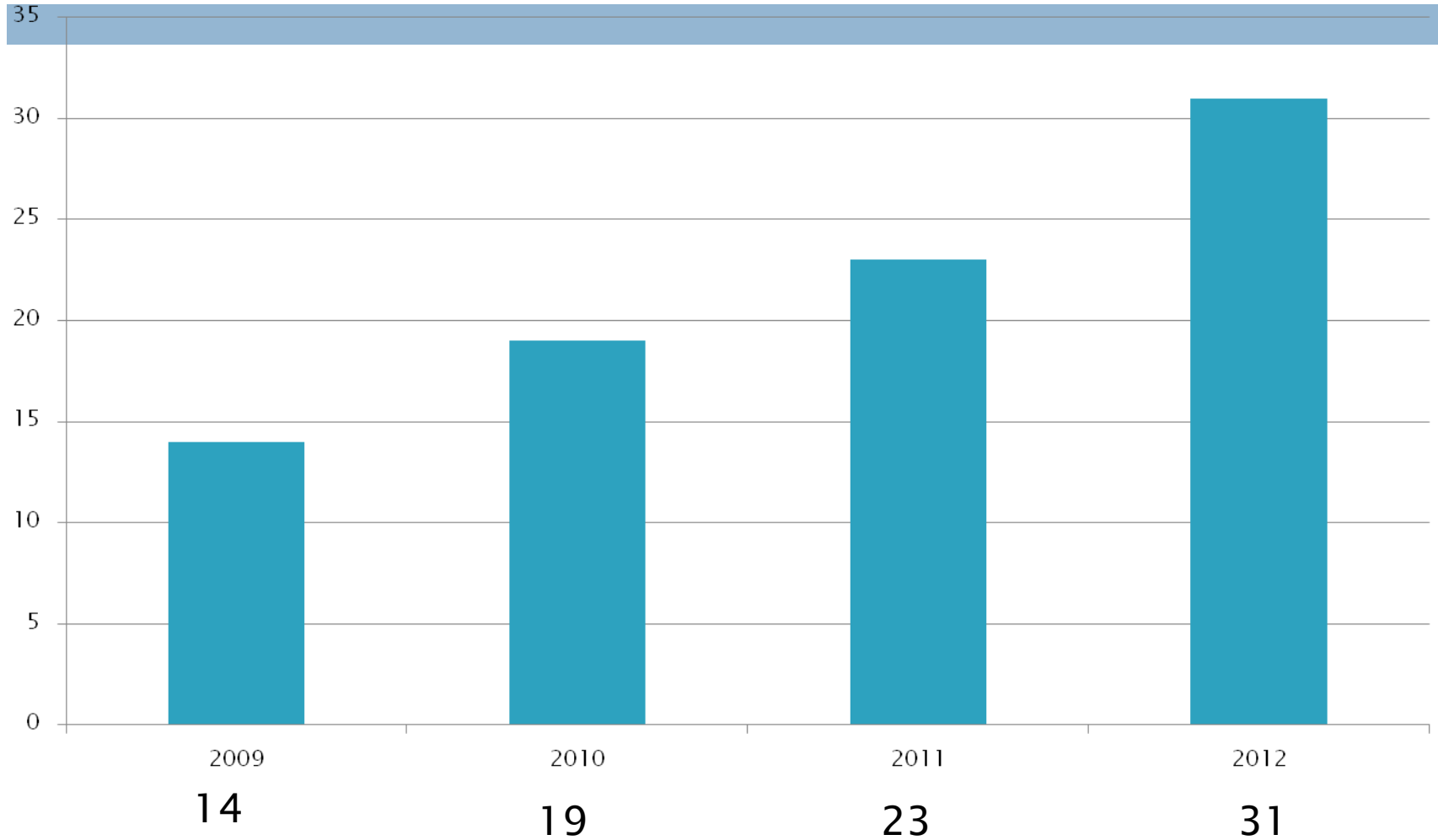
- Parent
- LP: HSE Family Therapy Service
- School principal
- Registrar Paediatrician
- Community Psychiatry Service
- GP

Chair:

HSE Community Worker

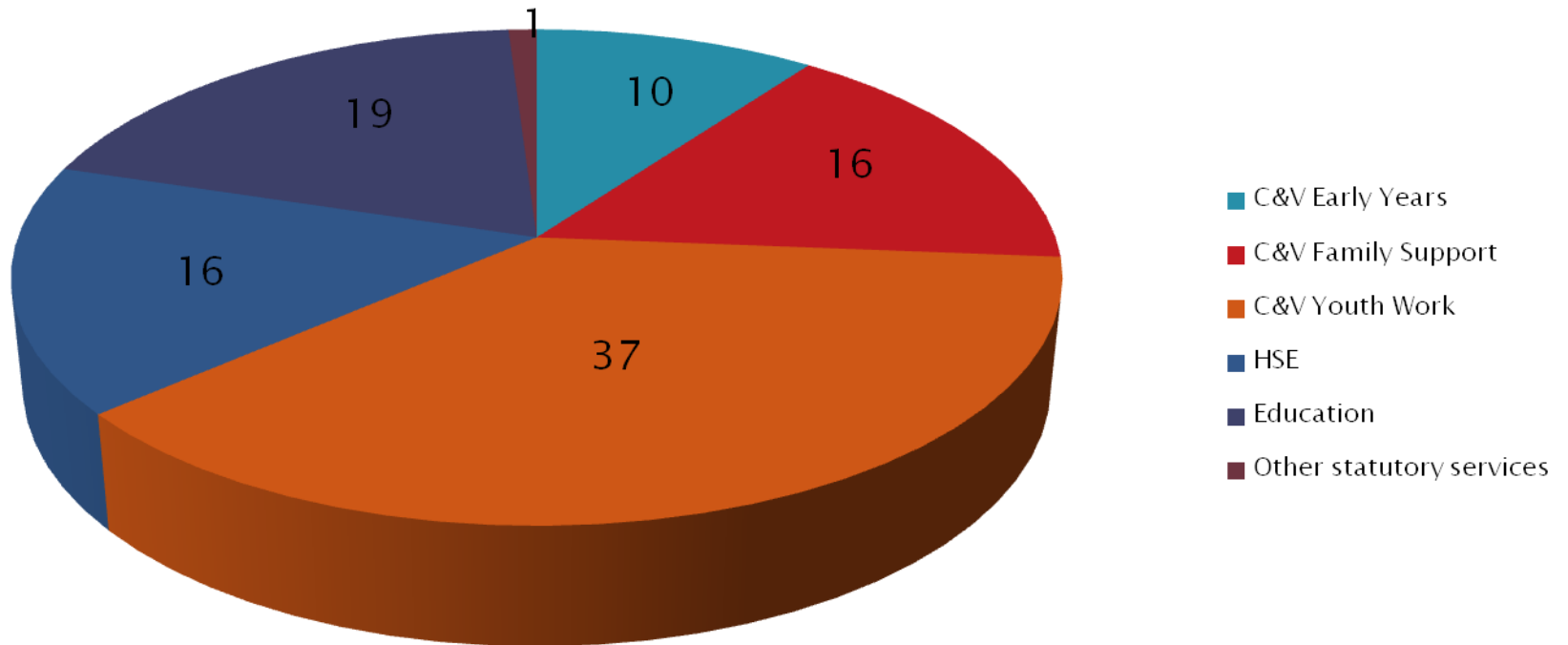
- Parents
- LP: Consultant Psychiatrist, CAMHS
- Family Resource Centre
- Leitrim Development Company
- Leitrim Citizens Information Service
- Interpreter

ION Requests



ION – sectors (%)

ION Requests



Additional statistics

No of children benefitting from processes	283
Male / female	65/35 %
No. of inter-agency support meetings	311
Average number of inter-agency meetings per month	12
Agencies involved in processes	90+
No. of individuals trained through inter-sectoral training	367
No. of on-site presentations (schools, HSE teams, comm & vol orgs, etc.)	130

ion – what has made it work?



- Underpinned and informed by;
 - theoretical and practice models of integrated working
 - existing multi-agency coordinating structures
- Part of a continuum of need and response – pre-social work – early intervention, non stigmatising, family-centred – with close and organic linkages with the child protection service

ion – what has made it work?



- Ownership and promotion at senior level in HSE
- Ownership by key stakeholders – cross sectoral / Working Groups and Advisory Group
- Division into sectors / role of sector convenors
- Ongoing inter-service training
- Tailored on-site training in sectors across both counties
- Adapting for use in urban and rural settings
- Continuous development and change
- Role of independent chairs and minute takers – maximises skills and experience

ion – what has made it work?

- Actions and outcomes focused
- Development of Guidelines
 - ▣ Lead Practitioners
 - ▣ Chairs
 - ▣ Minute Takers
 - ▣ Participants

Agreed Working Procedures

- ▣ Referral to Social Work
- ▣ Information sharing
- ▣ Process review

ion – what has made it work?

Changing the way we work.....

- Has provided a real alternative for referrals SW, CAMHS, etc. -
- Each family gets the most effective appropriate response for its needs
- Has put informal inter-agency collaboration onto a formal structured setting
- Develops a culture of collective responsibility



1. Integration into existing structures and procedures

- 'did not attend' procedures
- school exclusion processes
- domestic violence (DVRIM)
- youth offending
- primary care



2. Challenges

- establish ion as a *standard* method of appraisal of need – the way we *all* do business
- creatively involve the voice of the child/young person
- maintain and extend the culture of early assistance in a context of diminishing resources and a refocusing on risk rather than need