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Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
an Chabháin agus Mhuineacháin
Cavan and Monaghan
Education and Training Board

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PROVISION

Exploring Options for Cavan & Monaghan

July 2020

Sort-it



...helping people to get organised!

"Education is the key to giving every child an equal opportunity in life... Our rates of school completion and participation in higher education continue to rise. And yet, too many of our children still fall through the cracks and are in danger of being left behind."

Programme for New Partnership Government and the 32nd Dáil
- 2016

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Abbreviations

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ALP	Alternative Learning Provision
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BOBF	Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures
CAMHS	Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service
CMETB	Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board
CYPSC	Children and Young People's Services Committee
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ESL	Early School Leaving
ETB	Education & Training Board
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
EWS	Education Welfare Services (Part of TESS)
FSLs	Family School Liaison Service – Monaghan Town
GYDP	Garda Youth Diversion Programme
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison (part of TESS)
JLO	Juvenile Liaison Officer – An Garda Síochána
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LECP	Local Economic & Community Plan
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
ODD	Oppositional Defiance Disorder
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate (Courses)
PPFS	Prevention Partnership and Family Support
PS	Primary School
PPS	Post-Primary School
SCP	School Completion Programme (Part of TESS)
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SW	Social Welfare
TESS	Tusla Education Support Services
YETI	Youth Employment & Training Initiative
YP	Young Person
YWI	Youth Work Ireland
YWICM	Youth Work Ireland Cavan Monaghan

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

- A number of stakeholder and multi-agency working groups in both Cavan and Monaghan have expressed concern about the gap in educational provision that exists in both counties for young people under the age of 16 years, who have disengaged from mainstream education provision.
- As a result of this disengagement young people are missing out on a structured continuation of educational input while they wait to reach the age of 16, when they may have the opportunity to engage in other educational or training pathways in both counties.
- In order to be able to identify the best way to address this gap in terms of alternative education provision for these young people, it is imperative to understand more about the context of early school leaving pre-16 yrs – how it occurs and the contributory factors that are associated with it.
- This study was commissioned by Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board and commenced in March 2020, just before the country went into lockdown due to the COVID-19 epidemic. The consultant engaged with the key stakeholders both in person prior to the lockdown and by telephone during lockdown. This resulted in the engagement with a total of 21 stakeholders to gather their feedback on the subject of early school leaving in Cavan and Monaghan.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has created a totally new context in which to consider the issue of early school leaving and the possible service delivery solutions to address the issue:
 - It will potentially increase the need to support young people, as the disruption caused by the lockdown phase may have a negative impact some vulnerable young people who would have been considered to be “on the brink of leaving” and by September 2020 there is a real possibility that having been out of education since mid-March they may not re-engage.
 - There is also the possibility of an increased level of mental health issues presenting in young people arising out of the COVID-19 isolation experience, which may also have a knock-on effect on school attendance.
 - COVID-19 forces the creation of a “new normal” approach to service delivery of youth and educational supports. The full implications of these will continue to be worked out as we progress through the phases of re-opening society.
 - Finally, it remains to be seen to what degree the impact that the exceptional expenditure on the COVID-19 response will have on the funding made available to all Government departments in the post COVID recovery period.

1.2 Contextualising the issue of early school leaving

- The goal of reducing levels of early school leaving is embedded in a number of the strategies for the county both nationally and locally, as well as at a European level. The rationale for this is clear – **life outcomes for individuals are better when they do not leave school early**. The plans referenced include:

- *Education and Training Framework 2020*

European Commission

- *Programme for New Partnership Government and the 32nd Dáil 2016*

32nd Dáil

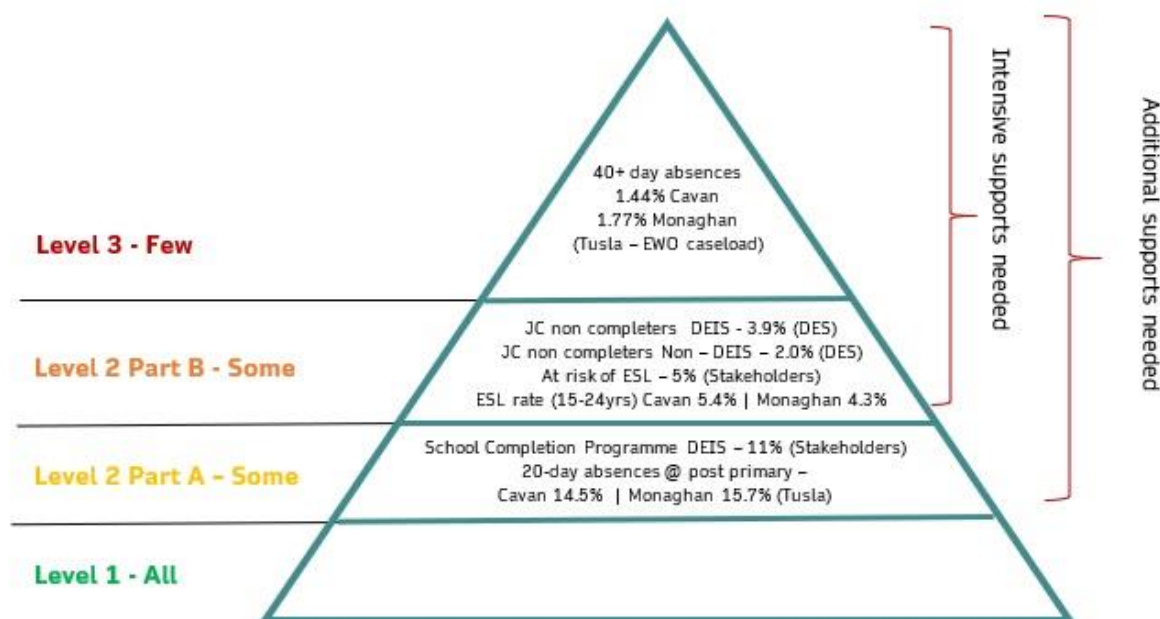
- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| - | <i>Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, 2014-2020</i> | <i>Department of Children and Youth Affairs</i> |
| - | <i>Action Plan for Education, 2019</i> | <i>Department of Education and Skills</i> |
| - | <i>DEIS Plan 2017</i> | <i>Department of Education and Skills</i> |
| - | <i>National Traveller and Roma inclusion Strategy 2017-2021</i> | <i>Department of Justice and Equality</i> |
| - | <i>Youth Plans for Cavan and Monaghan 2018-2020</i> | <i>Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board</i> |
| - | <i>Area Profiles for Cavan and Monaghan 2019</i> | <i>Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board</i> |
| - | <i>Needs of NEETs in Cavan and Monaghan, 2018</i> | <i>Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board</i> |
| - | <i>Cavan CYPSC Plan 2018-2020</i> | <i>Cavan Children and Young Peoples Services Committee</i> |
| - | <i>Monaghan CYPSC Plan 2018-2020</i> | <i>Monaghan Children and Young Peoples Services Committee</i> |
| - | <i>Cavan Local Economic & Community Plan 2016-2021</i> | <i>Cavan Local Community Development Committee</i> |
| - | <i>Monaghan Local Economic & Community Plan 2015-2021</i> | <i>Monaghan Local Community Development Committee</i> |
| - | <i>Area Commissioning Plan 2018-2020</i> | <i>Tusla Cavan & Monaghan</i> |
- Early school leaving may lead individuals to take up a weaker position in society and in the labour market (European Commission 2009). It is associated with reduced earning capacity in life and leads to a higher likelihood of frequency and duration of unemployment during the lifetime (Lamb and Hua, 2017).
 - An Early School Leaving Factsheet prepared as part of an Erasmus+ project suggested that each additional year of school attendance resulted in €70,000 euro in additional lifetime income.
 - Australian researchers (Lamb and Hua) estimated that an early school leaver (aged 19 yrs) in Australia was likely to cost the community and the economy in excess of €500,000 over their lifetime, not to mention the individual cost to the person in terms of self-esteem, confidence and health. This rises to over €900,000 if by the age of 24 yrs they have failed to re-engage with any form of education or training.
Whilst this research is not directly transferable to an Irish context, it allows us to start thinking about the cost/benefit that can be achieved by funding interventions designed to increase the likelihood of young people remaining at school or re-engaging with education.
 - Ultimately, we want to safeguard against the situation where:
“...too many of our children still fall through the cracks and are in danger of being left behind.”

Programme for New Partnership Government developed in 2016 by the 32nd Dáil

1.3 What is the scale of early school leaving in Cavan and Monaghan?

- This study focuses on the cohort of young people in the age bracket of 13-15 years who are not attending mainstream second level school or who are considered at risk of leaving school. Projections based on Census 2016 data suggests that currently there are in the region of:
 - 3,464 young people aged 13-15 yrs in Co. Cavan
 - 2,758 young people aged 13-15 yrs in Co. Monaghan

- For the purposes of this study the author looked to two sources to endeavour to estimate the number of young people under 16yrs who might be at risk of early school leaving or indeed who have already left mainstream schooling:
 - Published statistical data
 - Feedback from key stakeholders interviewed
- The consultant constructed an illustration borrowed from the “Levels of support for children and families” used by Tusla and adapted to reflect occurrence of early school leaving (ESL).



- The illustration reflects the “All, Some, Few” categorisation of young people in the post-primary school environment and the associated estimated proportion of young people that are represented in each category in Cavan/Monaghan. The figures included are based on published statistics and stakeholder feedback related to early school leaving (ESL). The illustration attempts to summarise the estimated number of young people in this vulnerable cohort who may require additional support to remain engaged in learning and at school.
 - The illustration starts out with the estimated number of young people in the age category 13-15yr in 2020 in each county. This is depicted in the bottom Level 1 and represents the “All” category of young people who received universal school supports and education
 - **Level 2 Part A** of the illustration relates to the Some “Part A” and reflects the estimated proportion of young people who are identified as struggling with engagement or attendance at school and are identified as requiring some additional support.
 - Indications from Stakeholders attached to DEIS school, suggest that approximately 11% of the student body will engage in School Completion Programmes in their schools
 - DES statistics suggest that in Cavan 14.5% of the student body at second level and 15.7% in Monaghan have triggered the 20-day school absence level
 Young people who are referenced in these numbers require additional support to help them to re-engage in school, which may come in the form of linking with the School Student Support Team and NEPs as well as the School Completion Programme, Home School Liaison Officer or Monaghan Town Family School Liaison Service (FSLs) where available. Such interventions will make the difference for some of these young people in assisting them to re-engage and be retained at mainstream school. For those young people who do not have access to these additional services or for whom the interventions are not successful, they are referred to in Level 2 – Part B of the illustration.

- **Level 2 Part B** illustrates the smaller proportion of Level 2 young people who may not respond to some of the early interventions available at school. They constitute the smaller proportion of young people who do not continue to complete the Junior Certificate - 3.9% nationally at DEIS school and 2.0% at non-DEIS schools. Stakeholder estimates put this cohort of young people who are at risk of leaving school early to be 5% of the student body of under 16yr olds.

This cohort of young people require additional tailored supports in aimed at helping deal with the causal factors which are contributing to their school refusal. These may be social or emotional issues, learning issues, family factors, confidence, anxiety or motivational order to assist them to re-engage. They require a one-to-one tailored approach which may include some structured time away from the school environment before re-integration can be achieved.

- **Level 3** of the illustration refers to the “Few” young people who are engaged with Education and Welfare having accumulated 40+ day absences and who are at most risk of educational disadvantage often having disengaged entirely from school or being on reduced timetables. These figures are based on the live caseload numbers for EWOs in Cavan and Monaghan which are a factor of the capacity of the Education Welfare officers rather than a reflection of the actual number of young people in this “FEW” category.

Again a tailored approach to working with these young people is required so as to effect any change in their perceptions of their own ability to learn and to help them to tap into their own motivation for engagement in life.

- With the absence of an exact figure of young people under the age of 16yrs, who are currently not engaged in mainstream education and are not having their educational needs met, the author has attempted to estimate numbers of these young people in both Cavan and Monaghan based on the statistical data available and stakeholder estimates, in order to identify the scale of the issue of early school leaving in Cavan and Monaghan. The table overleaf summarised the estimates which are demonstrated in the illustration on page 9.

Based on estimated number of 13-15 yrs in 2020

Post Primary category	Source	Cavan		Monaghan	
		%	Estimated Number	%	Estimated Number
LEVEL 1					
YP aged 13-15 yrs (* & **)	Census 2016	100%	3464	100%	2758
LEVEL 2 Part A					
Young people having 20-day + absences from school	Tusla - county %	14.5%	502	15.7%	441
Young People engaged in School Completion Programmes	Stakeholder Estimate	11.0%	381	11.0%	303
LEVEL 2 Part B					
At risk of ESL	Stakeholder Estimate	5.0%	173	5.0%	138
	CSO (Highest level of education)	5.4%	187	4.3%	119
JC non completers	DES - national average	2.4%	83	2.4%	55
LEVEL 3					
Young people having 40+ day absences from school (***)	EWO caseload	1.44%	50	1.77%	49

* Young people in 1-3rd year

** Number of 13-15yr olds

*** 40+ absences

Will be aged 13-15yr olds in 2020

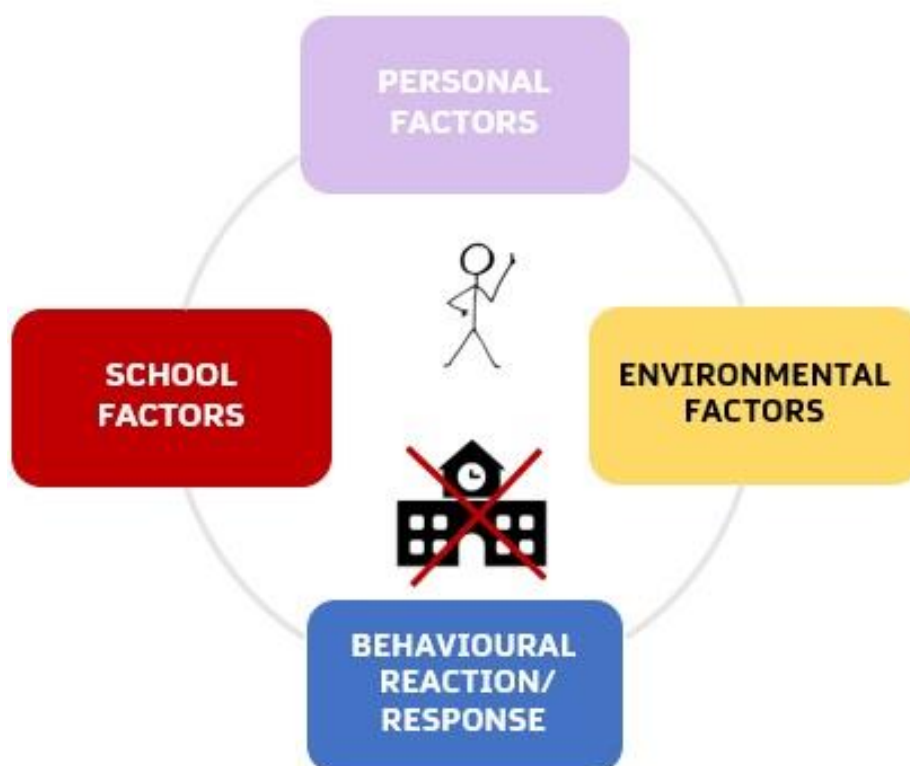
Extrapolated from Census 2016 figures to represent the numbers of 13-15yr olds in 2020

This number of YP is limited by the capacity of the EWO and is not true reflection of the number of actual referrals to the service

- Using the estimates for “at risk of early school leaving” the data provided by stakeholders and CSO suggests that currently there may be as many as 300 young people across the two counties (173 in Cavan and 138 in Monaghan) who fall into this cohort and as many as 138 in the 13-15yr old age group that may not complete the Junior Certificate (83 in Cavan and 55 in Monaghan).
- There is an immediate need for collaboration between key stakeholder organisations that are working with vulnerable young people (e.g. Tusla, CAMHS, NEPs, EWOs, GYDP and Youth Organisations), in order to clearly identify the actual number of young people who make up this under 16 yrs early school leavers cohort in both counties and their location within each county so as to better design service provision to respond to the identified need.

1.4 Factors influencing early school leaving in Cavan and Monaghan

- Feedback from stakeholders resulted in a comprehensive list of factors that contribute to early school leaving. These have been organised into 4 key categories:



The figure below outlines some of the elements of each of these four factors:

<p>Personal Factors: Within the internal or personal experience of the young people</p>	<p>Environmental Factors: Home, family, community factors -many of which may contribute to the development of internal factors) – Strongly featuring adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)</p>
<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor Mental Health • Mental illness • Learning challenges • Low levels of resilience/coping skills • Poor social skills • Illness 	<p>Including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and home dynamics • Parenting capability, responsibility, and skill • Household history, culture, attitude, and values • Poverty • Poor transition experience from primary school to secondary school • Lack of social acceptance and integration
<p>School Factors: Aspects of the physical environment, triggering influences, relationships with key staff members, or policies and attitudes in the school</p>	<p>Behavioural responses or reactions: which may develop in response to the either of the other three and be used as a coping strategy - these factors do not necessarily alone cause early school leaving alone, but can complicate matters.</p>
<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies • Culture • Relationships • Environment • Curriculum 	<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioural difficulties/Acting out/Risk taking behaviour • Attitude/Disposition • Drug Taking • Other addictions • Suicide/Attempted Suicide

- The more complexities a young person is dealing with, the greater the likelihood that they will require more support and a more bespoke approach to working on issues which impact on the risk of early school leaving. Any alternative learning provision needs to start first with the young person where they are at.
- As can be seen from the categorisation of factors influencing the instance of early school leaving in the figure above, the home environment and parental capacity has a huge part to play in the experience, disposition, and behaviour of young people.
- Two -sub-sets of young people were identified as being of additional concern by stakeholders –
 - Traveller young people
 - New communities

In additional to the “normal” challenges faced by some young people, members of both these sub-sets face additional challenges in relation to their engagement with the mainstream schooling system. These challenges largely relate to their cultural norms, their cultural prioritisation of education, expectations of them due to their culture, language deficits and poverty.
- The fact that young people are experiencing such a range of influencing factors, means that whatever type of alternative learning provision that is developed for both counties, the provision needs to be centred on and tailored to the needs of each individual young person.

1.5 Supports in Cavan and Monaghan to help improve attendance and reduce early school leaving

- It is acknowledged by the Department of Education and Skills in its Action Plan for Education, that early school leaving occurs at a higher level in areas of greater social disadvantage (as evidenced by the Department of Education - Education Indicators for Ireland Table 1 page 23 and Retention Rates by school type – Table 5 page 36) and therefore the DEIS Programme is designed to address equality of education by providing additional supports to schools with that designation. However early school leaving is not singularly a feature of DEIS designated schools

and students of experiencing disadvantage may attend schools that do not have DEIS designation.

Generic Supports for schools

- There are a number of generic supports available to schools which allow them to respond to additional identified needs of pupils. These include access to the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) which is available to all schools by allocation, Student Support Teams in second level schools and engagement with the Education Welfare Service in cases where 20+day student absences occur.

Supplementary Supports in schools

- In addition to generic supports, there a number of supplementary supports available to **some** schools across the two counties. These focus on addressing educational disadvantage and are primarily associated with DEIS designated schools. The supports in question here are :
 - Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)
 - School Completion Programme (SCP)

They belong to the suite of supports which along with the Education Welfare Service make up Tusla's Education support Service (TESS) supports focused specifically on improving attendance, participation and retention by monitoring student attendance and working with young people on re-engagement in education. HSCL is available to DEIS designated schools and SCPs are generally available to DEIS schools but in some cases non DEIS schools will be part of a SCP due to historic reasons.

- In addition to DEIS supports, 7 schools (3 primary and 4 second level school) in Monaghan town are able to access additional support from the Family School Liaison Service which is delivered by the Monaghan Education Centre.

The Family School Liaison Service (FSLs) – Monaghan Town

This service is delivered through Monaghan Education Centre and works across 3 primary and 4 post-primary schools in Monaghan Town that do not have the additional resources of DEIS status schools. It has been delivered in some form since 1999.

The primary focus of the service is to provide one-to-one support for children and young people who are at risk of early school leaving. Most often these children are experiencing social, educational or family issues which are impacting on their ability to engage in school activities and therefore to progress their education.

The service is delivered where it is needed across the 7 schools and is led by referral, primarily from schools, but also from Tusla - Education Welfare, Tusla - Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) and CAMHS. One of the primary aims of Monaghan FSLs is early intervention - preventing the case escalating to the point where PPFS, Education Welfare or Social Work intervention is required.

Examining the reach of specialist supports in schools in Cavan and Monaghan

- Examining the numbers of children and young people enrolled at schools with DEIS/SCP supports in both counties, one can identify that there are more schools and therefore more pupils, that have no access to additional specialist supports focused on improving school attendance and reengaging students, than those with specialist supports across both counties. The table below illustrates the proportion of schools/pupils with no access to supplementary specialist supports.

CAVAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS	MONAGHAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Total No: 75 Total Enrolment 2019/20: 10,010	Total No: 62 Total Enrolment 2019/20: 7,992
8,516 (85%) primary pupils in 65 (87%) primary schools in Co. Cavan do not have any access to early intervention support to mitigate against emerging patterns of early school leaving.	4,579 (57%) students enrolled in 44 (71%) primary schools in Co. Monaghan do not have any access to early intervention support to mitigate against emerging patterns of early school leaving.
CAVAN SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS	MONAGHAN SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS
Total No: 11 Total Enrolment 2019/20: 5,701	Total No: 12 Total Enrolment 2019/20: 5,417
4,737 (83.1%) of post primary pupils in 9 (82%) schools across the county in Co. Cavan are without access to any additional support provision to work with young people and their families to reduce the level of early school leaving.	2,359 (43.5%) students in 4 (33%) second level schools in the county are without access to any additional support provision to work with young people and their families to reduce the level of early school leaving.

(Source: Department of Education and Skills 2019)

- Whilst the Tusla Education Welfare Officers for Cavan and Monaghan engage with both primary and post primary school pupils and their families, the current workload of the EWOs results them only being able to work with pupils that have reached the **40+ day absence** level. Both EWOs in Cavan and Monaghan are working to a maximum capacity caseload at 49-50 cases each. This is an area where there is clear need for additional resources on the group in order to be able to work at an early stage with these vulnerable young people.

Focused thematic supports

- The only other support programmes available to young people under the age of 16yrs arise primarily in the youth work arena and have very specific **focussed thematic remit**. These include:
 - Garda Youth Diversion Programme – Cavan & Monaghan
 - Amplify - Monaghan (entry age was dropped from 16-24yrs to 14-24 yrs)
 - Tusla's Integrated Youth Programme – Monaghan
 - Youth Information Centre – Monaghan (Carrickmacross and Castleblayney)
 - Bounceback Youth Service - Cavan (SE Cavan and West Cavan)
 - Include Youth Service – Monaghan (Clones, Ballybay and Castleblayney)

These programmes have not been designed as alternative education provision targeting young people under the age of 16 who are out of school – it just happens that some of their participants may fall into this category and therefore they are engaged in some form of structured programme which benefits them.

Pilot/Exceptional Programmes

- In the past year, a number of **pilot or exceptional projects** have been developed with a specific focus on engaging young people at risk of early school leaving and those that have already left school early.
 - Pre-Youthreach, Cavan Town – in response to exceptional identified need
 - Pilot iScoil, Monaghan Town (funded by Tusla)
 - Pilot with Compass in Wellbeing Centre, Castleblayney (funded by Tusla)

Transition Programmes

- The effect of a **poor transition from primary school to secondary school** is a factor that stakeholders have identified as one of the significant stressors in a young person life and which can contribute to their likelihood of leaving school early.
- SCP, NEPS and the Family School Liaison Service in Monaghan town offer additional transition supports where primary school pupils are engaged in preparing for the move to second level schools. However, as outlined above these supports are not available to all students universally and more vulnerable students may need additional targeted support to assist them to transition well.

Identifying the service gap

- Whilst it is acknowledged that there are some effective generic supports in schools in both counties for young people with identified additional needs, these are not always sufficient or specialised enough to be able to work effectively with the most vulnerable under 16yr old young people who are most at risk of early school leaving or who have already disengaged. There are also young people who need more intervention than even DEIS school services can offer in order to re-engage them in school.
- Youth support programmes targeting young people not in education employment or training are primarily aimed at young people of 16+ yrs of age whilst other out-of-school provision which can accommodate under 16 yr olds tend to have a specific thematic focus (i.e. justice, building good relations, building resilience) as opposed to having an alternative education provision.
- The service gaps which exist become very relevant when a young person is in need of additional support. Due to the rurality of both counties there is a case to be made for the model of the Family School Liaison Service (FSLs) in Monaghan town being expanded to be made available for both counties as a **mobile service** which can supplement the SCP and DEIS/HSCLS supports available in designated schools.
- With regards to services that support early school leavers under the age of 16 yrs, there is some ground to make up in counties Cavan and Monaghan. There is an evident need which is not being met by current provision and consequently there are at present some young people under 16 yrs that are not engaged in any/sufficient educational input to adequately support their progression in life.

It is imperative that this need is addressed in a manner that will allow some long-term sustainability and impact to be achieved to address this cohort of disengaged young people.

- Alongside this need, sits the need to introduce more early intervention approaches into the primary school system to try to reduce the number of young people getting into the position where that disengage in the lower second level school system.

1.6 Learning from elsewhere

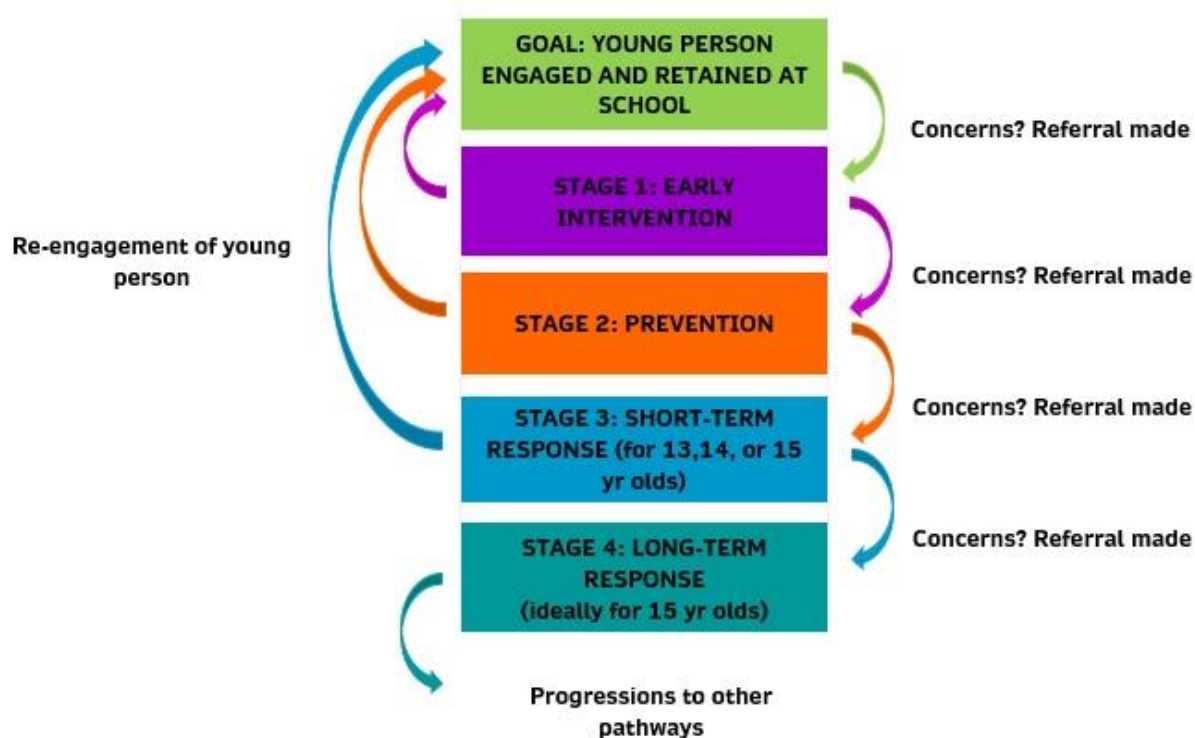
- From the research undertaken by the author the common features embedded in each service that have a proven track record of working well with this cohort young people include:
 - One-to-one support
 - Small numbers in classes
 - Bespoke educational curriculum around the interests of the young person
 - Youth worker input
 - Focus on personal development building confidence, self-esteem, and resilience
 - Holistic response – acknowledging other challenges which may be at play – anxiety, addiction issues, sexual identity issues etc.
 - Meeting the young person where they are at
 - Empowering young people to solution
 - Working from a strengths-based approach

- Opportunity to develop good routines and habits
 - Achievement of accredited modules which can build up over time
 - Building solid relationships with the young person and building trust is critical
 - Co-ordination of services – do not overwhelm the YP in service land
 - Relationship between delivery team members is very important
 - Connection and integration with community services
 - Youthwork and tutor partnership
 - Multiagency Partnership approach delivery and finding solutions – pooling resources
 - Good governance structure for any programme
 - Some mechanism for engaging parents and supporting them to support their young people
 - Flexibility and adaptability to respond to needs wherever they arise in the counties
 - Continuity of funding to retention of staff and their skills and development ensure development
 - Importance of technology for accessing rural areas - this has been highlighted as being especially important in the context of COVID-19)
- What is also clear from analysis carried out is there is a need for a model of learning provision that offers short-term as well as longer-term support for young people.

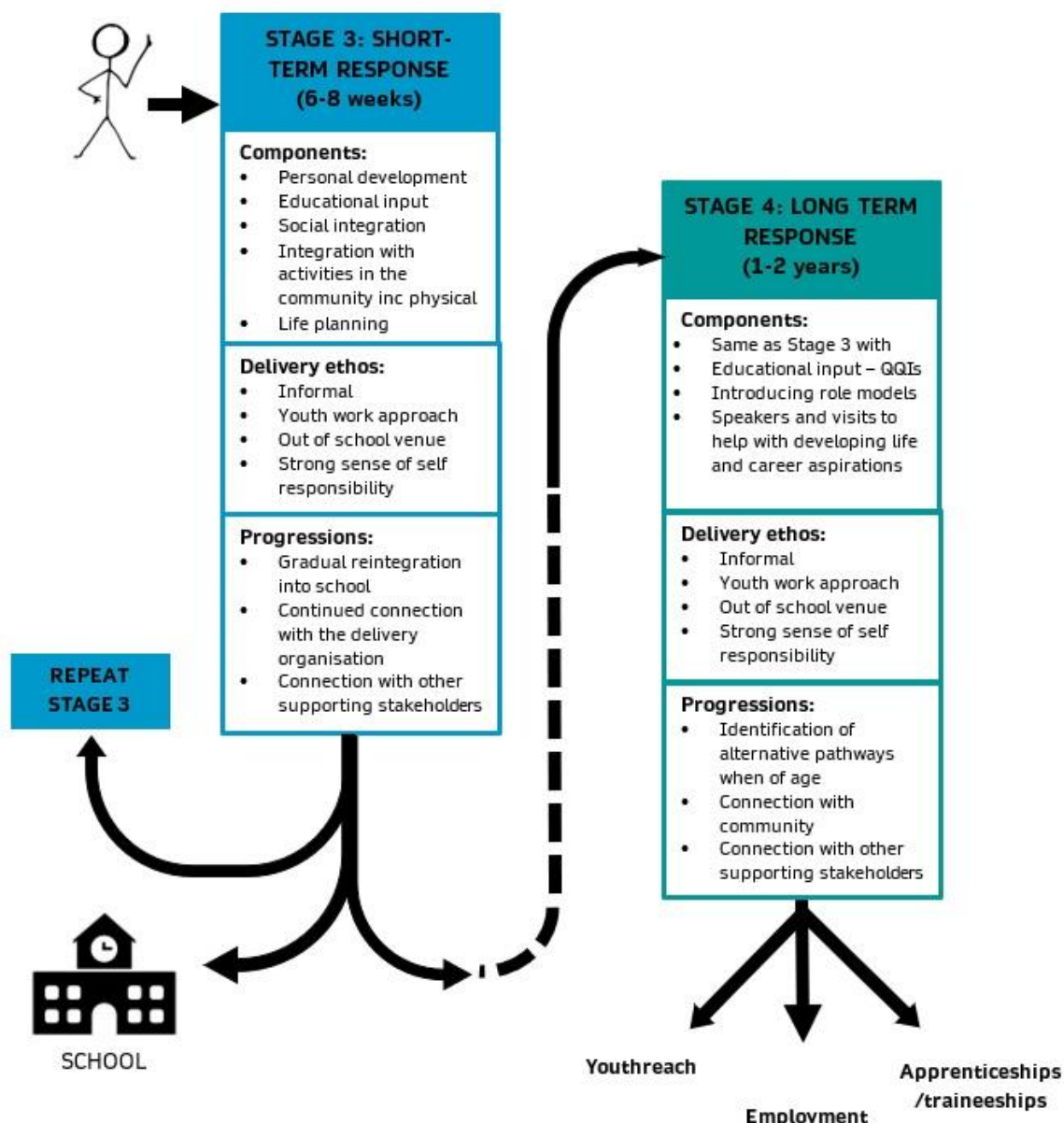
1.7 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: School Retention Whole-School Response

- The author suggests that a **School Retention Whole-System Response** is required if we are to truly respond to the issue of early school leaving for under 16y olds effectively. Whilst this study is primarily concerned with exploring options for alternative leaning provision, the author feels that there are early intervention and prevention elements of the whole system response approach which if planned for and implemented, would ultimately reduce the number of young people at risk of leaving school early and also it would reduce the number that ultimately leave school prematurely.
- Whilst the early intervention and prevention measures referenced may not be solely within the remit of Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board, they are included in this report as a mechanism for stakeholders to engage in a wider conversation about addressing early school leaving in both counties. Through these conversations it is anticipated that relevant stakeholders can engage with the elements of the recommendations that they have a remit for, and therefore collectively a Whole System Response will be activated.
- A Whole System Response has been suggested to bolster the services already in existence and to plug the gaps identified in both counties, so as to reduce the number of children who ***“fall through the cracks and are in danger of being left behind”***.



- Key elements of Stages 1 and 2 are:
 - A Universal Transition programme at primary school level
 - Targeted Transition support at primary and secondary levels by referral
 - A primary school transition tracking system to track safe transition of pupils from primary to second level school
 - Targeted Traveller/Roma community school support programme
 - Utilisation of existing HSCL/SCP and other DEIS resources in schools where they exist and FFSL in Monaghan town with the schools already engaged in the service.
 - An extension of the FSLs in Monaghan Town delivered as a mobile support, **across both counties** to primary and second level school that are without the resources of DEIS/HSCL/SCP offering to work on a universal and targeted basis as required
- Stage 3 – Short Term Response
Modelled on the Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board ALP (as outlined in Section 7.1.1 in this report) and delivered in similar 8-week cycles with an aim to re-engage the young person back into mainstream schooling.
- Stage 4 – Longer term response
Young people who are not suited to a return to mainstream school system or who fail to respond to re-engagement methodologies in Stage 3 may be considered for a longer term engagement in an Alternative Education Programme which features accredited modules (QQIs, NALA – Write on) in a format that may incorporate iScoil or Youthreach support with wrap around services to develop the young person, integrate them with local youth and other relevant services and move them towards other 16yr + progression pathways.



Recommendation 2: The role of Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board in developing an ALP

The primary role to be played by Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board in relation to the Whole System Response is in relation to Stages 3 and 4 where it can play the most relevant role as a partner in the delivery of Stages 3 and Stage 4 of the Whole-System Response for Cavan and Monaghan in order to address the gap in provision in both counties.

The early intervention measures of Stage 1 and Stage 2 (outlined above) are not within the responsibility or remit of Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board, and therefore the role of the ETB in this instance is to engage with other relevant organisations (Cavan CYPSC, Monaghan CYPSC, Tusla, Monaghan Education Centre, NEPS, Department of Education and Skills, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Primary and Second Level Schools) to share the learning and to enrol

them in mobilising collaboratively to seek avenues of sustainable funding through which to progress the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report.

Recommendation 3: Governance of an Alternative Learning Provision

One of the important aspects of the development of any model of alternative learning provision for under 16s, is how it fits in with existing educational provision and how it is governed. The governance structure adopted by the DDLETB ALPs in Dublin (See Figure 10) presents as being robust with the ultimate governance responsibility falling under the remit of the ETB.

Recommendation 4: Estimation of the number of young people in this cohort

There is a need for an exercise to be undertaken to provide a more accurate count of young people under the age of 16 who are at risk of early school leaving or who have already left in Counties Cavan and Monaghan.

This exercise needs to engage the following stakeholders:

- CAMHS HSE
- Tusla – SW and PPFS Tusla
- School Completion Programmes Tusla – TESS
- Home School Community Liaison Scheme Tusla -TESS
- Education Welfare Services Tusla - TESS
- GYDP JLO/Tusla
- Schools Dept of Education & Skills
- NEPS Dept of Education & Skills

Recommendation 5: Flexibility and Mobility of the ALP

Access to the Stage 3 and 4 ALP is of critical importance given the rural nature of both Cavan and Monaghan. Ideally the service needs to be adaptable and fit to move where it is needed in each county.

Recommendation 6: Catering for the needs of Minority Groups of concern

There is a case to be made for a stand-alone support programme for the Traveller community in both Cavan and Monaghan which would focus on improving the education experiences for children and young people and would support them to remain in education by working with children, young people, their parents and schools.

Supporting young people from new communities has to involve supplementary language tuition so as to be able to bring their literacy levels up to a standard which allows them to engage fully in other activities, education and supports.

Recommendation 7: Bolstering existing service provision and avoiding the scenario of “Robbing Peter to Pay Paul”

The overall educational system in Cavan and Monaghan requires additional resource input so as to effectively address the issue of early school leaving early and to avoid a movement of resources from one area to the other, which effectively can be described as “robbing Peter to pay Paul”.

Education Welfare Service

Education Welfare Service is currently staffed by two Education Welfare officers – one for each county, who are both are working on a maximum case load of 49-50 cases each. This means that they only have the capacity work with the young people who have accumulated 40+ days of school absences. This therefore is one specific area where more resources are required in Cavan and Monaghan.

National Educational Psychological Service

The National Educational Psychological Service is also working to maximum capacity with 5 psychologists on the ground covering both counties. Therefore any additional request for NEPS to support an ALP in either county would require additional resources to be allocated to the service.

School Completion Programmes

The current model of delivery of the iScoil Pilot engages two School Completion Programme staff in supporting three young people to participate in the iScoil pilot in Monaghan Town five mornings a week, and therefore they not available to the students in Beech Hill College that need their support.

1.8 Funding the ALP and other recommendations

- Funding availability will continue to present one of the biggest issues to supporting young people, especially vulnerable young people, adequately as they grow and develop. There may be an opportunity to develop a wide-reaching programme encompassing all four stages, under the upcoming Peace + programme, however this can be a challenging programme of funding to access and to administer.
- One of the first avenues for funding to consider is to look at the re-allocation of Home Tuition funding to the provision of an out of school service for young people under 16yrs. This would have to be dependent on the needs of the young people involved and their ability to engage in a setting with small numbers of other young people.
- The author suggests that there may be a possibility of looking for a multi-agency approach to funding. This approach might involve the following departments and agencies:
 - Department of Education and Skills
 - Tusla
 - HSE
 each of which is extremely likely to be working with these “at risk” young people.

1.9 Next Steps to be taken

- This study provides a starting point from which a number of key stakeholders will need to collaborate in considering what their contribution might be to implementing/lobbying for some of the recommendations made above.
- The initial priority for Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board will be to circulate this report to interested parties as a pre-cursor for planned collaborative action.
- Subsequently CMETB's focus should be primarily on addressing the required provision outlined in Stages 3 and 4 for both Cavan and Monaghan. Consultation with key stakeholders collectively is also required as a priority to get a clearer idea of the actual number of young people who would be suitable for a Stage 3 or Stage 4 ALP at present as a pre-cursor for the service to be developed with the best location selected.
- The table below outlines the key elements of each Stage of the Whole-System Response, potential drivers to co-ordinate actions, other collaborators, and possible funders for each stage.

	Key Features	Drivers	Collaborators	Possible Funders
Stage 1: EARLY INTERVENTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Transition Programme • Transition Tracking Programme • Existing SCP • Existing HCSSL/DEIS supports • Mobile Family School Liaison Service 	Monaghan Education Centre	Monaghan Education Centre NEPS Schools EWS Tusla CYPSCs	Department of Education and Skills Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Stage 2: PREVENTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted Transition Programme • Mobile Family School Liaison Service • Targeted programmes/interventions for target groups of concern i.e. Traveller young people, young people from new communities 	Monaghan Education Centre	Monaghan Education Centre NEPS Schools EWS Tusla Youth Organisations CYPSCs	Department of Education and Skills

	Key Features	Drivers	Collaborators	Possible Funders
Stage 3: SHORT TERM RESPONSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight-week intervention model in non-school environment • Youth work approach • Continued connection with school • Gradual re-integration to school • Emphasis on personal development as well as educational input • Achievement of accredited modules • Opportunity to repeat 8-week model if required 	Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board	CMETB Second Level Schools Youth Organisations EWS Tusla/PPFS/BEACON CAMHS NEPS SCPs CYPSCs	Department of Education and Skills Tusla HSE
Stage 4: LONG TERM RESPONSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min 1 year in duration • QQI modules/accredited modules of education • Non-school environment • Youth work approach • Emphasis on personal development as well as educational input • Achievement of accredited modules • Possibly integrating iScoil or Youthreach methodology of learning supplemented with personal development and wrap-around therapeutic supports as appropriate • Potential of developing this response to incorporate Leaving Cert Applied (LCA) or Leaving Cert Vocational Programme (LCVP) 	Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board	CMETB Second Level Schools Youth Organisations EWS Tusla/PPFS/BEACON CAMHS NEPS SCPs CYPSCs	Department of Education and Skills Tusla HSE

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Overview

This report has been prepared by Ruth Daly of Sort-it, for the Cavan and Monaghan Education & Training Board to investigate the possibility of providing Alternative Learning Provision delivery for counties Cavan and Monaghan.

A number of stakeholder and multi-agency working groups in both Cavan and Monaghan have expressed concern about the gap in educational provision that exists in both counties for young people under the age of 16 years, who have disengaged from mainstream education provision. There are a number of young people in both counties that fall into this category and who are not able to avail of any educational service at present. As a result of this disengagement they are missing out on a structured continuation of educational input while they wait to reach the age of 16 when they may have the opportunity to engage in other educational or training structures available in both counties.

The concern of stakeholders is that a prolonged period away from education may create a significant barrier for young people in achieving their full potential in future life and in the short-term it may open them to the possibility of:

- Becoming socially isolated
- Developing unhealthy routines and habits
- Becoming disenfranchised
- Losing confidence in their ability to learn and train for future life opportunities
- Developing poor mental health
- Engaging in behaviours which increase their likelihood of involvement with the justice system.

In order to identify the best way forward in terms of alternative education provision for these young people, it is imperative to understand more about the context of early school leaving pre-16 yrs – how it occurs and the contributory factors that are associated with it.

2.2 Terms of Reference

In response to several conversations between stakeholders happening simultaneously in both counties about creating a response to this gap in educational provision, the Cavan and Monaghan Education & Training Board commissioned this scoping study with the following terms of reference:

1. To establish the needs of young people (under the age of 16) in Counties Cavan and Monaghan who are at risk of leaving school early or who have already disengaged with the formal schooling system.
2. Explore current provision/responses available in counties Cavan and Monaghan, in response to risk of/early school leaving, so as to understand and map out the edges of each existing intervention.
3. Review some of the models of Alternative Learning Provision being employed in Ireland.
4. Make recommendations on foot of above research and analysis as to the most appropriate ALP to be considered in the context of each county.

2.3 Methodology Adopted

The primary step in this study was desk research to explore the strategic context of alternative educational provision in Ireland by reviewing the key strategies and plans which are relevant to this area.

The second area of desk research sought to explore the statistical data collected around early school leaving in Ireland with a view to estimating the actual number of young people in this cohort in Cavan and Monaghan.

The study commenced in March 2020, just before the country went into lockdown due to the COVID-19 epidemic. The consultant engaged with the key stakeholders both in person prior to the lockdown and by telephone during lockdown. This resulted in the engagement with a total of 21 stakeholders to gather their feedback on the subject of early school leaving in Cavan and Monaghan. They were asked about the following:

- The challenges facing young people who have left the mainstream school system or who are at risk of leaving
- How the needs of young people can be incorporated into any model of alternative education provision for both counties
- An estimate of the number of young people in this cohort in Cavan and Monaghan
- What the existing structures of support look like and where their edges rest?
- What models of alternative education provision exist elsewhere in Ireland which might inform plans for Cavan and Monaghan?
- What recommendations can be made about how to progress with the development of specific support for this cohort of young people in Cavan and Monaghan?

A list of the stakeholders interviewed is included in Appendix 1.

2.4 Potential impact of COVID-19 on services and service planning

2.4.1 Immediate impact of COVID-19 on school attendance issues

As the author progressed with the primary research, and in the wake of school closures followed by societal lock-down, a number of stakeholders raised their concerns about how the pandemic might impact on the rate of early school leaving. It was felt that for some young people who were already struggling with attendance at school or with complexities of life at home, the experience of lockdown might add further to their challenges. One stakeholder voiced their concern that by September, having been out of school for 5 ½ months, some young people may not return at all or a greater number may need support to return to education. Therefore, taking action on alternative education provision is even more relevant and timely than anticipated at the outset.

There was also concern expressed by stakeholders that the COVID lockdown may have a negative impact on the mental health of young people, adding to general concerns about their mental resilience which existed pre-COVID and also potentially impacting on the school attendance of some young people.

2.4.2 Challenges of service delivery in a new COVID-19 age

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented every member of society with a changed world in which work, rest and play in a manner which was not even conceivable by us prior to this. In relation to the practicalities of delivering youth services, youth supports and youth education at all levels of school and third level education, there is a lot of planning, risk assessment and creative thinking to be done in order to create new mechanisms to safely engage effectively with young people and deliver the support they need in a way that safeguards the health and minimises the spread of infection for all.

The resilience and creativity of people from all walks of life that has been witnessed in response to the practical implications of lockdown has been heartening and we must endeavour to continue to adapt and adopt new ways of working using technology where possible, in order to develop safe practices for engagement in a post-COVID new-normal.

2.4.3 Impact of COVID-19 on future departmental funding in the post COVID-19 era

The national response to managing the pandemic in Ireland has seen the Irish Government committing unprecedented levels of funding to respond to needs as they have arisen. When this crisis is over and our new-normal is established, the impact that this unplanned but vital expenditure will have on budgets across all governmental departments, will start to unfold, however at present it is unknown. It is possible that there will be a negative impact on the budgets allocated across all governmental departments including those dealing with young people. However early school leaving will continue to present as an issue and therefore we must be prepared for whatever funding opportunities arise when they arise.

3. CONTEXTUALISING THE ISSUE OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

3.1 Concerns around Early School Leaving (ESL)

The legal definition of early school leaving in Ireland is:

“non-participation in school before a young person reaches the age of 16 or before completing three years of post-primary education, whichever is later.”

In counties Cavan and Monaghan, there is concern about the lack of alternative educational provision for young people under the age of 16, which presents a gap in educational provision. In the experience of stakeholders, some young people as young as 12 yrs are establishing patterns of

school refusal for a wide variety of reasons. Whilst there are additional structures in some schools (Home School Community Liaison Scheme - HSCL, School Completion Programme - SCP) in both the counties which support the re-engagement of young people in mainstream school provision, they are not available to every second level school. Additionally, where there are supports available in a school, they do not always bring about a re-engagement of the young people to mainstream schooling.

The result is a cohort of young people across both counties who are effectively missing out on the structure and input of education - in some cases for a number of years, before they come of age to be able to access education or training opportunities. This hiatus in their education can precipitate a range of issues which have a negative impact on the lives of the young people involved.

This cohort of young people are described so well in the quote from the **Programme for New Partnership Government and the 32nd Dáil**:

“...too many of our children still fall through the cracks and are in danger of being left behind.”

There is also a cohort of young people under the age of 16yrs for whom these additional interventions are just not effective and hence they withdraw from the school environment, move to reduced hours, or are excluded.

The 2010 report *“Addressing the Participation, Attendance and Retention of Children in Education”* prepared for the National Education Welfare Board in Ireland, clearly stated that:

“no strategy worked unilaterally in addressing the participation, attendance and retention of young people in education”.

Its findings highlighted the need for a combination of strategies to be adopted with the young person (and their family) at the centre. They focused on the importance of:

- Identifying the needs of the young person
- Putting in place a strategy or combination of strategies to address the needs identified
- Early intervention offering personalised support and engagement of families at key points such as transition points and at point of potential disengagement
- Developing positive and supportive school environments
- Community interventions that maintain connectedness with the student, the school, the family, and the community, addressing both personal (including parent-child conflicts) and practical issues (access to health and mental health care) around disengagement
- The efficacy of intensive case management approach, working with families and children to address emerging problems of poor attendance or behaviour.

The author of this report is of the opinion that the recommendations made in this report in 2010 are still very appropriate ten years after the report was published. This methodology is largely adopted by DEIS designated schools however, they are resourced to provide these additional supports. While it is not suggested that every school should be DEIS designated, it is clear that there are schools in both counties with young people who need additional supports at an early stage to prevent them reaching the crisis point of disengagement from mainstream schooling. There is a case to be made for supports to be applied across both counties on a more mobile, case-by-case basis rather than just being confined to a set of individual schools. This is essentially the approach taken by the Family School Liaison Service (FSLs) delivered in Monaghan town by Monaghan Education Centre.

The Family School Liaison Service (FSLs) – Monaghan Town (see Section 6.1.4)

This service is delivered through Monaghan Education Centre and works across 3 primary and 4 post-primary schools in Monaghan Town that do not have the additional resources of DEIS status schools.

The primary focus of the service is to provide one-to-one support for children and young people who are at risk of early school leaving. Most often these children are experiencing social, educational or family issues which are impacting on their ability to engage in school activities and therefore to progress their education.

The work of the FSLs service is varied and is led by referral, primarily from schools, but also from Tusla - Education Welfare, Tusla - Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) and CAMHS. One of the primary aims of Monaghan FSLs is early intervention - preventing the case escalating to the point where PPFS, Education Welfare or Social Work intervention is required.

It is important to emphasise that the primary goal in working with these young people is to re-engage them back into mainstream education in second level schools and to sustain that engagement to the most appropriate level for them. It is acknowledged that a full return to mainstream schooling may not be an option for some young people and in these cases alternative supports are required in order to re-ignite the young person's appetite for learning, education and progression in life through employing different methodologies of education, in different learning environments, until such an age as they can progress to available alternative pathways into training and education in Cavan and Monaghan.

Therefore, the starting point for this scoping study is the acknowledgement of the following:

- Early School leaving is a feature in the lives of a **small** number of young people in counties Cavan & Monaghan
- The reasons contributing to young people leaving school early are **varied and often times complex**
- Due to this complexity of issues involved, **no “one-size” intervention** will fit all young people’s situations.

Despite the potential challenges of navigating a way to the development of appropriate supports for young early school leavers in Cavan and Monaghan, it must be recognised that the goal of reducing levels of early school leaver is identified locally, nationally on an EU-wide basis as being important both for the reasons of improving short-term outcomes for young people and for improving their life-long economic and health fortunes. As such it is referenced in a number of relevant strategies and policy documents highlighted in the next section.

3.2 What makes the reduction of Early School Leaving a priority: Fit with EU, National and Local Strategies

As part of this study the author reviewed a number of European, National and local strategies that highlight the importance of supporting the young people at the heart of this scoping study – young people under 16 years who have dropped out of school or who are at risk of dropping out.

This section of the report outlines the relevant strategies that specifically identify the need to work with this group of young people and points towards what they have committed to work on.

3.2.1 Fit with National and EU Strategies

Education and Training Framework 2020 – European Commission

The Education and Training Framework 2020, very clearly identifies the detrimental impact on life outcomes that early school leaving can create and also the complex nature of the contributory factors which influence the occurrence of ESL:

“Early school leaving is linked to unemployment, social exclusion, poverty and poor health. There are many reasons why some young people give up education and training prematurely: personal or family problems, learning difficulties, or a fragile socio-economic situation. The way the education system is set up, school climate and teacher-pupil relations are also important factors.

Since there are often complex, interconnected reasons for children not completing secondary schooling, policies to reduce early school leaving must address a range of issues and combine education and social policy, youth work and health-related aspects.”

In the context of Ireland being part of the EU, it is committed to reducing the level of Early School Leaving.

Programme for New Partnership Government and the 32nd Dáil - 2016

The Programme for New Partnership Government developed in 2016 clearly identified the importance of education for the young people of Ireland, stating

“Education is the key to giving every child an equal opportunity in life....Our rates of school completion and participation in higher education continue to rise. And yet,

too many of our children still fall through the cracks and are in danger of being left behind.”

Some of the relevant actions identified in the Programme, which are specifically relevant to early school leavers include:

- Increasing the age of mandatory schooling to 17 yrs
- Publishing a new School Completion Strategy to improve school completion rates

And in particular:

- Examining additional supports to groups working with early school leavers

This study aims to clearly identify some of those “cracks” that exist in counties Cavan and Monaghan and to propose recommendations to reduce the number of young people at risk of falling through them. It is hoped that the recommendations made for “additional supports” mentioned in the Programme for New Partnership Government will still stand in coming years, however with the recent formation of a new Government and the impact of COVID-19, the context for the new Government will have been significantly altered.

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (BOBF): The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People (2014-2020)– Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Of specific relevance to the young people who are the target of this study, BOBF identifies:

Outcome 2: Achieve full potential in all areas of learning and development which includes:

- Supporting the development of social and emotional wellbeing
- Engaging children and young people in learning
- Supporting young people to achieve in education

By working on the achievement of Outcome 2 of BOBF, the State aligns itself with the implementation of specific articles of the UN Convention of Human Rights including:

“Article 28:

Right to education as a progressive and equal right, the State is obliged to.....develop different forms of secondary education and make it available and accessible to all;....take measures to encourage regular school attendance and reduce drop-out rates....

Article 29:

Education should be directed at developing the child’s personality and talents....”

Action Plan for Education, 2019 - Department of Education and Skills

In its Action Plan for 2019, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) specifically addresses the need to work towards minimising educational disadvantage by providing supports:

Goal 2:

“We will advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs in order to support them to achieve their potential”

In its document “Education Indicators for Ireland – Oct 2019”, the Department illustrates the progress over the last 5 years in educational attainment at DEIS and Non DEIS schools, which shows a general improvement on all indicators captured, supporting the aim to close the gap between DEIS and Non-DEIS schools in areas of retention and educational standards.

Table 1: Education indicators for Ireland - 2019

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>
Retention rates in DEIS post primary school (%) Leaving Certificate completion	82.1%	82.7%	84.4%	85.0%	<i>Not yet available</i>
Gap in retention rates – DEIS vs Non-DEIS post primary schools	10.5%	9.3%	8.5%	8.5%	<i>Not yet available</i>
Number of early school leavers started in 5 th years but did not sit Leaving Certificate in 6 th year	2,846	2,417	2,974	2,433	<i>Not yet available</i>
% early school leavers – started 5 th year but did not sit Leaving Certificate in 6 th year	4.3%	5.1%	4.1%	4.4%	<i>Not yet available</i>

(Source: DES – Education Indicators for Ireland – Oct 2019)

However, in the context of Cavan and Monaghan there are just **6 DEIS designated second level schools (2 in Cavan and 4 in Monaghan) out of a total of 23**. In these 6 schools there are additional supports such as School Completion Programmes and Home School Community Liaison schemes available to support young people who are identified as being more vulnerable to early school leaving and school refusal.

DEIS Plan 2017

The DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Programme is designed to tackle equality of education by providing additional supports to schools that are in designated areas of disadvantage, so as to assist the improvement of life-long outcomes for young people attending these schools.

With regards to retention rates at school, the DEIS 2017 Plan identifies the target of improving retention rates at second level DEIS Schools from their current rate of 82.7% to the national norm of 90.2% by 2025.

Additionally, relevant goals for 2019 outlines in the plan are:

Goal 2: To improve the learning experience and outcomes of pupils in DEIS schools

- Supporting transitions across the education continuum – from pre-school, where school-readiness is a key stage, through to further and higher education and training
- Supporting vulnerable groups – a renewed focus on measures to improve attendance, participation and retention of Travellers, Roma, and other students at particular risk of poor engagement with education and early school leaving

and

Goal 4: To support and foster best practices in school through inter-agency collaboration

As a result of focussed strategies such as Better Outcomes Bright Futures – the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, the CYPSC structure as part of TUSLA, National Youth Strategy and others, the mandate for cross departmental and interagency working has been clearly endorsed.

It is clear that this multi-agency approach is better placed to leverage more beneficial and valuable outcomes at an early intervention and prevention as well as at a response level, than a single agency approach. This is particularly the case in the area of attempts to reduce early school leaving, where the contributory factors are very often complex and involve social, emotional, psychological, family, community factors in relation to academic factors.

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021, Dept of Justice & Equality

Reflecting the lower levels of engagement of the Traveller and Roma communities in education in Ireland, The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy has outlined a number of objective and actions which relate to the retention of Traveller/Roma young people at school and to issues of bullying, racism and cultural awareness which continue to need to be addressing the school environment and which have an impact on Traveller and Roma young people remaining at school. The pertinent actions are:

- **Action 10.** The Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and TUSLA will develop proactive, early intervention education welfare supports to promote and support Traveller and Roma attendance, participation and engagement with the education system and retention to the Leaving Certificate or equivalent.
- **Action 17.** The Department of Justice and Equality will fund Traveller community groups to implement community-based supports to assist retention of Traveller and Roma children in the education system. The intervention and the supports to be provided will be designed in consultation with the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs/TUSLA, and Traveller interests.

- **Action 18.** In consultation with representative groups, the Department of Education and Skills will commission research on the effectiveness of their antibullying procedures and guidelines on Traveller and Roma experiences in the school system.
- **Action 21.** The Department of Education and Skills will continue to address the areas of anti-racism, identity-based bullying and cultural awareness through a suite of supports including the recently revised Stay Safe Programme and the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provided by Department funded support services to teachers at Primary and Post-Primary level.

3.2.2 Fit with local strategies

This section of the report examines local strategies relevant to Cavan and Monaghan and how they endorse the importance of supporting the retention of young people at school and where this is not possible the provision of alternative supports to ensure that the best outcomes for young people are preserved.

Cavan and Monaghan Education & Training Board Youth Plan 2018-2020

The Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board Youth Plan 2018-20 is structured around supporting the accomplishment of the 5 outcomes prioritised in BOBF, of which Outcome 2 is directly concerned with attaining educational potential:

BOBF PRINCIPAL OUTCOMES

1. Young people are active and healthy, with positive physical and mental wellbeing
2. **Young people are achieving their full potential in all areas of learning and development**
3. Young people are safe and protected from harm
4. Young people have economic security and opportunity
5. Young people are connected, respected and contributing to their world

Additionally, the plan underlines the need for supporting and participating in interagency collaboration and well as supporting the links between non-formal and formal education sector. Both of these approaches are incredibly important to the development of alternative educational provision for early school leavers under the age of 16 yrs.

Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board Area Profiles 2019 for DCYA

In mid-2019, the Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board completed Area Profiles for both counties. These detailed profiles were designed to examine the needs of young people (10-24 yrs) from the ground-up and identified the geographic areas in both counties where marginalised, disadvantaged, and vulnerable young people were most prevalent. The purpose of the creating the Areas Profiles was to ensure that funding from DCYA under the new reformed funding structure (UBU – Your Place, Your Space) was spent where it was most needed with young people who have the greatest needs.

These profiles clearly identified a number of issues relating to early school leaving by young people under:

- A large proportion of YP are leaving school between the ages of 12-16 and are disengaged from all education until they can enter Youth Reach Programmes, if at all - this makes re-engagement very difficult and prospects of progression to Further Education or training unlikely.
- Young people on reduced hours are not getting necessary supports and are being kept on school registers even though they are not engaged.
- Transition between primary and second level school is a tricky time for young people and if the transition is not a good one it can upset the process of settling into second level for some more vulnerable young people. Ideally there should be additional transition supports available to young people who need it.

Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board - Needs of NEETS in Cavan and Monaghan, 2018

In 2018 the Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board responded to a call from DCYA for applications for projects designed to support young people who were deemed to fall into the NEET category (not in education, training or employment) in both counties. Part of the response was to commission research into the needs of NEETS in Cavan and Monaghan and the creation of a brief for projects that would address their needs.

While this research concentrated in 16-24 yr old young people there was consistent feedback from stakeholders consulted as part of the research, that there was a clear gap in education provision for pre-NEETs - young people under the age of 16yrs, who were refusing to attend school or who had already disengaged from mainstream schooling and who were not old enough to access services in both counties for young people 16yrs plus.

Issues identified included:

- Young people were being retained on reduced hours, but not necessarily progressing their educational attainment
- They are not eligible for other supports/alternative education because of their age and the fact that they have not completed 3 years of second level education
- Tusla Education Welfare Officers do not have sufficient resources on the ground to work with them at an early stage in their school refusal (early intervention)
- Youthreach does not have the remit or the resources to work with this age group of young people
- It is increasingly more difficult to engage young people at 16 yrs, who have been out of education for a couple of years
- Many young people who are out of education at an early age are also socially isolated which can lead to other problems arising such as poor social skills, lack of confidence in their ability to learn and low life aspirations.

Cavan CYPSC Plan 2018-2020

The CYPSC Cavan Plan, like the Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board Youth Plan is nested against the 5 outcomes of BOBF in particular:

Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development

Cavan CYPSC identifies the importance of supporting the disadvantaged and vulnerable especially in relation to those who have left school early but also to understand the factors that have contributed to them leaving school early, so that preventative measures can be implemented in the county to reduce future levels of early school leaving.

While Co. Cavan has been fortunate to have had the opportunity of a number of EU funded programmes targeting young people aged 16yrs + who are not in education, training or employment, there is a recognition that these programmes are not mainstreamed and that it is important to learn

from their methodologies performance in order to be able to seek to replicate similar initiatives when their EU programme funding ceases (2020-2021).

Another area of relevance to this study, which Cavan CYPSC has identified as being of importance in reducing early school leaving, is that of transition stages – not only from Primary Schools to Second Level schools – which is of concern in this study, but from Pre-schools to Primary Schools and from Second Level Schools to Third Level institutions. CYPSC Cavan seeks to support steps that can be introduced to ensure that there is a consistent structure and resourcing of transition support.

Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development

- *Priority Area: Building confidence in young people*
 - Support the ongoing delivery of non-formal education across the county
 - Support the delivery of Personal Youth Development Programme, Journeys Programme and Amplify Programmes across the county
 - Liaise with programme delivery organisations to generate a learning on the factors associated with early school disengagement
- *Priority Area: Supporting key transitions*
 - Source funding to support co-ordinated transitions from preschool to primary school, primary to second level school and second to third level Higher levels of integration and successful transition at all stages Resource used for transitioning students
 - Support transitions by using “Mind the Gap” publication for students or develop own resource for Co. Cavan to support the transition from primary to second level school.
 - Explore potential funding mechanisms under which to deliver Life Skills training for young people transitioning from second level to third level

Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity

- *Priority Area: NEETs*
 - Develop a greater understanding of NEETs and the factors that contribute to their situation in order to work more effectively with them and to intervene at an early stage to prevent the same level of NEETs emerging in Cavan

Monaghan CYPSC Plan 2018-2020

As with the CYPSC Cavan plan, CYPSC Monaghan Plan is nested against the 5 outcomes of BOBF.

Outcome 2: Achieving full potential in learning and development

The plan identifies that while additional supports are available in DEIS schools to help with the retention and re-engagement of young people at school in Primary and Second Level, DEIS designation is limited to 10 out of 62 Primary schools reaching a total of 11.8% of all Primary School Children enrolled in the county.

Priority Area 8: Early Intervention - identifying vulnerable children and young people

- Objective 8.1 Improve the process for identifying vulnerable children and young people in schools leading to interventions which prevent early school leaving and other social and emotional issues developing to crisis level

Priority Area 10. Support key transitions

- Objective 10.1 Provide support for transitions from primary to second level school and second to third level

Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity

The plan also features the need to support NEETS and to understand their needs better so as to learn about how better in intervene at an earlier stage to help reduce the likelihood of early school leaving.

Priority Area 17: NEETs

Objective 17.1 Profile young people not in education, employment or training in Monaghan

Objective 17.2 Reduce the number of NEETS in Co. Monaghan

Cavan Local Economic & Community Plan 2016-2021

Cavan Local Economic and Community Plan identified the need to improve outcomes for children and young people through local and national interagency working using the CYPSC mechanism in the contact of BOBF.

- Objective 9.4 Develop an integrated response to the needs of young people, helping them to reach their full potential

Monaghan Local Economic & Community Plan 2015-2021

Monaghan's Local Economic and Community Plan placed importance on improving the life outcomes of people living in the county by ensuring support for the to participate in education and lifelong learning. It also identified the importance of facilities and supports for young people in an informal educational setting which is an important element of the development of alternative educational provision for the county.

8.1 High Level Goal 2:

- To Support individuals and communities in participating in educational and lifelong learning opportunities
 - 2.7 To increase numbers participating in training and further education opportunities.
 - 2.7.3 To implement a range of initiatives to support early school leavers and socially excluded young people to participate in lifelong learning opportunities.
 - 2.7.4 To support the progression of disadvantaged young adults into further education, training, and employment.
 - 4.4 Develop the availability of all youth services and activities for all young people in the county

Tusla Cavan Monaghan: Area Commissioning Plan 2018-2020

Tusla sees early intervention support in schools as a vital component in its mandate to identifying vulnerable children and young people at the earliest opportunity possible and stepping in to prevent an escalation to level where crisis interventions are required. Early intervention results in better outcomes for the children and young people. This is clearly identified in Tusla Cavan Monaghan's Area Commission Plan 2018-2020 as one of the ways Tusla wants to work in this period:

REDUCE DEMAND FOR CRISIS SERVICES BY BUILDING CAPACITY OF PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

We will identify vulnerable children & families earlier by :

- ✓ **Funding community based, home delivered accessible, non-stigmatising family support services in all communities** so that key agencies such as Early Years and Public Health Services are confident to refer to us at an early stage, before problems in families escalate;
- ✓ **Co-funding of universal and specialist parenting programmes on an interagency basis;**
- ✓ **Developing relationships and fund targeted interventions with the education sector** so that children aged 6 – 12 years who are experiencing difficulties in their lives are identified before problems escalate during adolescence.

This is taken through to one of the commission priorities under the heading of “**Building on early intervention and prevention capacity at all levels of need**”, which identified Priority Focus 2 as :

PRIORITY FOCUS 2:

Tusla in Cavan and Monaghan has identified the need for improved co-ordination across all Education Support Services across and improved integration with Tusla services. Improved co-ordination and integration will result in earlier intervention, prevention of child abuse and reduction in the numbers of children with complex needs.

Tusla is one of the key agencies which will play a role in the development of alternative educational provision in both counties as many of the young people identified as early school leavers or those at risk, and their families are engaged with Tusla either through the spectrum of services areas from Social Work intervention to Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS), Youth Outreach or Beacon Family Support.

3.3 Considering of the cost of school leaving early?

Early School Leaving is widely recognised as being associated with striking costs both to the individual and society. This study does not aim to present a literary review of research which reflects this assertion, however it does point to a few sources which offer a suggestion of the degree to which early school leaving costs individuals through their lives and also the extent to which this also impacts wider society – thereby making it a concern for everyone.

A Fact Sheet on Early School Leaving developed as part of an Erasmus project (ec.europa.eu), which is included in Appendix 2, points to number of "economic" costs in terms of lower productivity, lower tax revenues and higher welfare payments. Additionally, early school leaving generates very large "social" costs such as high levels of social isolation in later life, increased demand on the health system, and less social connectedness in life. The same fact sheet suggests that each additional year of school attendance results in €70,000 euro in additional lifetime income.

A useful perspective on the impact of early school leaving is to examine the cost to the individual, to the economy and to the community/society. The author identified research which examined this from an Australian perspective. While it is not directly translatable to the Irish context it provides to us some indication of what the scale of costs might be in Ireland.

“Counting the Costs of Lost Opportunity in Australian Education” Stephen Lamb and Shuyan Hua, Mitchell Institute Report No. 02/2017 2017

“Education is one of the main mechanisms through which opportunity and success are determined and is a key predictor of a person’s level of engagement in lifelong work and study. Individuals with higher levels of education have higher-paying jobs, better general health, and a lower likelihood of engaging in crime. They also gain from a range of family household benefits, such as more effective household management and care of their children’s health and education.”

Early school leaving is associated with reduced earning capacity in life and leads to a higher likelihood of frequency and duration of unemployment during the lifetime. The report defines two primary areas in which the costs of early school leaving are incurred :



The researchers Lamb and Huo, carried out extensive modelling in order to estimate the cost of early school leaving in Australia. They based their calculations on these fiscal and social cost categories and made the distinction between an early leaver and a disengaged young person.

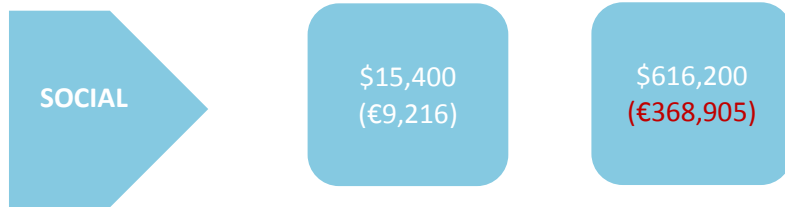
- **An early school leaver in their terms was a student who failed to completed Year 12 or equivalent (this would be Leaving Cert year) by the age of 19.** The researchers divided this group into those who were likely to continue their education and those who were likely to remain as lifetime early leavers across their lifetime (12%) in order to measure the true impact of early school leaving.
- **A disengaged young person is one who is not in full-time work of study at the age of 24.** Their research extracted an estimate of the number of these young people would remain disconnected from full-time work or study over much of their adult life (13%). It was felt that if by the age of 24 a young person had not re-engaged with education or training; they were not likely to do so in their later life.

From this base the researchers examined the costs of early school leaving for both categories of young person (in Australia dollars and euro equivalent):

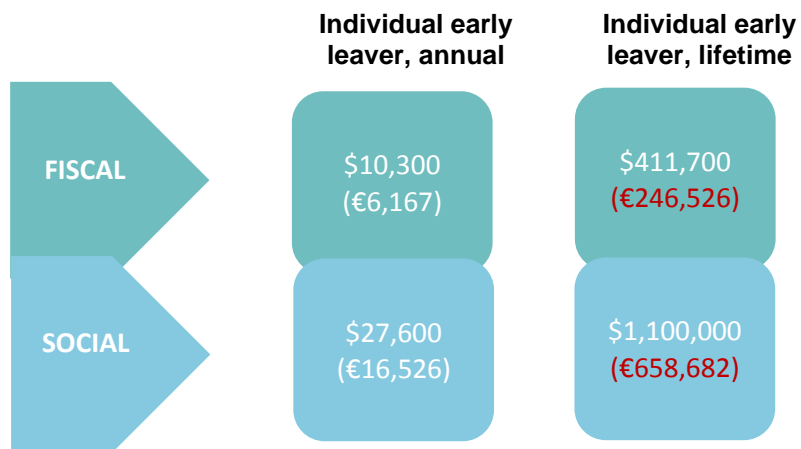
Figure 1: Costs of early School Leaving – Australian Research

Early school leaver – 19 yrs old (2014 net present value)





Disengaged young person – 24 yrs old (2014 net present value)



The life-time term cost of early school leaving in fiscal and social terms is 2.4 times higher for a disengaged young person at 24yrs than an early school leaver at 19yr old.

This information does not allow us to extrapolate the figures in order to make an estimate of the cost of early school leaving in Cavan and Monaghan because we do not have the same data set or modelling capability to replicate the calculations. However, it does start to present to the readers, the potential extent of the costs to both counties and to the personal lives of young people.

3.4 What does this tell us about the strategic context of early school leaving?

What we know at this point in the study, is that the goal of reducing levels of early school leaving is embedded in the strategic plans for the county both nationally and locally as well as on a European level.

The rationale for this is clear – **life outcomes for individuals are better when they do not leave school early:**

“Disparities in educational attainment lead to major differences in many areas of life: people who miss out face increased likelihood of experiencing unemployment or underemployment, crime, public welfare dependency and poor health.”

*“Counting the Costs of Lost Opportunity In Australian Education”
Stephen Lamb and Shuyan Huo, Mitchell Institute Report No. 02/2017 2017*

And we want to safeguard against the situation where

“...too many of our children still fall through the cracks and are in danger of being left behind.”

Programme for New Partnership Government developed in 2016

As the Australian model of costing early school leaving demonstrates, it makes financial sense in the long-term to invest in early intervention supports to reengage young people under the age of 16yrs in education, to support them to improve their prospects and to help them to fulfil their potential.

4. WHAT IS THE SCALE OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING IN CAVAN & MONAGHAN?

4.1 What do the statistics tell us?

This study focuses on the cohort of young people in the age bracket of 13-15 years who are not attending mainstream second level school or who are considered at risk of leaving school.

Using the baseline of Census 2016 figures, the author has identified the number of young people aged 9-11 yrs recorded in the 2016 Census who are now in the 13-15 yrs age group in 2020. The 13-15yr old age group roughly equates to 1-3rd years in school (this does not allow for the impact of migration into or out of both counties). This data suggests that currently there are in the region of:

- 3,464 young people aged 13-15 yrs in Co. Cavan
- 2,758 young people aged 13-15 yrs in Co. Monaghan

Ideally, we would like to be able to put a definitive figure on the number of young people in Cavan and Monaghan under the age of 16 who are currently not attending school, to know the size of the challenge we are dealing with and to be able to develop appropriate strategies to respond to the level of need that exists.

However, in practice this specific number is not recorded and made available in one place. Therefore, we can approach developing an estimate of the rate of early school leavers by looking to three publicly available statistics.

4.1.1 School Attendance

Statistics on school attendances give an inkling of the level of young people at risk of early school leaving. The most recent publication on school attendance from the Tusla is based on the academic year 2016/17. According to the figures for that year, school attendance at Primary School level was better in Monaghan with an average of 4.3% (7.9 days/year) being lost per student, compared to 5.0% (9.3 days/year) for Co. Cavan. Both were lower than the average figure for the State (5.6%).

Table 2: Key statistics on school attendance 2016/17: Primary Schools

2016/2017	Average % of student days lost	Average no. of days	Enrolment 2016/17	% of students with 20-day absences	Estimated No. of students with 20-days absences	Average % expulsions	Average % suspensions
PRIMARY SCHOOL							
Monaghan	4.3%	7.9	7694	6.7%	515	0.02%	0.07%
Cavan	5.0%	9.3	9786	9.3%	910	0.00%	0.06%
State	5.6%	10.2	--	10.9%	--	0.02%	0.48%

(Source: Tusla 2018)

At post-primary level school, there was a higher percentage of student days lost in Co. Cavan (9.2%) than in the State (8.2%), whilst Monaghan was marginally lower at 7.9% .

Looking at the level of 20-day absences from school in one school year, the levels at Primary School were on average half of those which occur at Second level, with a higher level of 20-absence at Primary School in Cavan – 9.3% (910) of pupils missing 20+ days of school in that year. The trend at Second Level switched around with Monaghan demonstrating that 15.7% of second level students (841 based on 2016/17 enrolment figures) recorded 20+ days absences.

Table 3: Key statistics on school attendance 2016/17: Post-Primary Schools

2016/2017	Average % of student days lost	Average no. of days	Enrolment 2016/17	% of students with 20-day absences	Estimated no. of students with 20-day absences	Average % expulsions	Average % suspensions
POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL							
Monaghan	7.9%	13.1	5360	15.7%	841	0.06%	3.51%
Cavan	9.2%	15.4	5202	14.5%	754	0.37%	3.49%
State	8.2%	13.7	--	15.8%	--	0.60%	4.30%

(Source: Tusla 2018)

The report identifies a greater divide between urban/rural locations with greater absences noted in urban areas than in rural areas. Also, there was a noticeable increase in absences by children in areas of greater disadvantage attending DEIS schools as compared to non-DEIS schools. Suspensions and expulsion rates were higher at post-primary level than at primary, both on a county and State basis.

OBSERVATION 1:

If one makes the assumption that young people recording school absences of 20 days or more per year are demonstrating greater risk of early school leaving than those with less absences, then we can learn from these statistics about the potential level of at-risk young people in both counties.

Applying the % of 20-day absences which occurred in 2016/17 to the 2019/20 enrolment figures for Cos. Cavan and Monaghan, it would suggest that in the current academic year (without the impact of the COVID closure of schools being factored in) there potentially would have been in the order of 931 children in Cavan and 535 children in Monaghan at Primary School and 826 young people in Cavan and 850 young people in Monaghan at Second Level in this at-risk category at second level.

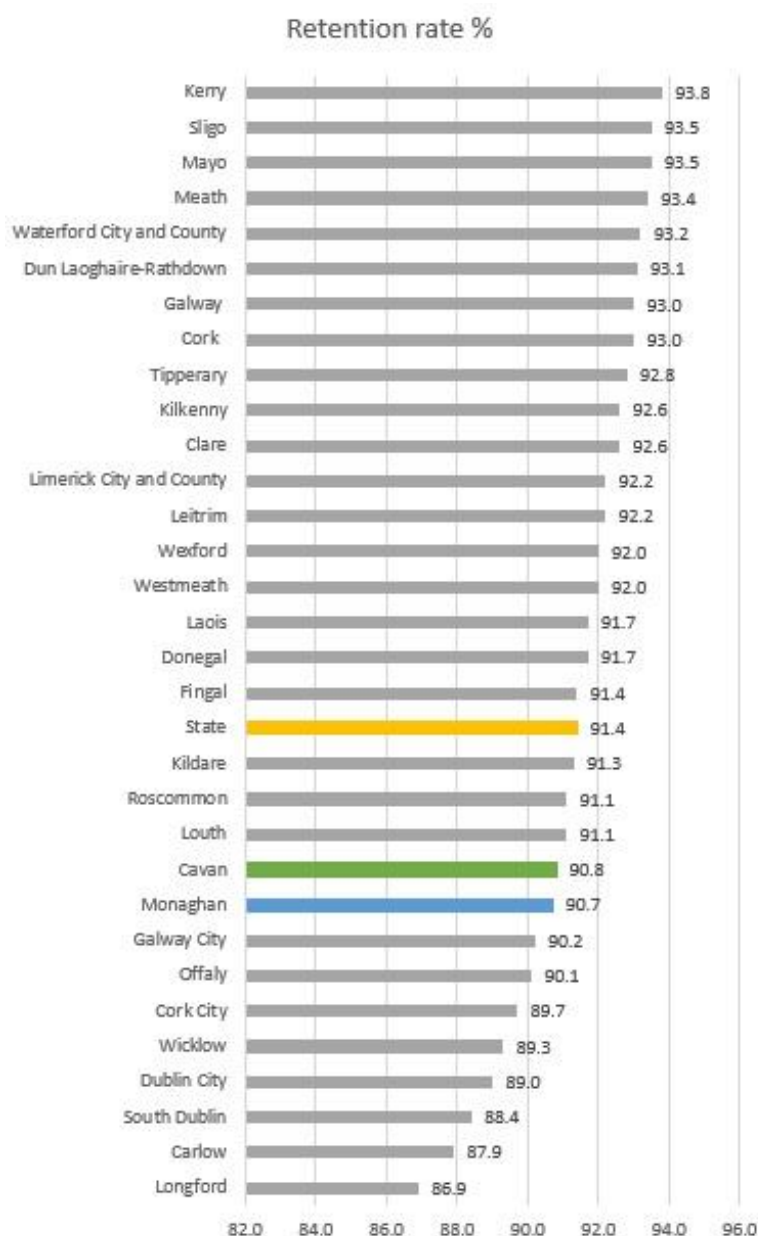
Young people at risk of ESL	Cavan	Monaghan
Total enrolment at Primary level	10,010	7,992
% of 20-day absences Primary 2016/17 (national %)	9.3%	6.7%
Estimated number of 20-day absences using 2016/17 rate and applied to 2019/20 enrolments	931	535
Subset of young people at risk at Primary school	931	535
Total enrolment at Post-primary level	5,701	5,417
% of 20-day absences post-primary 2016/17 (national %)	14.5%	15.7%
Estimated number of 20-day absences using 2016/17 rate and applied to 2019/20 enrolments	826	850
Subset of young people at risk at Post-Primary school	826	850

4.1.2 Retention Rates at Second Level School

The second set of statistics is from The Department of Education and Skills, in their report “*Retention rates of pupils in second-level schools – Entry Cohort 2012*”. This report examines the number of young people who entered the school system in 2012 and captures the number who progressed to Leaving Cert in 2018.

From this data it can be seen that the retention rate to Leaving Certificate across the country averages out at **91.4%**, with retention rates in Cavan and Monaghan slightly lower than the State figure but broadly similar at **90.8%** and **90.7%** respectively. There is a small difference between the genders with a lower National retention rate for males (**89.2% male: 92.5% female**).

Figure 2: Retention Rates to Leaving Certificate by county – 2012 cohort



There is also a marginal difference in the retention rates for different school types as illustrated below: (Source: Department of Education & Skills 2019)

Table 4: Retention Rates to Leaving Certificate by school type and gender – 2012 cohort

School Type	Male	Female	Total
Secondary	92.1%	94.2%	93.2%
Community & comprehensive	88.7%	93.0%	90.7%
Vocational	86.8%	90.5%	88.5%
Total	89.2%	92.5%	90.8%

(Source: Department of Education & Skills 2019)

Finally, the report examined data for retention at schools with DEIS status compared to non-DEIS school. This demonstrated that based on the 2012 cohort retention figures, by Leaving Cert stage, non-returners at DEIS schools (15.3%) were over twice the rate than at non-DEIS schools (6.6%). The table below illustrates the difference between DEIS and non-DEIS school at each year in the second level cycle. This data was not available on a county by county basis.

Table 5: Retention Rates by year of school by school type – 2012 cohort

Year of Entry	DEIS Schools		Non-DEIS Schools		Difference between DEIS and non-DEIS	All Schools	
	Retention Rate	Failed to return	Retention Rate	Failed to return		Retention Rate	Failed to return
Entry cohort	100%	---	100%	---	---	100%	---
Junior Cycle Year 2	99.0%	1.0%	99.3%	0.7%	0.3%	99.2%	0.8%
Junior Cycle Year 3	97.9%	2.1%	98.8%	1.2%	0.9%	98.6%	1.4%
Junior Certificate	96.1%	3.9%	98.0%	2.0%	1.9%	97.6%	2.4%
Senior Cycle Year 1	93.9%	6.1%	96.5%	3.5%	2.6%	95.9%	4.1%
Senior Cycle Year 2	88.9%	11.1%	93.8%	6.2%	5.9%	92.7%	7.3%
Leaving Certificate	84.7%	15.3%	93.4%	6.6%	8.7%	91.5%	8.5%

(Source: Department of Education & Skills 2019)

Deficits in this data:

Note from the report:

“It should be noted that this report deals with retention within the State-aided schooling system only. It does not take account of important educational pathways outside this system, such as Youthreach and apprenticeship training. In effect, pupils leaving school to undertake these programmes are treated as Early School Leavers for the purposes of this analysis.

It seems reasonable to assume that the ‘true’ retention rate, comparable to completion of upper second-level education (equivalent to NFQ levels 4,5 and 6 Advanced), is higher than that shown in the table above, when participation in apprenticeship, out-of-school programmes and other training within the first year of leaving school is considered.”

Source: Department of Education & Skills –
Retention Rates of pupils in second level schools – 2011 Cohort, 2018

It can be clearly seen that the instance of early school Leaving increases considerably as young people progress towards Leaving Cert in both DEIS and non-DEIS schools however the difference in the retention rates of the two categories of school also widens with the progress through each academic year - from 1.9% difference at Junior Certificate level to 8.7% by Leaving Certificate level.

OBSERVATION 2:

This report is concerned with the ESL rates in the lower secondary school level (young people under 16 years of age). Retention rates to Junior Cert are not provided on a county by county basis, therefore the national rates have been applied to Cavan and Monaghan enrolment figures in order to estimate the potential number of young people who would be likely not to reach Junior Cert in 2020 (disregarding the impact that COVID 19 has created) of those who started second level in 2017.

County	Co. Cavan	Co. Monaghan
Retention Rate to Leaving Certificate	90.8%	90.7%
Non-completion rate to Leaving Certificate	9.2%	9.3%
Second Level Enrolments 2019/20	5,701	5,417
Estimated number of early school leaving young people not completing Leaving Cert based on 2019/20 enrolments	524	503
Second level enrolments at DEIS schools 2019/20	964	1,626
Potential No. of non-completers of Junior Cert at DEIS schools applied to 2019/20 enrolment figures – these are at risk young people. (Based on the national rate of 3.9% for the cohort entering in 2012 and due to leave in 2018)	37	63
Second level enrolments at non-DEIS schools 2019/20	4,737	3,791
Potential No. of non-completers of Junior Cert at Non-DEIS schools applied to 2019/20 enrolment figures - these are at risk young people. (Based on the national rate of 2.0% for the cohort entering in 2012 and due to leave in 2018)	95	76
Potential cohort of young people at risk of ESL by 2022	132	139

(Source: Department of Education & Skills 2019)

4.1.3 Highest level of education completed

Whilst we might not be in a position to put an exact number of young people under 16yrs who are at this moment not engaged in full time in Cavan and Monaghan, Census 2016 provides us with an

opportunity to examine the number of young people in the two age categories 15-19yrs and 20-24 yrs and their highest levels of education.

Table 6: Highest level of education achieved – young people 2016

CAVAN	Total	No formal education	Primary	Lower secondary	Total	Early School Leaver rate
15-19 yrs	4,377	13	35	89	137	3.1%
20-24 yrs	3,525	22	64	201	287	8.1%
Total	7,902	35	99	290	424	5.4%
Monaghan	Total	No formal education	Primary	Lower secondary	Total	Early School Leaver rate
15-19 yrs	4,016	3	8	72	83	2.1%
20-24 yrs	2,975	13	41	165	219	7.4%
Total	6,991	16	49	237	302	4.3%

(Source: Census 2016)

4.1.4 Education and the Traveller community

According to the Census of 2016, 0.63% of the Cavan population and 0.45% of the Monaghan population identifies as belonging to the Traveller community. However, reviewing this data against that of the Department of Housing in 2016, which accounts for 156 traveller families in Cavan and 157 Traveller families in Monaghan, it suggests that the Census figures might be under representing the size of the Traveller Community in both counties as it is widely accepted that family sizes in Traveller community are likely to have on average 5-6 members.

Table 7: Population of Traveller community – 2016

	Cavan			Monaghan		
	Traveller Community Individuals	No. Families	Travellers as % of total population	Traveller Community Individuals	No. Families	Travellers as % of total population
2016	475	156	0.63%	276	157	0.45%

(Source: Census 2016)

The 2016 Census also suggests that nationally there is a larger proportion of the Traveller community under the age of 25yrs than above it, and than in the general population as outlined in the table below.

Table 8: Key indicators on education and the Traveller community – 2016

Factor	Nationally	General Population
Proportion of those under 15yrs in the Traveller Community	39.7%	21.4%
Proportion of those in the Traveller Community under the age of 25 yrs	56.8%	34.6%

(Source: Census 2016)

This is borne out in the breakdown of Census 2016 figures by county as illustrated in the table below.

Table 9: Population of Traveller young people in Cavan & Monaghan 2016

	Cavan	% of total Travellers	Monaghan	% of total Travellers
Young Travellers (0-4)	72	15.2%	30	10.9%
Young Travellers (5-9)	73	15.4%	26	9.4%
Young Travellers (10-14)	56	11.7%	34	12.3%
Young Travellers (15-19)	44	9.3%	35	12.6%

Young Travellers (20-24)	25	5.2%	25	9.0%
Total Young Travellers (10-24)	270	56.8%	150	54.3%

(Source: Census 2016)

Census 2016 also tells us that levels of education in the Traveller community were well below that of the general population documenting that 55% of Travellers had left school by the age of 15 yrs with only 1% progressing to third level education. There are no statistics collated which relate specifically to Cavan and Monaghan, however enrolment figures for Traveller pupils collected by the Department of Education and Skills suggest the proportion of enrolments of Traveller young people are reasonably in line with the Census figures and therefore potentially under-reported.

Table 10: Enrolment of Traveller children and young people in Cavan & Monaghan

	Cavan			Monaghan		
	Total Post primary enrolments	Traveller enrolments	Travellers as % of total pupils	Total Post primary enrolments	Traveller enrolments	Travellers as % of total pupils
2013-2014	4,927	36	0.7%	5,818	36	0.6%
2014-2015	4,952	33	0.7%	5,352	37	0.7%
2015-2016	5,060	27	0.5%	5,410	36	0.7%

(Source: DES – Number of pupils who are members of the Traveller community, Feb 2017)

Whilst the Action Plan for Education 2016-19 did reference the focus of increasing Traveller participation at third level, there is a need first to work towards supporting Traveller young people to remain at school at the very least to complete their lower secondary education in order to assist them in achieving the best education outcomes in the most appropriate onward pathways possible. This goal has been identified in the National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017.

The lack of quantitative data on the Traveller community does give rise to a reliance on anecdotal information about the scale of the challenges that this community is dealing with and results in a gap in baseline information upon to which to measure any positive actions taken to support the needs of this community.

4.2 What do the stakeholders tell us?

Throughout the process of consultation with stakeholders for this study, there was no clear consensus on the actual number of young people in both counties who are not attending school. This obviously leads to a difficulty in being able to adequately address the issue of alternative learning provision if we cannot put a figure on the extent of the problem and therefore manage to ascertain the level of funding that would be required to address the issue effectively.

The primary source for this information should be the 23 second level schools across both counties, however at the time of this study there was not the opportunity to canvas schools due to the COVID related closures.

There are also a number of stakeholders who are working with vulnerable young people under the age of 16 yrs, some of whom are not currently engaged in mainstream education. These include:

- Tusla Education Welfare Services (TESS)
- Tusla Social Work & PPFS
- CAMHS
- Garda Youth Diversion Projects
- Cavan Traveller Movement

The author feels that there is an immediate need for collaboration and information sharing (under strict guidelines) between these organisations in order to clearly identify the number of young people who make up this under 16 yrs early school leavers cohort in both counties and their location within each county.

Suggestions made by stakeholders during the course of this study help to give some indication of the size of the target group that have already left school and the proportion of those that may be at risk:

	Estimated scale of ESL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A DEIS School in Co. Monaghan – estimated that about 5% of the of student population are pupils at risk of early school leaving. They are working with 12% in the School Completion Programme 	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A 2nd DEIS School in Co. Monaghan – are working with approximately 10% of student population in their School Completion Programme, considered to be struggling to engage at school. Some of these will be more at be at risk of early school leaving. 	>10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A DEIS School in Co. Cavan involved in a SCP – estimated that about 5% of student population at risk of early school leaving 	5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tusla Cavan & Monaghan – Approximately 600 young people are currently engaging with Tusla across its services including Social Work Involvement, Youth Outreach, Prevention Partnership & Family support Programme (PPFS), Beacon Programme across Cavan and Monaghan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is estimated that approximately 40 of these are not in education – 6.6%, however it should be noted that these may also include 16 and 17 year olds 	6.6%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Monaghan GYDP approx. 80% of YP (young people being engaged in intensive work) are out of school due to expulsions, reduced hours, suspensions or long-term suspensions – where the school keeps their places open 	9 young people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tusla Education Welfare Monaghan is working with a case load of 49 active cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the majority of which are 40-50 days absent Mostly 12, 13 and 14 yr olds Mostly male – about 80/20 male : female 	1.77% over 40 days absent (as % of 12-15yr olds)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tusla Education Welfare Cavan is working with a case load of 50 active cases 	1.44% over 40 days absent (as % of 12-15yr olds)

4.3 What does this tell us about the scale of early school leaving in Cavan and Monaghan?

The two previous sections have provided a number of lenses through which to look at the potential scale of early school leaving in Cavan and Monaghan. In order to access a more accurate estimate of actual numbers in this under 16 yrs cohort, a manual data analysis exercise would have to be undertaken by each of the stakeholder organisations to interrogate their client records in order to identify the number of under 16yr olds who are not currently engaged in full time education or on

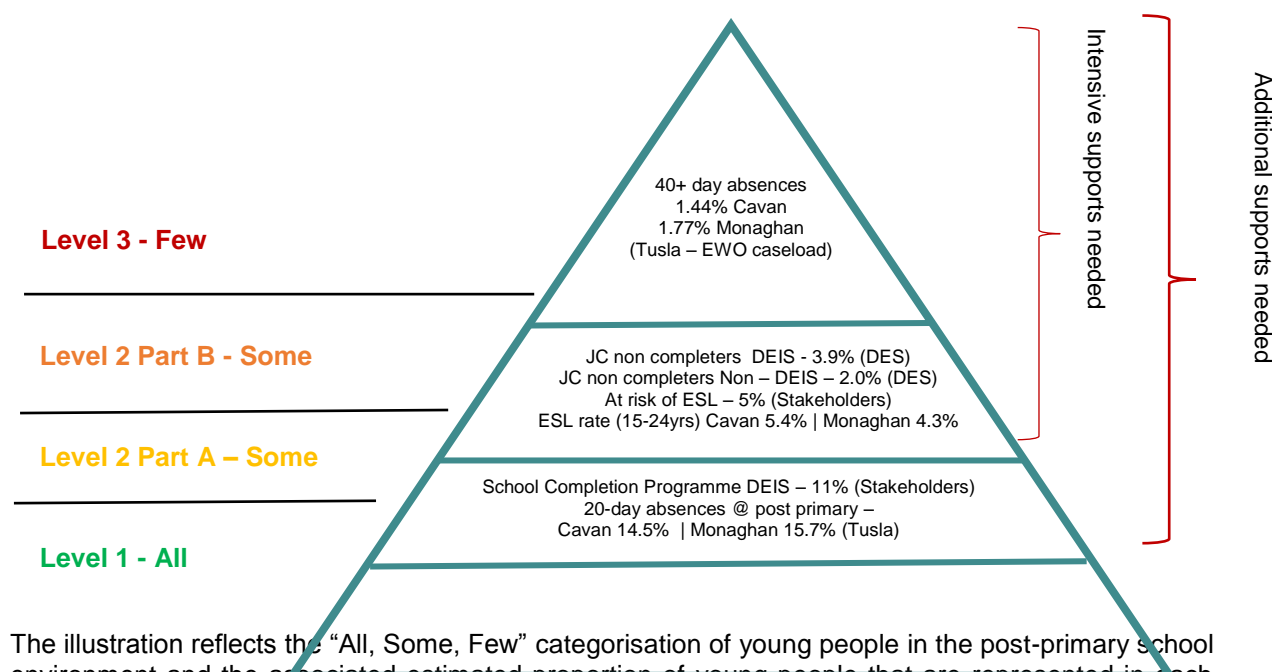
reduced hours and those at risk of disengagement. Once this is complete, they should come together to cross reference their data to ensure that each individual young person is only being counted once.

In the absence of this exercise the author has suggested the following scale which may be useful to quantify the potential levels of early school leaving and scale of young people at risk of early school leaving from second level schools. This scale reflects the illustrates the phenomenon within support services where:

- General/universal services are needed/available for **all**
- Targeted additional services are required to support Some part A and Some Part B
- Specialised services are required to support the **few**

The consultant has constructed an illustration (Figure 2) borrowed from the “Levels of support for children and families” used by Tusla and adapted to reflect occurrence of early school leaving (ESL). Based on feedback from stakeholders, it attempts to summarise the estimated number of young people in this vulnerable cohort who require additional support to remain engaged in learning and at school.

Figure 3: Levels within early school leaving



The illustration reflects the “All, Some, Few” categorisation of young people in the post-primary school environment and the associated estimated proportion of young people that are represented in each category in Cavan/Monaghan. The figures included are based on published statistics and stakeholder feedback related to early school leaving (ESL). The illustration attempts to summarise the estimated number of young people in this vulnerable cohort who may require additional support to remain engaged in learning and at school.

- The illustration starts out with the estimated number of young people in the age category 13-15yr in 2020 in each county. This is depicted in the bottom Level 1 and represents the “All” category of young people who received universal school supports and education
- **Level 2 Part A** of the illustration relates to the Some “Part A” and reflects the estimated proportion of young people who are identified as struggling with engagement or attendance at school and are identified as requiring some additional support.
 - Indications from Stakeholders attached to DEIS school, suggest that approximately 11% of the student body will engage in School Completion Programmes in their schools
 - DES statistics suggest that in Cavan 14.5% of the student body at second level and 15.7% in Monaghan have triggered the 20-day school absence level

Young people who are referenced in these numbers require additional support to help them to re-engage in school, which may come in the form of linking with the School Student Support Team and NEPs as well as the School Completion Programme, Home School Liaison Officer or Monaghan Town Family School Liaison Service (FSLs) where available. Such interventions will make the difference for some of these young people in assisting them to re-engage and be retained at mainstream school. For those young people who do not have access to these additional services or for whom the interventions are not successful, they are referred to in Level 2 – Part B of the illustration.

- **Level 2 Part B** illustrates the smaller proportion of Level 2 young people who may not respond to some of the early interventions available at school. They constitute the smaller proportion of young people who do not continue to complete the Junior Certificate - 3.9% nationally at DEIS school and 2.0% at non-DEIS schools. Stakeholder estimates put this cohort of young people who are at risk of leaving school early to be 5% of the student body of under 16yr olds.

This cohort of young people require additional tailored supports in aimed at helping deal with the causal factors which are contributing to their school refusal. These may be social or emotional issues, learning issues, family factors, confidence, anxiety or motivational order to assist them to re-engage. They require a one-to-one tailored approach which may include some structured time away from the school environment before re-integration can be achieved.

- **Level 3** of the illustration refers to the “Few” young people who are engaged with Education and Welfare having accumulated 40+ day absences and who are at most risk of educational disadvantage often having disengaged entirely from school or being on reduced timetables. These figures are based on the live caseload numbers for EWOs in Cavan and Monaghan which are a factor of the capacity of the Education Welfare officers rather than a reflection of the actual number of young people in this “FEW” category.

Again a tailored approach to working with these young people is required so as to effect any change in their perceptions of their own ability to learn and to help them to tap into their own motivation for engagement in life.

With the absence of an exact figure of young people under the age of 16yrs, who are currently not engaged in mainstream education and are not having their educational needs met, the author has attempted to estimate numbers of these young people in both Cavan and Monaghan based on the statistical data available and stakeholder estimates, in order to identify the scale of the issue of early school leaving in Cavan and Monaghan. The table below summarised the estimates which are demonstrated in the earlier illustration.

Using the base of the number of 13-15yr olds in Cavan and Monaghan in 2020:

- 3,464 young people aged 13-15 yrs in Co. Cavan
- 2,758 young people aged 13-15 yrs in Co. Monaghan

the following estimates can be suggested:

Table 11: Key estimates associated with early school leaving of young people in Cavan & Monaghan

Post Primary category	Source	Cavan		Monaghan	
		%	Estimated Number	%	Estimated Number
LEVEL 1 - ALL					
YP aged 13-15 yrs (* & **)	Census 2016	100%	3464	100%	2758
LEVEL 2: SOME Part A - as a % of ALL					
Young people with 20-day absences	Tusla - county %	14.5%	502	15.7%	441
Young People engaged in School Completion Programmes	Stakeholder Estimate	11.0%	381	11.0%	303
LEVEL 2: SOME Part B as a % of ALL					

At risk of ESL	Stakeholder Estimate	5.0%	173	5.0%	138
	CSO (Highest level of education)	5.4%	187	4.3%	119
JC non completers	DES - national average	2.4%	83	2.4%	55
LEVEL 3 as a % of ALL					
40+ day absences (***)	EWO caseload	1.44%	50	1.77%	49

Assumptions

*	Young people in 1-3 rd year	Will be aged 13-15yr olds in 2020
**	Number of 13-15yr olds	Extrapolated from Census 2016 figures to represent the numbers of 13-15yr olds in 2020
***	40+ absences	This number of YP is limited by the capacity of the EWO and is not true reflection of the number of actual referrals to the service

Using the estimates for “at risk of early school leaving” the data provided by stakeholders and CSO suggests that currently there may be as many as 300 young people across the two counties (173 in Cavan and 138 in Monaghan) who fall into this cohort and as many as 138 in the 13-15yr old age group that may not complete the Junior Certificate (83 in Cavan and 55 in Monaghan).

As mentioned earlier what is clear from this exercise is that there is a need to undertake a collaborative piece of work with key stakeholders (e.g. Tusla, CAMHS, NEPs, EWOs Youth Organisations), to get a more definitive grasp of the number of young people under 16 yrs who make up this cohort. A definitive figure with some details on geographic placement would help enormously with planning service provision and also in seeking support for appropriate interventions in both counties.

5. FACTORS INFLUENCING EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING IN CAVAN & MONAGHAN

5.1 Introduction

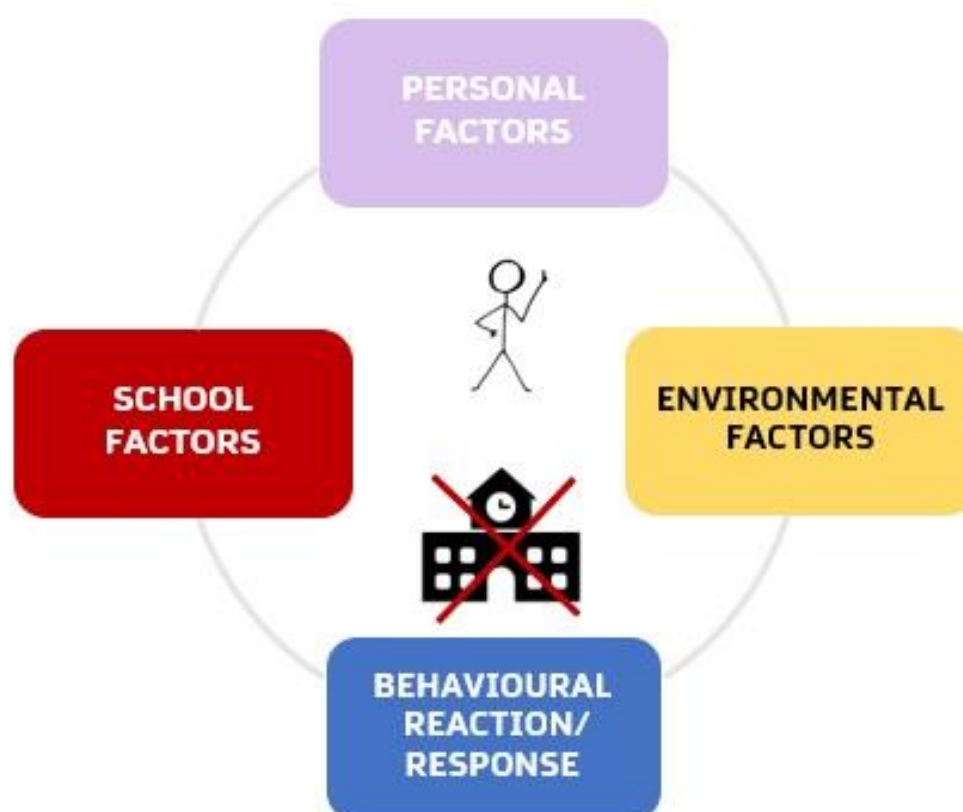
This section of the report is informed by feedback gathered from key stakeholders in Cavan and Monaghan who were each engaged in a conversation about the needs of young people under the age of 16 yrs, who are already disengaged from the mainstream education system or who are in the brink of leaving.

What is clear from the interviews undertaken for this study, is that there is broad agreement of the factors that contribute to early school leaving across stakeholders. Additionally, there is agreement that there is a very wide range of contributory factors which will influence the development of a response to working with young people.

5.2 What are the factors contributing to early school leaving in Cavan and Monaghan?

The stakeholders suggested a wide range of factors that contribute towards the risk of early school leaving or actual early school leaving. In reviewing these factors, the author identified that they fell into four categories:

Figure 4: Factors influencing Early School Leaving



Pe

Environmental Factors: Home, family, community factors -many of which may contribute to the development of internal factors) – Strongly featuring adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

School Factors: Aspects of the physical environment, triggering influences, relationships with key staff members, or policies, culture, and attitudes in the school

Behavioural responses or reactions: which may develop in response to the either of the other three categories and be used as a coping strategy - these factors do not necessarily alone cause early school leaving alone but can complicate matters.

The figure overleaf outlines more of the detailed feedback given by Stakeholders under each category. Often times a blanket explanation of “school refusal” is offered in response to asking about the cause of early school leaving – but school refusal is a symptom not the cause.

This analysis aims to start to understand the “symptoms” in order to understand what is contributing to its cause - this is where the work with young people at risk of early school leaving needs to start and be understood.

Figure 5: Stakeholder feedback on factors contributing to early school leaving

PERSONAL INFLUENCES					
POOR MENTAL HEALTH	MENTAL ILLNESS – DIAGNOSED DISORDER/SYNDROME	LEARNING DIFICULTIES	LOW LEVELS OF RESILIENCE/LACK OF COPING SKILLS	POOR SOCIAL SKILLS	ILLNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anxiety/Stress Low self-esteem Low self-confidence Panic Poor body image Extremely stressed Social anxiety Generalised anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depression ADD/ADHD OCD ODD PTSD/Chronic Stress Autism Level of girls on ASD spectrum but undiagnosed Anorexia/eating disorders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific learning challenges – diagnosed or undiagnosed Struggling academically Some have never caught up ground from Primary School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people do not have good coping skills Not able to cope with peer pressure Not able to deal with demands of school and teachers Inability to cope with pressure/expectation to study hard and achieve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited social connectedness Friendship issues/No friends Under the influence of social cohort – peer pressure to conform Vulnerable to victimisation and bullying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to attend school Difficult in catching up academically on return Difficulty re-integrating socially after illness
ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES					
FAMILY & HOME DYNAMICS	PARENTING CAPABILITY, RESPONSIBILITY AND SKILL	HOUSEHOLD & COMMUNITY HISTORY, CULTURE, ATTITUDE AND VALUES	POVERTY	POOR TRANSITION EXPERIENCE FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL	LACK OF SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE & INTEGRATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental separation New family structures Family working patterns – long working hours Limited parenting capacity ACEs arising from complex/dysfunctional home environments Conflict in the home Drugs/Alcohol at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited parenting skills Communication at home is not good, no talking between parents and kids Skewed balance of power between Parents and young people Lack of parental supervision – across all classes Lack of resilience in some parents Parents overcompensating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low educational attainment in households Cultural Norms e.g. traveller community Intergenerational factor Ambivalence towards education, authority and doing their part in ensuring their young people attend school Neighbourhood/community influences and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poverty factor - Underlies everything for a lot of young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor coping skills for dealing with change Lack of connectivity between PS and SS Poor levels of socialisation skills in some young people Difficulties associated with transition become apparent in 1st year from Halloween break through into 2nd year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face-to-face bullying Cyber bullying Social isolation Social exclusion Cultural isolation On the basis of difference – LGBTI, Culture, Faith, Race
SCHOOL FACTORS					

POLICIES	CULTURE	RELATIONSHIPS	ENVIRONMENT	CURRICULUM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict policies ref uniform compliance, behaviour • Lack of action on bullying • Not being able to accommodate cultural needs within school policy • Suggestion that some schools not reporting absences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative attitude of some staff • Expectations of teaching staff that some young people will leave early • Attitude and understanding of cultural differences • Lack of understanding of issues around sexual identity and gender fluidity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge of one-to-many relationships compared with one-to-few in primary school • Some young people just do not get on with all their teachers – there can often be one who triggers the young person • Poor transition from Primary to second level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triggering environments • Absence of “safe spaces” to escape to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited of choices that interest young people • Limited practical subjects • Not accommodating different learning styles • Junior and Leaving Cert not suitable for some young people • Some being set up for failure • Compulsory nature of Irish at second level can cause stress
BEHAVIOURAL REACTION/RESPONSE				
BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES	ATTITUDE/DISPOSITION	DRUG TAKING	OTHER ADDICTIONS	SUICIDE/ATTEMPTED SUICIDE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging behaviour/acting out • Anger management issues • Frequently dis-regulated with no ability to regulate self again • Risk taking behaviour • Young people in control & difficulties in dealing with authority • Assertiveness is absent aggression is present • Potential to get involved in criminal activity • Potential to get involved in anti-social behaviour • Bullying behaviour • Potential to harm self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disinterested • Hopeless • Bored – high or low achievers • Lack of get up and go/motivation • Defiant • Low aspirations • Apathy and disinterest in anything • Lack of purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Primary & Second level schools : Ketamine, Cocaine, Ecstasy - most particularly Monaghan town • Reasons behind drugs – huge peer pressure to join in the drug taking • Young people being uses as drug runners • Normalisation of drinking alcohol as part of socialising • Drugs less of an issue in rural areas • Not necessarily the factor that prevents school attendance – a salve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol - Regular consumption of alcohol, perhaps leading on to trying out other substances • Smoking • Vaping – without previous experience of smoking • Technology – excessive on-line gaming/presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suicide - can be linked to drug taking and poor mental health • Suicide ideation • Self-Harm

5.2.1 Personal Factors

The Personal factors are the issues which are most often exhibited by the young people personally – they are being experienced by the young people themselves and may contribute to school refusal or inability to cope with the school environment:

- Poor Mental Health
- Mental illness
- Learning challenges
- Low levels of resilience/coping skills
- Poor social skills
- Illness

Heading up these factors and mentioned most frequently by stakeholders was poor mental health, particularly anxiety.

At its worst, the anxiety levels of some young people prevent them from even leaving their homes and in such instances, attending school is not an option. For such young people, the likelihood is that they will have been referred to NEPS or CAMHS and may also be on the radar of the Educational Welfare Officer. In some cases, where CAMHS has been working with such a young people the priority will be to focus on the mental health first and get the young people to the point where they are better able to cope with the introduction of education. Education may in some cases be facilitated by the EWO in the home environment with home tuition.

5.2.2 Environmental Factors

The Environmental Factors considered here are those which are outside the young people's control and which they navigate by developing their own responses and coping strategies. Many of them are captured in the term "Adverse Childhood Experiences" and are recognised as sources of toxic levels of stress which can result in poorer health and life outcomes for young people in the long term. They include:

- Family and home dynamics
- Parenting capability, responsibility, and skill
- Household history, culture, attitude, and values
- Poverty
- Poor transition experience from primary school to secondary school
- Lack of social acceptance and integration

Ironically for some young people attendance at school will provide for them some relief and a safe haven from these factors. The current COVID-19 pandemic therefore will have the potential to present a damaging impact on these young people where school is not available to them to escape to from the home environment they have been confined to. However, for other young people these factors will contribute to the development of a dysregulated stress response system making the school environment a more difficult environment for them to be in and one which they actively seek to get away from.

5.2.3 School Factors

For some young people the biggest challenge to them engaging in education is the school, teachers and school environment itself. Feedback from stakeholders identified the key factors as:

- Policies
- Culture
- Relationships
- Environment
- Curriculum

From the moment they step into the environment, some young people may be triggered (by school bells, noise, crowds), they may experience bullying, feel that they are not accepted or consider that the culture of the school does not welcome them.

For others, the difficulties will arise out of the relationships or lack of relationship they have with specific staff members, with peers or not having had a good experience of transitioning from primary school.

For young people with behavioural challenges they can find the formality of the school environment with its rules and regulations and discipline policies difficult, and especially for young people who have an inherent difficulty in dealing with authority, this can result in triggered outburst. Challenging behaviour is most often associated with males. Stakeholder feedback suggests that for schools, behavioural challenges are one of the more difficult elements of managing the school student relationship, and some schools are more effective than others at doing this.

5.2.4 Behavioural Reaction/Response

The third dimension of factors that are evident in young people who are early school leavers are the behavioural reactions/responses. Not all of these factors will necessarily prevent the young people attending school, however they make the life of the young person who is at risk of early school leaving even more complex. These include:

- Behavioural difficulties/Acting out/Risk taking behaviour
- Attitude/Disposition
- Drug Taking
- Other addictions
- Suicide/Attempted Suicide

5.2.5 Levels of complexity in the lives of young people

Stakeholders agreed that the challenges involved in re-engaging an early school leaver in returning to education was significantly influenced by the level of complexity in a young person's life. The more complexities in life that a young person is dealing with, the greater the likelihood that they will require more support and potentially a more bespoke approach. Any alternative learning provision needs to start first with the young person where they are at.

5.3 Categories of Early School Leaver

From the consultation with stakeholders, there appears to be a number of categories of young people who are already early school leavers or at risk of early school leaving. The distinctions between these types of young people should inform the design of provision to re-engage them in education through an alternative form of provision.

Some of these directly correlate with the internal influences which have been already described.

- 1) Young people with poor mental health/mental illness**
 - Cannot cope at school
 - Some cannot even leave their bedrooms/homes
- 2) Young people with difficult behaviour**
 - Cannot control their behaviour
 - Find authority very difficult to handle

- Causing significant disruption in classes in school
- May be a threat to other students

3) Young people with little interest or motivation

- They do not see the point in school, consider it boring
- They are likely to have a truancy record
- The support from home cannot make an impression on this disposition

4) Young people on the autistic spectrum

- May have attended behavioural units at Primary school, but now same strategies do not work with them
- Limited number of behavioural units at second level schools in the area
- The school environment is triggering or uncomfortable for them

5) Young people who have experienced illness or have chronic illness

- May have missed a lot of school and fallen behind
- May miss a portion of school on a continual basis

The resulting status with regards to schooling for these categories of young people is they may be:

- Not physically attending school because they can't or won't
- On reduced timetables
- Excluded

The other major stakeholder group involved in supporting young people to attend school is parents.

5.4 Engaging parents

As can be seen from the categorisation of factors influencing the instance of early school leaving in Section 5.2 above, the home environment and parental capacity has a huge part to play in the disposition, experience, and behaviour of young people.

In the 2010 National Education Welfare Board in Ireland report “*Addressing the Participation, Attendance and Retention of Children in Education*” four types of parents were classified:

Figure 6: Types of Parents

FOUR TYPES OF PARENTS	
Parents/carers who tried hard to tackle poor attendance	Parents/carers who describe themselves as feeling powerless to tackle poor attendance
Parents/carers who are apathetic about tackling poor attendance or who appear not to engage with the school or other support professionals	Parents/carers who appear to be over-protective or dependent on their child

This creates a useful distinction for stakeholders to tailor their approach and understanding of the parental context when enrolling parents to support early school leavers to re-engage with learning.

Many of the stakeholders who contributed of this study underlined the crisis point that many parents from across the socio-economic strata currently find themselves in in relation to shifting power dynamics with young people, their own challenges in setting boundaries and general lack of influence in the life of their young people. Therefore, the majority of parents themselves need support their young people in spirit of collaboration with other stakeholders.

5.5 Differences between Cavan and Monaghan

There was a reasonable consensus that there was not a significant difference in the pattern of early school leaving in young people between Cavan and Monaghan or indeed across areas of each county.

The primary differences cited were the rural/urban dimension and levels of deprivation/poverty. The rural/urban dynamic can often be exacerbated by the poor transport infrastructure in both counties which can add to the challenges faced by some families especially those living in poverty and those presenting as having chaotic households.

It is important to note that the analysis of statistics on schools and supports outlined in Section 6, points to a lower level of inbuilt supports (DEIS/SCP) in Cavan primary and second level schools than there is in Monaghan. There has also been more proactive collaboration between stakeholders in Monaghan and a stakeholder group has been engaged recently in pursuing ways of developing supports for early school leavers under the age of 16yrs in Co. Monaghan.

5.6 Sub-sets of concern

In addition to the range of issues which young people can be subject to and which may influence early school leaving there are some sub-sets of young people who have additional challenges to face. Two such groups in Cavan and Monaghan are Traveller young people and young people from new communities.

5.6.1 Traveller Community

During the course of this study and previous research carried out over the past 3 years in Cavan and Monaghan, there have been regular concerns voiced about the engagement and retention of Traveller children and young people in education in both counties. There is a larger Traveller community living in Co. Cavan (475 people) than in Co. Monaghan (276) with the largest concentration living around both county towns.

A recent report into the needs of Traveller young people in Co. Cavan (*An Inclusive Cavan: Needs Assessment Young Travellers (10-24yrs) in Cavan*) included education as a core area of concern. The feedback from the young people and their parents included in the report is endorsed by stakeholders in the county in respect of Traveller young people and the pattern of early school leaving in this grouping.

From feedback captured in the Needs Assessment Report and stakeholder feedback gathered as part of this study, some of the issues identified which contribute to early school leaving within this community include:

- Traveller young people talked about having extremely negative experiences of school
 - Experiencing a lack of respect
 - Being looked down on
 - Teachers not treating them as equal to non-Traveller pupils
 - Not being engaged in learning

- Not receiving the help they need to progress
- Experiencing racism and bullying in school
- An acceptance inside the Traveller community and an expectation in the school community that Traveller young people will leave school early
- Peer pressure amongst Traveller young people to leave school early
- Different attitudes across schools towards Traveller young people which makes a real difference in relation to their engagement and retention.
- The influence of the Traveller culture and its norms can contribute to the challenges they experience
 - In Primary school, girls generally attend girl's schools and boys attend boy's schools. Difficulties may then arise when they progress to a mixed post-primary school
 - Traveller young people (especially girls) mixing with non-Travellers and engaging in the full remit of the school curriculum, especially sports.
 - The practice and expectation that Traveller girls and boys will marry very young
 - Financial difficulties within families, therefore the prospect of attending Youthreach and accessing an educational stipend is very attractive
 - In some families there is no priority placed on educational attainment
- There is a need to help young people with their homework in afterschool clubs, where there is a low level of educational attainment by parents and they are therefore not in a position to help
- Support around transitioning from Primary to second level school is particularly important
- Greater cultural awareness and understanding within schools and staff cohort about Traveller culture

The EWO for Cavan suggested that approximately 45% of her caseload is young people from the Traveller community. The EWO for Monaghan suggested that over half of young people engaged in the Monaghan GYDP were from the Traveller community.

5.6.2 New communities

Both Cavan and Monaghan have experienced a high level of migration to the counties over the past 20 yrs with resettlement of Congolese and Syrian families, a high proportion of eastern European families coming here for work, a direct provision centre in Monaghan town and more recently the placement of non-Irish families in emergency accommodation whilst awaiting placement in a direct provision centres.

This has had a knock-on effect on the integration into and engagement in education provision in areas where these settlements have occurred. The most recent resettlement programme has seen Syrian families coming to both counties. There are particular issues for these young people in engaging with education as they may be missing basic literacy in their own language, the development of which has been impacted by many years spent moving from one settlement camp to another and a lack of structured educational inputs for them to engage within the that time. In some cases, the young people can speak their mother tongue but have never learned to write it. Whilst many of them pick up spoken English quite easily their ability to catch up on the written skills so as to be fully literate is challenged. In some cases schools do not get adequate resources to support them, so sometimes young people are sitting in school and unable to engage and therefore integration is difficult.

Added to these issues, many of the young people will have experienced a high level of trauma on a number of different levels which will have left their mark on many of them:

- The trauma of having experienced the brutality of war and the loss of family, friends, and neighbours
- The trauma for having to uproot and leave (often fleeing) from their homeland
- The trauma of the migration passage, often experienced in phases and experience of living temporarily without security and stability in countries for several years at a time

- And the trauma of coming to a country they have no knowledge of, again staying in a temporary accommodation situation until they finally received a permanent home and a community to integrate with.

Beyond the Syrian community, language capability of parents has a significant role to play in the educational journey of children and young people and the efforts by schools to engage parents in supporting their young people. Many parents are reliant on their young people to act as interpreters for them and therefore they can also be regularly taken out of school to facilitate this role.

Young people from new communities have additional challenges of trying to understand the local culture and its nuances, as well as having their own culture understood. Parents place different values on education and have different expectations of the role it plays in the lives of their young people as well as differences in standards of parenting and discipline which can also lead to friction within the parent-child relationship.

One of the biggest challenges to many new community families and their young people is poverty. Schools, Home School Liaison Coordinators, School Completion Programme staff and EWOs are regularly involved in sourcing uniforms and other school related equipment for such young people so that they can fit into the school environment.

5.7 What does this tell us about why young people leave school early?

This section outlines the broad range of factors that stakeholders identified as contributing to instance of early school leaving. The issues that stakeholders pointed to witnessing most frequently in the context of Cavan and Monaghan were:

- Mental Health concerns including anxiety levels, poor stress management, poor coping skills, lack of resilience (primarily with girls)
- Undiagnosed Autism Spectrum Disorders (primarily in girls), which only come to light in the more challenging environment of post-primary school
- Behavioural challenges (primarily with boys)
- Chaotic households contributing towards the accumulation of multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- The impact of parental separation – on the young person and on the home environment

Add to these issues the challenges presented by being part of a minority community as outlined in this section and the complexity of how to support these young people to re-engage with education just becomes more apparent.

The fact that young people are experiencing such a range of influencing factors, mean that whatever type of alternative learning provision that is developed for both counties, it needs to be centred on and tailored to the needs of each individual young person.

6. SUPPORTS IN CAVAN & MONAGHAN TO HELP IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND REDUCE ESL

6.1 Generic supports in schools

Across all schools there are two supports which aim to assist the school and the pupils deal with challenges over and above the day-to-day engagement in learning.

- National Education Psychological Service
- Student Support Teams (Post Primary Schools)

In addition, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) which is part of Tusla's Education Support Service (TESS) operates by referral across all primary and post-primary schools. Engagement with the Education Welfare Service is triggered when a student accumulates 20+ days absence from school.

6.1.1 National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The National Educational Psychological Service is a service of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and aims to support the personal, social and educational development of all children and young people through the application of psychological theory and practice in education. It has particular regard for children with special educational needs. Therefore its remit is not specific to young people who are at risk of leaving school early, however, in practice NEPS staff in Cavan and Monaghan will have knowledge of and may be working with young people in this cohort.

In Cavan and Monaghan there is a team of 5 psychologists interacting with a total of 137 Primary Schools and 23 Post Primary Schools. Approximately 60% of their time is spent on one-to-one case work and the remaining 40% is spent in supporting the development of school staff and management including:

- Incredible years - Emotional and behavioural support programme for primary schools
- In Second Level schools- they support the implementation of the Wellbeing programme for Junior Cert which involves 400 delivery hours across 1st-3rd year. NEPS works with schools to help them develop their wellbeing programme
- NEPS can support the transition of young people back to school
- Help with transitions from primary school to post-primary school
- Help with transition from pre-school into primary school
- They have a menu of support and development offerings which schools can avail of
- They plan with schools to scope out what work is needed in each school
 - Could be around bereavement, foster care, support and development

NEPS works across all schools and each school has an allocation of NEPS hours which is directed in agreement with the school principal whether in relation to one-to-one work or in relation to school support and development.

A key priority for NEPS is to build relationships with all schools and individual teachers. They specifically work with building the capacity and capacity of schools and teachers to deal with children and young people who present with social, emotional, behavioural or learning challenges. NEPS staff consider that the better equipped the school staff to deal with the challenges presented by individual children/young people, the better the outcomes for the individuals and the school. NEPS place a high importance on keeping young people at school if at all possible.

6.1.2 Student Support Teams

Student Support Teams will exist in some form in all Post-Primary schools. They are the first port of call for any issues arising with students outside of the normal day-to-day challenges of learning, where pupils are identified to have additional needs. In the majority of cases challenges for some

students will be short-lived and resolved with some short-term intervention and support from the Student Support Team. On occasions the Team may seek the intervention of specialist services.

Student Support Teams may be constituted differently in each school but in normally will include:

- A member of school management (principal or vice principal)
- Guidance counsellor
- Special needs co-ordinator
- Year heads/form tutors
- SPHE co-ordinator

In schools where additional resources exist the team may also include:

- Home School Community Liaison Teacher
- School Completion Officer
- Chaplain
- Behaviour support Teachers

The remit of the Student Support Team as student focused mechanism is to:

- Co-ordinate the support available for students in the school
- Facilitate links with the community and other non-school support services
- Enable students with support needs to continue to access a full education
- Assist staff to manage those students effectively
- Ensure new staff members are briefed about policies and procedures relating to student well-being and support
- Advices school management on the development and review of effective student support policies and structures

The effectiveness of the Student Support Team will differ from school to school according to the culture of the school, the leadership of the team, the strengths of the individuals involved, and challenges presented by the student body.

6.1.3 Education Welfare Services

The Educational Welfare Service works across all primary and second level schools with children, young people and their families who are experiencing difficulty with school attendance, participation, and retention. This is done by referral through, home visits, educational welfare conferences and collaboratively working with different agencies. The main priority of the work is around the welfare of children and young people and to ensure that concerns around attendance are addressed before attendance becomes a crisis issue.

There is one Education Welfare Officer (EWO) operating in Cavan and one in Monaghan. In theory they should receive begin their involvement with a child or young person when they receive a referral from schools once a 20-day absence level is triggered by a student. However, in practice, both EWOs are fully tasked with a case load of 50 open cases in each county which typically relate to school absences of 40+ day. Therefore, they do not have the capacity to work at an earlier intervention level with young people and their families in order to avert the crisis stage being reached.

The Education Welfare Service works under the Education Welfare Act (2000) and has the power to take legal action against a parent if it is felt that they are failing in their duty to ensure that their child/young person between the ages of 6yrd and 16yrs, attends school. In the majority of cases the parents are part of the partnership with schools, SCP, HSCL and other community structures working together with the EWO to improve the life outcomes for the young person.

An important part of their work is in an interagency realm where they collaborate with other sections of Tusla, schools and school support structures, ETBs, youth organisations, FRCs and other youth-oriented stakeholders. It is particularly in the interagency context that gaps in services in both the

counties can be identified, like the lack of alternative provision for young people under the age of 16 who are not in attendance at school.

6.2 Supplementary supports in schools

It is acknowledged by the Department of Education and Skills in its Action Plan for Education, that early school leaving occurs at a higher level in areas of greater social disadvantage and therefore the DEIS Programme is designed to address equality of education by providing additional supports to schools with that designation. However, early school leaving is not singularly a feature of DEIS designated schools and not all young people who experience educational disadvantage attend DEIS schools.

At present there are some additional supports available in both Cavan and Monaghan for DEIS designated schools, which are designed to tackle educational disadvantage and which help in dealing with young people who are acknowledged to be presenting with difficulties in attending school or where a pattern of absence is observed.

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is one of three strands of Tusla Education Support Service (tess) including the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme and the Educational Welfare Service (*outlined in 6.1.3 above*). All three strands share the same national outcomes:

- Improved Attendance
- Improved Participation
- Improved Retention

6.2.1 Home School Community Liaison Scheme

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) is targeted at students who are at risk of not reaching their potential in the educational system because of economic or social disadvantage. It operates from a preventative standpoint rather than a curative one.

The HSCL Scheme aims to:

- Maximise the participation of the children in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure
- Promote active co-operation between home, school, and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children
- Work with parents to prepare and support them as a resource to their own children and encourage parents to become involved in their child's education
- Enhance the children's uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level and their attitudes to life-long learning
- Disseminate the positive outcomes of the Scheme throughout the school system generally

Embedded in this service is the aim of working with at risk young people and their families in order to improve the likelihood of the child progressing to complete their compulsory phase of education and hopefully beyond.

The HSCL will work in tandem with School Completion Programme and will refer students to the SCP where they receive additional support over a longer period of time.

The HSCL co-ordinator in a school will work with the key adults (parents and teachers) in the life of a young person, to empower them so that they can better support their young people to attend school and engage effectively and to encourage a positive attitude towards life-long learning. This can be difficult for some parents where their experience of education themselves was poor, where they don't

place great value on education or where they have a low level of educational attainment and therefore may not have a great level of confidence in their abilities to support their children and young people. The HSCL co-ordinator will operate from the school and will also visit families at their homes – whatever is needed in order to engage them. Home visits are vital part of the relationship building that is needed to work with families and it also allows the co-ordinators to get a sense of context for the young person.

HSCL is available in DEIS designated schools.

6.2.2 School Completion Programme

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is a targeted programme of support for primary and post primary children and young people who have been identified as potentially at risk of early school leaving or who are out of school and have not successfully transferred to an alternative learning site (i.e. Youthreach, Community Training Centre etc.) or employment.

It is a support under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Programme, funded by Tusla Education Support Services (tess). SCP aims to retain a young person to completion of the leaving certificate, equivalent qualification or suitable level of educational attainment which enables them to transition into further education, training, or employment.

There are 3 SCPs in Co. Monaghan engaging a total of 8 schools and 1 in Co Cavan working with 5 schools. A list of the School Completion Programmes operating in Cavan and Monaghan can be found in Appendices 3 and 4. Each SCP is managed independently by a SCP committee and regardless of the fact that there may be changes in the needs of schools in the counties over time, there does not appear to be a mechanism in built to re-direct the activities of each SCP to schools which may demonstrate a higher level of needs. There is also no uniformity between each programme and how they operate.

Young people who are referred to a SCP will engage in a range of activities that are geared towards their specific needs and depending on the individual SCP they can include:

- One-to-one tailored support which may address social, emotional personal, behavioural, or academic needs e.g. Decider Skills
- A suite of on-line accredited programmes which assist the young person to deal with some of the specific issues they are struggling with e.g. Working things out
- Breakfast clubs
- After school supports
- Homework clubs
- Holiday educational supports
- Work placements
- Bereavements supports e.g. Rainbows programme
- Developing social and life skills through activities like cookery
- Therapeutic interventions such as art therapy, play therapy, equine therapy, music therapy or drama therapy
- Transfer programme to support transitioning between primary and second level school
- Being available for young people around the entry doors or school locker areas at key break times
- In relation to young people who are most at risk of early school leaving there are a number of specific interventions delivered:
 - Attendance tracking and monitoring of
 - Mentoring programmes e.g. MAP mentoring
 - Out-of-school educational supports

The SCP staff will generally have a permanent office presence in the second level school to which they are attached, and therefore are available to young people to drop in if they need support. The relationship building between SCP and the young people they work with is of the utmost importance.

If after a period of intervention with a young person who is at risk of early school leaving there is no change in the level of engagement the SCP will liaise with the EWO for the next level of support. They will continue to be involved in the life of the young person in partnership with the EWO and school as well as other community services which are considered to be appropriate. A SCP co-ordinator may consider it appropriate to co-ordinate a Meitheal in certain situations which is a valuable support to harness the support of a cross section of local services to improve the outcomes for a young person.

6.2.3 Family School Liaison Service – Monaghan Town only (FSLs)

The Monaghan Town Family School Liaison Service provided through Monaghan Education Centre has existed in some form since 1998. The service supports schools in Monaghan town where there is no additional support available through mechanisms like home school liaison officers or school completion programmes. The service has been faced with challenges of sustainability and therefore has taken on slightly different emphases depending on the funder at that time. At present the service is funded by a combination of contributions from the schools involved and support from Tusla.

Currently there are 7 schools in Monaghan town availing of the Family School Liaison Service, three primary and four second level:

Primary Schools	Post Primary Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monaghan Model School • St. Louis Girls National School • St. Louis Infant School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coláiste Oiriail • Monaghan Collegiate School • St. Louis Girls Secondary School • St. Macartan's College

The work of the FSLs service is varied and is led by referral, primarily from schools, but also from Tusla - Education Welfare, Tusla - Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS), CAMHS. One of the main aims of FSLs is early intervention - preventing the case escalating to the point where PPFS, Education Welfare or Social Work intervention is required.

The service is staffed by one support worker working 4 days a week and engaging in the following activities:

- One-to-one with students
- Delivering a Primary to Post Primary Transition Programme
- Providing training on topical issues i.e. cyberbullying for staff, parents or pupils
- Providing general signposting and information guidance to schools in the cluster (and at times outside of it) – “How do I?” and “Who do I talk to ?” type of requests
- Participating in Meitheals for specific students
- Delivering awareness raising events for teachers about services in the child and family sector in the county

The types of issues that the support worker engages with pupils and in some cases their families include:

- Low attendance
- School exclusion
- Academic issues
 - Study skills
 - Learning Challenges
- Social and emotional issues
 - Especially anxiety
 - Lack of confidence
 - Difficulty in building relationships
 - Dealing with bullying
- Chaotic family environment which may include:
 - Difference cultural norms

- Domestic abuse
- Family breakdown
- Death or separation of a parent
- Mental health issues
- Addiction issues
- Complements the curriculum on wellbeing, bereavement, mindfulness
- Needs to work with parents – family support
- Trying to identify the “worried well” and stop it progressing

In the 3-year period 2015/16 – 2017/18 attendance issues accounted for over half of the referrals received from both primary and second level school.

6.3 Examining the reach of specialist supports in schools in Cavan and Monaghan

6.3.1 Co. Cavan

There are **75 primary schools in Co. Cavan** with a total enrolment in the academic year 2019/20 of 10,010. Ten of these schools have DEIS status with an enrolment of 1,494 (14.9% of the total county enrolment). Additionally, there is one SCP in Co. Cavan which engages with 3 of these ten DEIS primary schools with combined enrolment 1,054 pupils.

Table 12: Schools and enrolments at schools with DEIS/SCP supports - Cavan Primary Schools

Academic Year: 2019/20 CAVAN	No. Schools	Enrolment	%
Total Primary Schools	75	10,010	100%
DEIS primary schools	10	1,494	14.9%
Schools with School Completion projects (which all have DEIS status)	3	1,054	10.5%
<i>Enrolment at schools without any additional support</i>	65	8,516	85.1%

(Sources: Department of Education & Skills 2019 & Tusla)

This would suggest that 8,516 (85%) primary pupils in 65 schools across the county in Co. Cavan do not have any access to specialist early intervention support to mitigate against emerging patterns of early school leaving.

There are **11 post-primary schools in Co. Cavan** with a total enrolment of 5,701 in academic year 2019/20. Two of these schools are DEIS designated and also are engaged in a SCP accounting for an enrolment of 964 (16.9%) of all pupils.

Table 13: Schools and enrolments at schools with DEIS/SCP supports - Cavan Second Level Schools

Academic Year: 2019/20 CAVAN	No. Schools	Enrolment	%
Total Post-Primary Schools	11	5,701	100%
DEIS post-primary schools	2	964	16.9%
Schools with School Completion projects (which both have DEIS status)	2	964	16.9%
<i>Enrolment at schools without any additional support</i>	9	4,737	83.1%

(Sources: Department of Education & Skills 2019 & Tusla)

This would suggest that 4,737 (83.1%) of post primary pupils in 9 schools across the county in Co. Cavan do not have any access to additional specialist support for young people at risk of early school leaving or who already disengaged.

Whilst the Tusla Education Welfare Officer for Cavan does engage with both primary and post primary school pupils and their families, the current workload of the EWO is such that the majority of cases are pupils who have missed 30%+ of the school year by the time the EWO is in a position to take the

case on. Therefore for the Education Welfare Services to be able to respond to the 20+day level of absences, additional resources would be required on the ground.

6.3.2 Co. Monaghan

There are **62 primary schools in Co. Monaghan** with a total enrolment in the academic year 2019/20 of 7,992. Ten of these schools have DEIS status with an enrolment of 947 (11.8% of the total county enrolment). Additionally, there are three SCPs in Co. Monaghan engaging with 8 primary school with a combined enrolment of 1,412 pupils. Three of these schools are also DEIS designated.

In Monaghan Town, the Family School Liaison Service is managed by Monaghan Education Centre and has been running since 1999 with a variety of funding sources. It engages with three schools in the town that are not DEIS designated or involved in SCPs. The total enrolment in these three schools is 1,017. The service is very valuable to the schools involved however is limited to one support worker working four days per week.

Table 14: Schools and enrolments at schools with DEIS/SCP supports - Monaghan Primary Schools

Academic Year: 2019/20 MONAGHAN	No. Schools	Enrolment	%
Total Primary Schools	62	7,992	100%
DEIS primary schools	10	947	11.8%
Schools with School Completion projects (of which 3 are DEIS schools)	8	1,412	17.7%
Schools supported by Family School Liaison Service (Monaghan Town) (not in a SCP or DEIS designated)	3	623	7.8%
<i>Enrolment at schools without any additional support</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>4,579</i>	<i>57%</i>

The net result is that **4,579 (57%) students enrolled in 44 primary schools in Co. Monaghan have no access to additional specialist support services which can provide early intervention support to children and their families demonstrating early indications of school absence patterns.**

There are **12 post-primary schools in County Monaghan** with a total enrolment in the academic year 2019/20 of 5,417. Four of them have DEIS designation and are also part of one of three SCPs, representing an enrolment of 1,626 (30% of the total county enrolment). The Monaghan Family School Liaison Service works with another 4 second level schools with a combined enrolment of 1,729.

Table 15: Schools and enrolments at schools with DEIS/SCP supports - Monaghan Second Level Schools

Academic Year: 2019/20 MONAGHAN	No. Schools	Enrolment	%
Total Post-Primary Schools	12	5,417	100%
DEIS post-primary schools	4	1,626	30.0%
Schools with Schools Completion Programmes (which are all DEIS schools)	4	1,626	30.0%
Schools supported by Monaghan town Family School Liaison Service (not in a SCP or DEIS designated)	4	1,729	32.0%
<i>Enrolment at schools without any additional support</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2,359</i>	<i>43.5%</i>

(Sources: Department of Education & Skills 2019 & Tusla)

This leaves 2,359 (43.5%) students in 4 second level schools without any additional specialist support provision to work with young people and their families to reduce the level of early school leaving.

Again whilst the Tusla Education Welfare Officer for Monaghan does engage with both primary and post primary school pupils and their families, the current workload of the EWO results in pupils being at a 40-50 day level of absence by the time they are engaged with the EWO service. Additional resources would be required on the ground in Co. Monaghan in order for the Education Welfare Service to be able to respond to referrals at an earlier stage of 20+ day absences.

OBSERVATION 3:

The phenomenon of early school leaving occurs across all school types and social strata due to the fact that there are such a broad range of contributory factors. The rate of early school leaving is confirmed as being higher at DEIS schools than Non-DEIS schools, and the supports available to deal with the risk of early school leaving are concentrated in DEIS schools and SCPs.

This however means that in both counties there still remains a high number of schools that just do not have supplementary supports made available to them to do early intervention work to attempt to re-engage young people at risk.

Schools with no specific additional supports (HCSL, SCP or FSLs)							
	Primary Schools			Post Primary Schools			Total no. pupils
	No.	Pupils	%	No.	Pupils	%	
Cavan	65	8,516	85.1%	9	4,737	83.1%	13,253
Monaghan	44	4,579	30%	4	2,359	43.5%	6,938

6.4 Other relevant supports for young people aged under 16 in Counties Cavan & Monaghan

Within the two counties there are a number of additional support provisions available in a non-school environment which engage a range of young people including some under 16s who are out of school.

Some are programmes that are delivered by non-educational stakeholders with a broader remit than just education and whilst others more recently are being piloted by potential alternative education provisions with a core educational remit and targeted at.

6.4.1 Themed programmes that support young people in Cavan & Monaghan - non educational focus

Over the past 4 years a number of new programmes have been delivered in both Cavan and Monaghan targeting young people aged 16-24 yrs who are classed as not being in education, employment, or training (NEETS). These programmes have been funded primarily through Department of Children and Youth Affairs, PEACE IV and International Fund for Ireland programmes and therefore have had a specific life with no long-term sustainability potential. Of particular relevance to this project, they did not cater for under 16 yrs olds therefore any young people under 16 years who already were disengaged from education could not attend.

Additionally, Youthreach centres are operating in three centres in each county, however their focus is re-engaging with young people who are out of education from 16 yrs and above with a core educational focus resulting in the attainment of QQI qualifications.

Table 16: Location of Youthreach Centre in Cavan & Monaghan

Youthreach Cavan	Youthreach Monaghan
Cavan Town	Monaghan Town
Cootehill	Carrickmacross
Kingscourt	Castleblayney

The only support programmes available to young people under the age of 16yrs arise primarily in the youth work arena and as mentioned earlier have very specific focussed agendas. These include:

- Garda Youth Diversion Programme – Cavan & Monaghan
- Amplify - Monaghan (entry age was dropped from 16-24yrs to 14-24 yrs)
- Tusla's Integrated Youth Programme – Monaghan

- Youth Information Centre – Monaghan (Carrickmacross and Castleblayney)
- Bounceback Youth Service - Cavan (SE Cavan and West Cavan)
- Include Youth Service – Monaghan (Clones, Ballybay and Castleblayney)
- ISPCC, Co. Monaghan
- Youth Information Centre – Monaghan (Carrickmacross)

These programmes have not been designed to be alternative education provision targeting young people under the age of 16 who are out of school – it just happens that some of their participants may fall into this category and therefore they are engaged in some form of structured programme which benefits them.

Also these programmes have very particular objectives which are associated with the aims of their funding organisation and therefore referrals to these programmes will prioritise young people with needs that match the programme aims.

A summary of these programmes has been provided overleaf with more detailed overview included in Appendix 4.

CAVAN							
Programme/ Initiative	Provider	Funder	Location & coverage	Capacity	Target age	Focus	Methodology
GYDP – 365 Project	Foroige	Dept of Justice, POBAL, Dormant Accounts ESF Annual review	Cavan Town & Bailieborough Covering all Co. Cavan	8-12 intensive places 20-35 group work & activities	12-17 yrs officially 8-19 yrs in practice	Reduction of anti-social & criminal behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce impulsivity • Enhance empathy • Enhance pro-social behaviour 	1-1 work Group work Tailored to needs of YP
Bounceback Youth Service	Youth Work Ireland (YWI) ISPC	DCYA/UBU	Ballyjamesduff, Bailieborough & Kingscourt Belturbet, Swanlinbar Ballyconnell	15	12-16yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-engagement in education (BB & BJD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confidence building ○ Building resilience ○ Integration – reducing social isolation ○ Drug and alcohol misuse 	1-1 work Group work Tailored to needs of YP
MONAGHAN							
GYDP - Neighbourhood Youth Project	Foroige	Dept of Justice, POBAL, Dormant Accounts ESF Annual review	Monaghan Town	8-12 intensive places 20-35 group work and activities	12-17 yrs officially 8-19 yrs in practice	Reduction of anti-social & criminal behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce impulsivity • Enhance empathy • Enhance pro-social behaviour 	1-1 work Group work Tailored to needs of YP
Amplify Monaghan	Foroige & YWI	PEACE IV Ends Sept 2021	Co. Monaghan – moving around in blocks	15 YP per 6-month block	Initially 16-24 yrs then reduced to 14-25 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active leadership • Personal development • Building good relations 	26-week programme 1-1 work Group work Tailored to needs of YP
Integrated Youth Programme	Foroige	Tusla On-going	Castleblayney covering Co. Monaghan	25 YP	8-18 yrs YP know to Tusla & referred by Youth Forum	For young people in need of additional support especially where socially isolated. Focus on integrating them into the community, building relationships, building self- confidence, enhancing pro-social behaviour and help them to develop decision making skills	1-1 work Group work Tailored to needs of YP
Include Youth	YWI/ ISPC	DCYA/UBU	Clones Ballybay Castleblayney	20	10-24yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-engagement in education (Clones) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confidence & resilience building ○ Integration – reducing social isolation ○ Drug and alcohol misuse ○ Building cross cultural relationships ○ Provision youth service space (Ballybay) 	1-2 work Group work Tailored to needs of YP

6.4.2 Pilot/Exceptional programmes supporting early school leavers and vulnerable young people at risk of leaving school early

In the past year, a number of pilot projects have been developed with a specific focus on engaging young people at risk of early school leaving and those that have already left school early.

- Pre-Youthreach, Cavan Town – in response to exceptional identified need
- Pilot iScoil, Monaghan Town
- Pilot with Compass in Wellbeing Centre, Castleblayney

Both the Pre-Youthreach Programme and iScoil Pilots Programme have developed out of a real need to engage a specific number of young people who were identified by a number of stakeholders as being:

- Under 16 yrs
- Out of school
- Vulnerable and at risk of social isolation or involvement risk taking behaviour

Both of these programmes are classified as alternative educational responses.

Pre-Youthreach Programme, Cavan Town

Genesis

In September 2019, a Pre-Youthreach programme commenced at Youthreach Cavan Town, which catered for young people aged 14 and 15 yrs. The programme was developed as a response to a critical situation where a number of young people had not place to go for educational input. The centre had received a high level of enquiries about access to the Youthreach programme from families for young people who did not yet meet the age entry criteria for Youthreach of being 16 yrs.

A request was made to Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board to run a programme specifically for this young age group taking their needs into consideration as well as how they might fit in with the other activities of the centre. Approval was given for 10 places to be accommodated and 13 additional tutor hours per week were provided to the centre.

Pupils

Working off referrals received for 14 and 15 yr olds as well as additional referrals received from the Cavan EWO, the manager enrolled 6 students successfully –

- 3 males and 3 females
- 2 from Ballyjamesduff, 4 from Cavan Town
- 4 from the traveller community

Mechanics of the Pre-Youthreach Programme

The programme utilised the existing on-line learning resources available to the centre including NALA – Write on Literacy Programme, QQI levels 2 and 3 in practical subjects like crafts, cookery, woodwork, sport as well as core subjects like communications, personal care and presentation.

The programme rolled out on a 5 day a week basis from 9am to 12.30pm for a full academic year. The pupils were connected with other youth services and programmes where appropriate e.g. Bounceback Resilience Programme, Garda youth Diversion Programme. They have access to a counsellor on the Youthreach staff.

Pros

- Feedback from the participants has been extremely positive with particular reference to:
 - That it was not like school
 - They liked being treated like adults
 - Being involved in decision making
 - That it was like a small community
- Each pupil has a mentor in the centre which is a positive process to empower the young person to grow and develop with support
- Attendance at the centre has been very good for 4 out of the 6 attending
- The pupils can access counselling onsite

- They develop a Personal Education plan with action plan which helps them to set goals and think about next steps after the programme
- The majority of the pupils in the programme will progress to the core Youthreach programme when they finish this year.
- The smaller group size works well for the pupils
- When pupils progressed more quickly than anticipated through QQI level 2 subjects they were able to progress to level 3
- It's a cost-effective option to re-engaging young people who are not likely to go back to mainstream school and who are well disposed to the Youthreach model
- It was noted that 15 yr olds were not as much of a handful as anticipated prior to commencing the programme.

Cons

- Youthreach does not have remit to deliver this programme for young people under the age of 16yrs. This programme was only delivered in this instance in response to a critical need which was identified.
- It was acknowledged that Youthreach is not for everyone
- Some of the drawbacks which arose included:
 - The pupils did not like that they were allocated to the one room in the centre all the time with no movement between topics.
 - There was an issue about taking the young people on trips like the other Youthreach students
 - There was not a choice in students in subjects, they did what other Youthreach students in the centre were doing
- As the pupils are under the age of 16, there is no financial stipend for attendance as exists for older Youthreach students – however this did not appear to be too much of a deal breaker for the pupils.
- There was no travel allowance for the younger pupils also.
- There is no Summer model to engage these younger pupils, this will need to be developed to suit their ages, as the normal Youthreach model is built around students taking day trips and other off-site experiences in June and doing work experience in July.

iScoil Pilot Programme, Monaghan Town

Genesis

iScoil is an online learning programme what was set up in 2009 targeting young people aged 13-16 who are not in mainstream education and offering accredited learning opportunities. It offers a variety of courses leading to a QQI level 3 award and is designed to allow the learner to work at their own pace with the support of an online tutor and an in-room staff member.

The iScoil Monaghan pilot programme is being delivered through the North Monaghan School Completion Programme. It came about very rapidly in early 2020 in response to many requests by the SCP for resources to address the need identified in the county in relation to under young people 16yrs who were not engaged in any education having left school and still being too young for Youthreach.

The resources supplied were in the form of 3 laptops, access to an iScoil licence and training on how to work the programme. The pilot was funded by Tusla and commenced on February 24th. Without additional running costs being provided Teach na Daoine in Monaghan town facilitated the pilot by providing space in their building and support towards refreshments.

The pilot is very much in its infancy, however indications at the time of the author's interview with the staff involved, were that it was showing great potential.

Pupils

A steering committee has been established for the programme and referrals are approved by the Monaghan Education Welfare Officer who was delighted to have a new pathway back to education for three boys from Monaghan town. All three were no longer attending school and were considered to

be beyond the possibility of re-engaging with the mainstream school process for different reasons. Two of the boys are from the travelling community.

Mechanics of the pilot

SCP staff collect the three iScoil pupils and the programme runs from 11-1.00, five days a week. There are two staff required to be present at all times due to the level of support required especially as everyone is getting used to the programme and also to manage the dynamics of personalities of the three pupils.

The pupils work with an online tutor who guides their engagement in practical life skills- oriented subjects which are based around their interests and have core literacy and numeracy inbuilt. Ultimately the pupils will be working towards QQI level 3 qualifications.

The programme will run for a full 12 months and progress will be measured through benchmarking pre and post the project as well as weekly progress updates.

Pros

- On the plus side, the staff in the SCP are very excited about the potential for iScoil and they have had an indication from Tusla that if this programme works well there is a prospect of receiving another three laptops and licences for next year.
- The pupils get to learn in a non-school environment with a structured accredited programme which is interests-led. They get good one-one encouragement and support from staff and from the online tutor.
- The programme is moveable by nature and can respond to need in different parts of the county provided a suitable free of charge venue can be found.

Cons

- On the other hand, some of the challenges of the programme include the lack of additional programme costs to cover venues, supplies, transport and refreshment costs which may arise for future delivery.
- Also, the programme delivery takes 2 of the SCP staff away from core SCP work in Beech Hill College five mornings a week, therefore there is a loss of service to SCP pupils there. There is no additional funding allocated to the SCP to replace the lost staff hours on core SCP work.
- If future resources are secured to sustain the existing places and for additional iScoil places, a huge consideration in selecting the pupils will be their location as currently the SCP staff collect the pupils, but as they are all from Monaghan this is achievable.
- There is no capacity in the structure of iScoil to make ancillary services available i.e. counselling, which would allow the pupils involved to deal with some of their underlying issues. Manager of Teach na Daoine Family Resource Centre (FRC), Packie Kelly has suggested that the FRC would be interested in providing some wrap-around resilience work with the Resilience worker at the centre. This type of support would not necessarily be available or guaranteed in other locations in the county.

Compass Pilot Programme, Castleblayney

Tusla at the Wellbeing Centre in Castleblayney developed a pilot programme with Compass in response to the need that was identified with a number of young males at school in Castleblayney who were also known to Tusla. They exhibited behavioural difficulties and were identified as being at risk of early school leaving. The pilot was designed to engage the participants in activities that helped build their self-confidence and interest in life using water sports and outdoor resources.

Pupils

Young boys exhibiting behavioural challenges for different reasons
 All at risk of total disengagement from school
 All engage with the PFS team at Tusla

Mechanics of the pilot

The pilot engaged the youths on a one-day a week basis and took them away to engage them in a full day of outdoor activities – land and water based, using existing resources available to Compass. The activities included hillwalking, cycling, canoeing , all with a focus on personal development focus - building resilience and confidence.

The programme ran over the course of 10 weeks and has resulting in one boy fully integrating back into school. For a second boy, it is clear that school is not for him and the third boy is still working on anxiety issues arising from a high level of ACEs.

Another pilot has recently started with two other youths who have autism tendencies and exhibit behavioural challenges.

Pros

- Utilising resources on site at the Wellbeing Centre
- Energises the young people with a completely different focus one day a week, makes the other 3.5 days more manageable for some
- Builds their confidence and resilience and gives them coping skills
- Gives them a say in what they engage in and responsibility to make choices
- Provides an alternative to engage these young people in a way that is not delivered at school

Cons

- Dependent on capacity of other contractors and staff – ad hoc approach
- For those who engaged in the pilot but do not return to school, there is still no other vehicle to engage them until they reach 16 yrs.
- No sustainable plan around a continuation or consistency of the intervention as a programme

6.5 Transition programmes

The transition between pre-school and primary school, primary school and second level and second level to third level have been widely identified as one of the most significant changes experienced by children and young people up to that point in their lives.

Factors such as bullying, longer commutes, extra homework, managing the more complex routines and timetables, different teaching styles, a bigger number of teachers to interact with and separation from friends, can impact on integration into second level schools. This period in a young person's life is filled with change where their bodies and minds are developing, and hormones also play a bigger part in their response to life. Many may be moving from single sex schools to co-ed school which presents another new experience for them to adjust to.

Stakeholders had also indicated that where young people on the Autism Spectrum have been at primary school with dedicated autism support units, some of the strategies that they previously have been using are now not so successful in enabling them to cope with the changes that second level school presents.

All second levels schools in Cavan and Monaghan provide some form of transition programme for students coming into their schools. This normally can include open days, assessment days, induction days before the school term starts and activities like team building or away days once term has started to facilitate the students to get to know each other. Some schools offer buddy mentoring schemes where each 1st year is buddied up with a senior student for the first year so as to ease their entry into the school.

SCP, NEPS and Monaghan Family School Liaison Service offer additional transition supports where primary school pupils are engaged in preparing for what is coming before they make the move towards second level schools.

However, for some young people this transition period still presents great challenges and stakeholders talk about the milestone of Halloween mid-term break and being able to clearly identify

the young people who have settled in well and those for whom the experience of second level school has still not been integrated. For these more vulnerable young people additional tailored supports in the final term of sixth class are needed to help them to prepare more comprehensively for the transition as well as working with them through summer in some cases and during the first term of 1st year. In schools with SCP and Homes School Liaison this support is available but in those without those resources an alternative programme of supplementary transition support is required so as to reduce the likelihood that this experience may impact on their progression in school.

Enrolling parents to support this transition period is essential and indeed parents supporting parents is highly effective.

6.6 What does this tell us about the service gaps that exist in Cavan and Monaghan?

Whilst it is acknowledged that there are some effective generic supports in schools in both Cavan and Monaghan for young people with identified additional needs these are not always sufficient or specialised enough to be able to work effectively with the most vulnerable under 16yr olds young people who are most at risk of early school leaving or who have already disengaged. There are also young people who need more intervention than even DEIS school services can offer in order to re-engage them in school.

The author has attempted to summarise the limitations of each of these supports/programme so as to be clearer about the gaps that exist in both counties in relation to the specific type support sought. The summary is presented in the table on the next page in Table 18.

The service gaps which exist become very relevant when a young person is in need of additional support. Due to the rurality of both counties there is a case to be made for the model of the Family School Liaison Service (FSLs) in Monaghan town (as outlined in Section 6.2.3 above) being expanded to be made available for both counties as a mobile service, which can supplement the SCP and DEIS/HSCLS supports available in designated schools. This service would require additional personnel and resources to ensure that it could respond to the needs of individual young people wherever they are at school. The FSLs has been in existence for over 20 years and the model is well proven as an effective support to schools in Monaghan town and is highly valued by both schools and stakeholders in the area.

Pilot programmes are great to test out a methodology however, to create an impact they need to be longer term and with a more consistent funding stream. One of the downsides of short-term programmes is that it can be challenging to attract and retain the right staff. And where staff have been trained and have developed key skills and experiences, this is often lost when the funding stream comes to an end.

With regards to services that support early school leavers under the age of 16 yrs there is some ground to make up. There is an evident need that is not being met by current provision. It is imperative that this need is addressed in a manner that will allow some long-term sustainability and impact to be achieved to address the cohort of disengaged young people.

Alongside this sits the need to introduce more early intervention approaches into the primary school system to try to reduce the number of young people getting into the position where that disengage in the lower second level school system.

Table 18: Limitations of existing supports to young people under 16yrs at risk of early school leaving

Initiative	Area	Limitations
School Completion Programme	Cavan Monaghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 SCP in Cavan working with 2 post primary schools and 3 primary schools • 3 SCPs in Monaghan working with 8 primary school and 4 post primary schools • No uniformity between each SCP
Home School Community Liaison Scheme	Cavan Monaghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating in 2 DEIS post primary schools in Cavan • Operating in 4 DEIS post primary schools in Monaghan
Education Welfare Services	Cavan Monaghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One EWO for each county • Each EWO is working beyond their maximum capacity with 49/50 open cases • Due to the limited capacity of the service in each county, each EWO intervention is only dealing with young people with 40+day of recorded absence • EWOs have no capacity to work at an early intervention stage – which would potentially prevent some school leaving cases getting to crisis stage.
Monaghan Family School Liaison Service	Monaghan Town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports 4 post-primary schools in Monaghan town • Limited capacity of support worker – 4 days per week • Programme funding is short term and does not currently allow the programme to expand its coverage
iScoil	Monaghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot programme offering 3 places at present • Programme runs for 1 year – not a short-term solution • €1000 per licence fee – challenge is to secure this level of funding every year • No additional programme costs built into the pilot to cover refreshments, venue or any other required wrap around service • Requires 2 staff to manage 2hrs per morning taking the SCP staff away from core support services in Beech Hill College • 3 pupils must be transported to and from the pilot each day
Pre-Youthreach Programme	Cavan Town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical response programme which is running for 1 academic year for young people who had no place to go • Limited number of additional tutor hours designated to the initiative • Utilising core Youthreach resources • No additional programme costs to cover trips and other commonplace Youthreach activities • Only operating in one Youthreach Centre • Youthreach is funded to support young people aged 15+20yrs – its national mandate is not for the younger ages, which may present an issue with a long-term continuation of this pilot.
Initiative	Area	Limitations

Garda Youth Diversion Programme	Cavan Monaghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed specifically to divert young people who have become involved in crime/anti-social behaviour as well supporting wider preventative work in the community and with families at risk • Primary referrals coming from local JLO will take priority over secondary referrals from other stakeholders • A high proportion of participants may also be out of school • This is not an alternative education provision
Integrated Youth Initiative	Monaghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed specifically to integrate vulnerable and socially isolated young people into the community • Young people must be on the Tusla radar • Operates in Monaghan only • A proportion of participants may also be out of school • This is not an alternative education provision
Compass Pilot Programme	Monaghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot programme at present in Monaghan only • Designed around the needs of a small number of boys with behavioural challenges already receiving support from Tusla • These young people happen also to be at risk of leaving school • Focus is on channelling their energies into outdoor activities • This is not an alternative education provision
Amplify Programme	Monaghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monaghan only at present • Focus is on developing interpersonal skills: active leadership, relationship building and personal development • Due to end in 2021 • This is not an alternative education provision
Bounceback	West Cavan SE Cavan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operates in very specific areas of West Cavan and South East Cavan only • One of the elements of the project is re-engagement in education • This is not an alternative education provision
Include Youth	Clones, Castleblayney Ballybay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the elements of the project is re-engagement in education • Operating in Clones, Castleblayney • This is not an alternative education provision

7. LEARNING FROM ELSEWHERE

7.1 Learning from elsewhere in Ireland

The author reviewed a number of alternative learning programmes in operation in Ireland with a view to understanding their ethos and methodologies and to learn from them what might be useful and relevant for Cavan and Monaghan.

7.1.1 Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB - Alternative Learning Programmes (ALPs)

One of the models that was of most interest to stakeholders in Cavan and Monaghan is the ALPs being delivered by Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB. The author visited the Tallaght ALP to speak with the co-ordinator of all five, Aoife Heffernan.

The Dun Laoghaire ALP was the first of the five to be developed and was developed in response to a need for early intervention for early school leaving – particularly for 12, 13-14 yr olds (1st to 3rd yr focus only). There are several training initiatives/centres other programmes in Dublin which accommodate older ages and also provide progression from junior certificate level at school as an alternative to Youthreach.

The DDETB ALPs are not categorised as an education provided – they are a back to education support initiative where the focus is:

- To identify the appropriate progression for the young person
- To identify what the young person is interested in and what they want to do when older
- It develop an individual learning plan

Pupils

They particularly focus on 12-14yr olds as there are no other supports for them. With the 12-13yr olds the aim is to get them back into mainstream education and as they are not out of education for too long at this stage it is more likely.

Referrals are received from the EWOs at 21 days out of school – must come from EWO and they must be an open case with the EWO. It could be that a youth service working with the young person makes a referral to the EWO, but it is the EWO that is the gatekeeper. It should be noted that a young person can re-enter an ALP if required.

All of the programmes have an 8-person capacity maximum and they have a rolling intake.

Mechanics of the Programmes

The programme is structured around 8-week blocks, whereby a young person starts with a plan and goals for 2 weeks which are reviewed at the end of the two weeks. If all is going well, at that time the service is extended by another two weeks and so on until the 8 weeks are completed. Additional blocks of 8 weeks can be added if progressions are going well – depends on the needs of the young person.

The ethos in the programmes is centred around a youth work approach. Essential skills like literacy and numeracy are approached by engaging the young person in what they have an interest in i.e. art, computers etc. The content covered over the 8-weeks is determined by the interests of the young person.

The following table outlines the characteristics of the 5 ALPs that are currently running in the DDLETB area:

Table 19: Characteristics of ALP delivery by Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB area

Name of service	Dun Laoghaire ALP	Tallaght ALP	Clondalkin ALP	Swords ALP	Balbriggan ALP
Delivery organisation	Crosscare	DDLETB	Crosscare	Crosscare	Foroige
Venue	Crosscare centre	Community	Crosscare centre	Crosscare centre	Foroige Centre

		Youth centre			
Accessibility	Close to community	Close to community	Close to community	Bus picks up YP from two points	Close to community
Days/Hours Generally, not a M or F -work with what works	3 days/wk. Tues, Wed, Thu 10-2pm	3 days/wk. Mon, Wed, Fri 10-1pm	3 days/wk. Tue, Thu 1-4pm Wed 10-1pm	3 days/wk. Tues, Wed Thu 9.30-12.30pm	3 days/wk. Tues, Wed, Thu 1.00-4.00
Contact hours/wk.	12	9	9	9	9
Admin hours/wk.	3	3	3	3	3
Number of places	8 – max at any one time	8 – max at any one time	8 – max at any one time	8 – max at any one time	8 – max at any one time
Staffing	1 Tutor ETB 1 YWkr local service – additional hours for ALP	1 Tutor ETB 1 YWkr local service – additional hours for ALP	1 Tutor ETB 1 YWkr local service – additional hours for ALP	1 Tutor ETB 1 YWkr local service – additional hours for ALP	1 Tutor ETB 1 YWkr local service – additional hours for ALP
Tutor focus	Academic content	Academic content	Academic content	Academic content	Academic content
Youth Worker	Youth work approach/ Methodologies Richie	Youth work approach/ Methodologies Elena	Youth work approach/ Methodologies Elena	Youth work approach/ Methodologies Simon	Youth work approach/ Methodologies Simon
Specialist focus	Woodwork based	IT	IT	Art/Creative	Art/Creative
Primary issues presenting	Anxiety	Behavioural issues	School refusal Behavioural issues	Behavioural issues and Anxiety	School refusal

There are two staff in each programme – a youth worker employed by the host youth organisation and a tutor employed by the ETB. The combined approach service the young people well with the ALPs helping the young people socially, educationally, and on a health and wellbeing dimension. The staff can help with addiction referrals if there is a need and will advocate on behalf of the YP. The relationship building between the staff and the young people is a huge part of the success.

There are no school rules in the programmes and there is space to allow for a YP to have a bad day. When this happens, there is more youth work approach used to engage them – fun, games. One of the priorities is to get the young person integrating, socialising and into a routine – which are often the things which have been lost due to school dis-engagement or exclusion. It is hoped that the young person to engage in other activities going on in the youth centre – the youth worker looks for other opportunities outside of the ALP to engage the young person in – social and recreational activities in the centre and in the community.

This is especially important during the school holiday periods when there is less structure in the young person's life. In the Summer tutors are off but the youth worker will engage with young person in the youth centres summer programme of activities which helps with social integration. In the plan for the 2020/2021 academic year it is planned to continue the structure of the ALP right through the mid-term breaks and school holidays as staff have found that there is a high level of non-attendance after these school holidays – this sets the young people back to zero. Therefore, the programme will work with the youth service to provide activities on the same days as the ALPs during holiday times and see how this works.

Key element - self-evaluation/assessment

At the end of each day the young people an evaluation based on the following questions:

- What I did?
- What I learned?
- What I liked?
- What I didn't like?
- Suggestions?

This daily exercise allows them to reflect and realise the value of activities, achievement and outcomes – it teaches them more about themselves.

Each young person must also review their performance at the end of each 2 weeks against the ALP 6 Key areas when they meet with the youth worker and tutor. The key areas are:

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Messaging
- Participation
- Contribution
- Checking and following instructions

Based on the meeting, the YP will be offered another 2-week block where they create the direction of the 2 weeks, identifying where they want to go in the future. This process allows them to identify where they are struggling, develop strategies to address it and take responsibility for their learning.

Progressions

The youth worker works with the Home School Liaison officer, the parents, social workers if involved and the EWO to bring about a slow integration back into the mainstream school environment. If a reintegration is not successful, progressions will depend on the age of the YP and what is local to the area – e.g. Carline takes young people from 14 yrs, Youthreach from 16 yrs (but at 15yrs with some exemptions). Progressions for a 13yr olds are a problem where they cannot be integrated back into school. Sometimes the parents don't have the knowledge, ability or education to follow up on options and avenues to support the young person, so the youth worker is important in relation to advocating for the young person.

2018/19 STATS

- 96 referrals
- 71 intake 100%
- 38 x 14 yr olds 53%

Progressions/Outcomes

22	returned to School in May 19	31%
16	progressed to training centres	23%
8	went to Youthreach	11%
12	Turned 16 or disengaged with EWO	17%
8	Returned to ALP in Sept 19	11%
5	?	

Challenges

One of the biggest battles is dole dependency or lack of familial value on work. Young people see family, friends, and neighbours all around them on the dole and possible several generations of the same. They do not have any local role models.

Pros

- One-to-one relationships
- Small numbers
- Non-school setting
- Focus on building confidence, socialising and getting routines back

Cons

- 13 yr olds on the programme who are not going to go back to mainstream school
 - Not doing junior cert
 - Still a problem with no progressions available after one year
 - This model of ALP is not a solution to this issue
- A few years ago they operated iScoil – but it worked out too expensive to continue.

Important considerations

The ETB tutors need to be the right tutors – with the right attitude and experience to work with this category of young people. They need to have a passion for young people to be the best they can be. The relationship between the youth worker and the tutor is especially important as it can be very intense dealing with the young people. The team need to be looking for things that trigger outbursts. There is a fine line between being too informal and being too strict.

There is a shortage of youth workers which makes it difficult for a youth organisation to deliver this programme as you need an additional youth worker to do this work.

A service level agreement is vital between the delivery organisation and the ETB youth service. DDLETB has produced a comprehensive “Roles and Responsibilities Agreement” document which demonstrates the level of good practice required in the setting up of a similar project in Cavan and Monaghan. This document is included in Appendix 5.

Given that venues may be used for Cavan and Monaghan projects which are not in the ownership of the delivery organisation it would also be advisable to have a service level agreement with the venue providers.

7.1.2 Other ETB Areas**Tipperary ETB ALP – iScoil Model**

The Tipperary ALP ran running for 2 years with YWI as a stand-alone service in Tipperary Town. It offered 12 places and was hosted in a youth centre catering for 12-15 yr olds coming from ETB schools and working to the DDLETB set of guidelines.

It was staffed by a YWI youth worker and an ETB tutor for 15 hours per week funded through a cocktail of funding including CYPSC, SICAP and ESB. The project could not secure long-term sustainable funding

This model incorporated iScoil for 2 models to provide a blended learning approach but did not find it totally satisfactory/beneficial as the young people need literacy to be at QQI level 3. iScoil is good for motivated students who have no academic barriers. Tipperary also found iScoil to be expensive to fund each year - €3000 per year for licences plus costs of running day to day and tutors and it was restrictive, and the students had to be out of school for 6-month before being eligible.

South Tipperary continues to run 3 iScoil places through their Integrated Company who run the GYDP

Galway Roscommon ETB

They developed an ALP model linked to Adult Education Centre with one youth worker and one teacher offering 7 places to 14 and 15 yr olds. The majority of learners were from the Traveller Community. The programme incorporated a heavy focus on group work and developmental youth work with an emphasis on QQIs in communications, gardening, cookery as well as English and maths. They have not secured sustainable long-term funding for the ALP.

Cork ETB

Using ETB co-operation hours, Cork has been able to run an ALP. This will only work if the tutors available with co-operation hours are youth trained and offer relevant topics and skills.

7.1.3 Carline Learning Centre

Located in in Lucan, County Dublin, Carline is a Learning Centre for young people aged 13 - 17 years old, who are excluded from or no longer attending mainstream education. The centre which has been running for 25 years is categorised as an educational services as it delivers a curriculum which includes Junior Certificate. In 2019 the centre was taken over by the Peter McVerry Trust.

Carline caters for up to 30 young people children in in classes from First Year to Junior Certificate. These young people engage with a team of 14 staff including social care staff, teaching staff, as well as support staff including a cook, bus driver and admin and cleaning staff. An important feature of the service is the ability for it to use its own bus to transport young people to the centre, easing accessibility to the centre.

In 2018, 40% of young people re-integrated back into mainstream education with 17 young people sitting the Junior Cert.

The Programme

- Social care service
- An education programme
- A psychological service

The young people attending the Centre have a responsibility to abide by a contract, code of conduct and complete a trial programme. There are regular reviews of their progress, with their parent/guardians and/or referral agents. The young person must attend all their classes and arranged appointments.

Opening Hours

The Centre is open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30 pm and Friday from 8.30am to 2.30pm.

The Education Programme

All the young people attending the Centre study all or some of the following subjects up to Junior Certificate level:

- English
- Mathematics
- History
- Physical Education
- Civic, Social and Political Education (C.S.P.E.)
- Material Technology(Wood)
- Business Studies
- Art, Craft and Design

The Social Care Programme

All the young people are assigned a keyworker from the Social Care team once they commence at Carline. They can avail of day to day support from their keyworker with their learning, time management, anger management, peer relationships etc. Each young person has an individual development plan which they work on with their keyworker.

The Counselling service

Many of the young people attending Carline benefit from attending counselling.

- Counselling support -one to one
- Parent and Child sessions
- Crisis management

7.2 Other models we can learn from

7.2.1 Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board PLC Access Programme

In September 2019 a new pilot programme called the PLC Access Programme commenced in both Monaghan Institute and Cavan Institute. It was designed as support intervention primarily for young people who were coming from Youthreach and in some cases from Leaving Cert Applied courses and who were interested in exploring the next step into a PLC environment.

The support was put in place as a direct response to feedback from Youthreach staff and other stakeholders that there was a specific cohort of learners coming into the Institutes who were floundering at the transition for a variety of reasons and consequently were dropping out of their chosen course.

The PLC Access Programme runs for 29 hours a week and each participant attracts the same level of financial support as a Youthreach participant along with a transport allowance.

The focus of the programme is introducing the learners to college life and helping them to integrate into the Institute environment and college life, how to navigate the supports available, manage their own time and learning as well as to build confidence in their ability to step up to this learning level.

The programme engages learners in core QQI level 5 classes and introduced them to taster session in topics that are of interest to them. The net result as they progress through the year is that they become more confident about their ability to learn at this level, that they start to get some ideas around what interest them and therefore what course they may be interest in in the following year. They continue to have 1-1 support when required and have access to a counsellor to deal with any personal issues that are hindering their personal development. Both programmes have been very successful in terms of the growth in the young people that has been witnessed by the programme co-ordinators.

Progressions

- There is a plan for everyone whether progression to traineeship/Solus, a course in the college or employment.

- They can apply for Back to Education Allowance next year and their co-ordinators can support the young people to apply for it
- They give the young people support to apply for it.
- By January time they have been able to identify the potential courses they want to follow

Pros

- They made friends through taster courses and group interactions and realised that they were not different. When at Youthreach when they go to events, they see school groups and they feel different – there is still a stigma surrounding Youthreach. It does not matter that they do well in Youthreach, they still feel that they have failed because they are in Youthreach
- College has done wonders for the self-confidence – it has helped them to see themselves as proper students
- The course has brought out what was in them anyway - they have grown more and are so much better able to cope with life
- The Programme also recognises that this group is will need to have ongoing contact with Mary and her team when they progress to their first full year in the Institute following a course of their choice, so she will be there and build in some time for them in her timetable if they continue in College
- They may be able to break the cycle then they will be able to empower their children
 - Lots of their parents cannot read
- The Multiagency aspect has been important
 - Links with GYDP, YETI, YWI etc

Cons

- So many positive outweighed the negatives
- For students especially coming from Bailieborough or Kingscourt, they get a travel allowance, but they get it in one go and found it difficult to budget it out to last the term. They don't have budgeting skills. If the course was in charge of the allowance, they could help make it last - but the young people have to learn how to do this – they had some difficulties with young people having no money to pay for transport to get to college.
- Engagement was always going to be an issue
- The Institutes gave a free hand with how to run the programme and how the sampling would work – this is only the first year so they will be able to apply the learning from this year to next year's programme
- Not everyone is going to be suited to the Access Programme

7.2.2 The MEITHEAL Model

The term Meitheal is an old Irish term used to describe how neighbours would come together to help each out with harvesting or other annual tasks on the farm. Meitheal in the Tusla context is a model of early intervention which brings key players in a child/young person's life together to work together in partnership to support the child/young person. The objective is to get parents and specialist to work together for the benefit of the child/young person. In Cavan and Monaghan they are being used on more and more frequently.

To initiate a Meitheal there must be two agencies/organisations involved i.e SCP, HSL, Tusla. It's a voluntary process and so the parents must agree for it to commence and there must be at least one parent involved and preferably the young person. If the young person is already involved with the Tusla Social Work team they are considered ineligible for a Meitheal, however it can be used as a step-down mechanism from Social Work intervention.

Meitheals are very much strengths-based processes and in the early stages a Strengths and Needs analysis will be completed based around the 5 national outcomes in BOBF. The needs of the young person and their parents form the basis of the agenda for the Meitheal. At the Meitheal meetings the needs are examined by a variety of stakeholders who see what they have offer in terms of help and support to tackle the needs. Actions arising from the meeting are associated with different

stakeholders and a date for a follow up is planned where progress can be monitored. Actions will have the net impact of reducing the needs of the young person over time.

7.2.3 Star Project

There are no targeted Traveller specific educational supports to children and young people from the Traveller community in Cavan or Monaghan. In other areas of the country there are specific interventions such as STAR in North Dublin which provides support to the Traveller and Roma communities with the aim of helping them to get the most out of education.

This project works directly with the Traveller parents and children, they work with the school to help them to be more inclusive and the assist in getting the young people, families and schools working well together. It's almost like a Home School Community Liaison Scheme and School Completion Programme specifically for the traveller and Roma community rolled into one.

7.3 What does this tell us about what works with early school leavers under 16yrs?

7.3.1 Features of alternative learning provision that work

Throughout the review of supports examined in this study, there are a number of common features embedded in each model that work well with this cohort young people:

- One-to-one support
- Small numbers in classes
- Bespoke educational curriculum around the interests of the young person
- Youth worker input
- Focus on personal development building confidence, self-esteem, and resilience
- Holistic response – acknowledging other challenges which may be at play – anxiety, addiction issues, sexual identity issues etc.
- Meeting the young person where they are at
- Empowering young people to solution
- Working from a strengths-based approach
- Achievement of accredited modules which can build up over time
- Opportunity to develop good routines and habits
- Building solid relationships with the young person and building trust is critical
- Co-ordination of services – do not overwhelm the young person in service land
- Relationship between delivery team members is very important
- Connection and integration with community services
- Youthwork and tutor partnership
- Multiagency Partnership approach delivery and finding solutions – pooling resources
- Good governance structure for the programme
- Some mechanism for engaging parents and supporting them to support their young people
- Flexibility and adaptability to respond to needs wherever they arise in the counties
- Continuity of funding to retention of staff and their skills and development ensure development
- Importance of technology for accessing rural areas - this has been highlighted as being especially important in the context of COVID-19)
- In a long-term delivery, there needs to be access to accredited modules which can contribute to an equivalent attainment to Junior Certificate.

7.3.2 Duration of intervention

What is also clear from analysis carried out is there is a need for a model of learning provision what offers short-term as well as long-term support for young people. While the primary aim of intervention

with school refusers, is to reengage them in mainstream education, there is an acknowledgement that the re-integration process if it is successful for some young people, may take longer for some than others.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusions - What we know to be true

- In counties Cavan and Monaghan we do not have a robust education-focused model of early intervention which can work across all school types and the full student body and which can respond to children at primary school level or young people at second level, who are struggling to engage or be retained within the mainstream education provision.
- In the both counties we also do not have out-of-school structures to offer educational and psycho-social support to young people which will meet their needs until existing progression routes to education or training can be accessed at 16yrs.
- Mainstream education working towards Junior Cert, Leaving Cert and progression to third level is not for everyone – alternatives are required
- Not all young people who need additional supports to remain at school, attend DEIS schools or schools with School Completion Programmes.
- The rural nature of Cavan and Monaghan with two thirds of the population living in the small villages and country-side, creates additional challenges in relation to engaging young people in the target cohort who may be widely dispersed across both counties. Therefore the rurality of both counties in conjunction with a challenged rural transport system will present difficulties in being able to serve young people in outlying areas.
- The number of young people who are educationally at risk is small in each county.
- Youthreach is not for everyone.
- Not all young people transition well from primary school to secondary school, and not all those who transitioned badly have support structures available to them to help them settle into and integrate into their school effectively.
- There is no structure or system with responsibility which will track a child from primary school through to post-primary to guarantee a transition has occurred, which means that some children can fall through the cracks before they even get to the stage of second level school.
- We do not have a homogenous group of young people with the same set of challenges or needs. Many of the young people who struggle with engagement at mainstream educational provision will be experiencing a cocktail of several issues or challenges which contribute to the complexity of supporting them.
- Minority groups require specific interventions which accommodate their cultural differences and needs.
- The impact of COVID-19 in the medium term (18 months- 2 years) is going to challenge every aspect of the way we provide services in every context. Therefore, the possibility of second or third waves of the virus occurring, the knock-on effect on youth mental health as well as how to manage physical distancing within service delivery as well as within school environments present all youth-oriented organisations with immense hurdles to overcome in the coming months as we ease out of lockdown.
- One of the other potential legacies of COVID-19 is the possibility that departmental budgets will be curtailed in an effort to recoup the exceptional expenditure incurred in the actions to respond to the challenges to health and the economy that the pandemic has presented. Whilst we are in

the process of a return to a new-normal we do not yet know how long additional measures will need to be adopted in response to further waves of COVID.

8.2 Recommendations - A suggested way forward for Alternative Learning Provision in Cavan and Monaghan

This study has sought to present the Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board with an understanding of early school leaving in a Cavan and Monaghan context, so as to recommend a way forward in the provision of a service which will engage with young people under 16yrs who have left the mainstream education system or who are at risk of leaving. This section of the report outlines the recommendations that the author suggests are most appropriate to the area.

In the course of undertaking this study it has become very clear to the author that addressing the issue of early school leaving through the provision of an alternative education model is not the full solution to the problem. There are a broader range of recommendations appropriate to the whole education system focusing on retention and engagement, which are beyond the remit of Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board alone, but which have relevance to a wider set of stakeholders operating in the counties. Therefore this broader set of recommendations is outlined in this section.

Recommendation 1: School Retention Whole System Response

The author suggests that a **School Retention Whole-System Response** is required if we are to truly respond to the issue of early school leaving effectively. Whilst this study is primarily concerned with exploring options for alternative learning provision, the author feels that there are early intervention and prevention elements of a Whole-System Response which if they were planned for and implemented would ultimately reduce the number of young people with a poor level of engagement at school and also would reduce the number that ultimately leave prematurely.

There are identified “cracks” in the current system of support and educational continuity and young people are being lost in those cracks. Engaging stakeholders in the whole schooling system is considered vital in order to “plug the cracks” and bolster the services already in existence thereby improving the outcomes of young people at an earlier stage in their education.

Whilst the early intervention and prevention measures referenced may not be solely within the remit of Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board, they are included in this report as a mechanism for stakeholders to engage in a wider conversation about addressing early school leaving in both counties. Through these conversations it is anticipated that relevant stakeholders can engage with the elements of the recommendations that they have a remit for, and therefore collectively a Whole System Response will be activated.

A Whole-System Response requires interagency co-operation and it also requires the investment of resources which will give a greater return in the long-term to the individuals, to society and to the economy.

The Whole-System Response suggested by the author involves 4 stages which work in tandem:

1. **Early Intervention**
2. **Prevention**
3. **Short-term Response**
4. **Long term Response**

Figure 7: School Retention Whole-System Response



The response model is outlined in more detail on the next page.

Figure 8: School Retention Whole-System Response in detail

<p>STAGE 1: EARLY INTERVENTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition Interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing universal school transition programmes to primary schools ○ Providing a primary school transition tracking service • Utilising Existing SCP service where available • Utilising Existing DEIS/Home School Community Liaison Schemes where available • Targeted interventions for minority groups of concern <p>ADDITIONAL service to plug the gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replicate Family School Liaison Service (FSLs) as a mobile response unit to cover each county with a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Primary School Division and ○ Secondary School Division <p>Referrals can be made by all primary and second level schools to either SCP/HSCL or FSLs where concerns about vulnerable children/families and attendance exist – pre 20-day trigger point.</p>
<p>STAGE 2: PREVENTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted school transition programmes following the child to second level and continuing relationship to establish to primary schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Existing SCP service where available ○ Existing DEIS/Home School Community Liaison Schemes where available ○ Family School Liaison Service as a mobile response unit to cover each county • FSLs following up on primary school transition tracking to ensure that all young people are transferred over successfully to second level • Work to engage children who have not transferred to second level • Work on referrals for targeted vulnerable families/children/young people on issues relating to attendance and referring to PPFS/other stakeholders for additional individual family support where needed • Secondary school - Referrals to Short Term Response where re-engagement is not working, and a different out-of-school intensive strategy is required
<p>STAGE 3: SHORT-TERM RESPONSE Alternative Learning Programme (for 13,14, or 15 yr olds)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8-week model of ALP intervention • Not in school environment with youth work approach • Focusing on personal development, core educational input self-evaluation – centred on interests of young person and with access to wrap-around therapeutic supports as appropriate • Integration with community services, youth services etc as appropriate • Gradual integration of young person back into school • Repeat of 8-week module if required to achieve re-integration
<p>STAGE 4: LONG-TERM</p>	

**RESPONSE Alternative
 Education Programme
 (ideally for 15 yr olds)**

- Having established that the re-integration model of Stage 3 is not suitable for certain young people a switch to engagement in a long-term AEP response is required
- 1 year in duration (possibly a second can be accommodated if required and the young person is too young for other progressions)
- Incorporation of QQI modules/accredited modules of education
- Possibly integrating iScoil or Youthreach methodology of learning supplemented with personal development and wrap-around therapeutic supports as appropriate
- Potential of developing this response to incorporate Leaving Cert Applied (LCA) or Leaving Cert Vocational Programme (LCVP)

Stage 1: Early Intervention & Stage 2: Prevention

Key to this Whole-System Response is the extension of the Family School Liaison Service (FSLs) delivered by the Monaghan Education Centre (*which itself has a remit for supporting schools in both counties - both DEIS and non-DEIS*). By extending the resources and reach of the the FSLs, it could provide a mobile response across both counties to primary and second level school that are without the resources of DEIS/HSCL/SCP. The FSLs would be able to work on a universal and targeted basis as required and could in essence, ensure that support and resources could follow the child/young person rather than the school.

Important additional elements of the support this type of a service would be provision of:

- Transitions Interventions
 - Universal Transition programme at primary school level
 - Targeted Transition support at primary and secondary levels by referral
 - Primary school transition tracking system
- Targeted Traveller/Roma community school support programme and targeted supports for new communities (Similar to STAR in North Dublin - Appendix 6)

Governance for this service could be provided by the Monaghan Education Centre with oversight by a multi-agency steering committee, similar to what exists already for the Monaghan town Family School Liaison Service.

In addition to wrapping around the existing DEIS/HSCL/SCP supports with transition support and targeted Traveller & Roma support, the FSLs could provide targeted support to children/young people and families in cases at non-DEIS schools where attendance was emerging as an issue.

The tracking of transitions from Primary to Second level schools is one which has been raised by several stakeholders as one which is not under the remit of any organisation and which if allocated as the responsibility of one organisation could ensure that children were not “falling between the cracks” at this very early stage.

Stages 1 and 2 of the Whole-System Response addresses three areas of concern raised by stakeholders engaged with, for this study:

1. Transition from Primary School to Secondary School
2. Tracking pupils from Primary school to Secondary school to ensure they transfer
3. Targeted support for Traveller and Roma communities

These areas of concern have also been identified in the following plans:

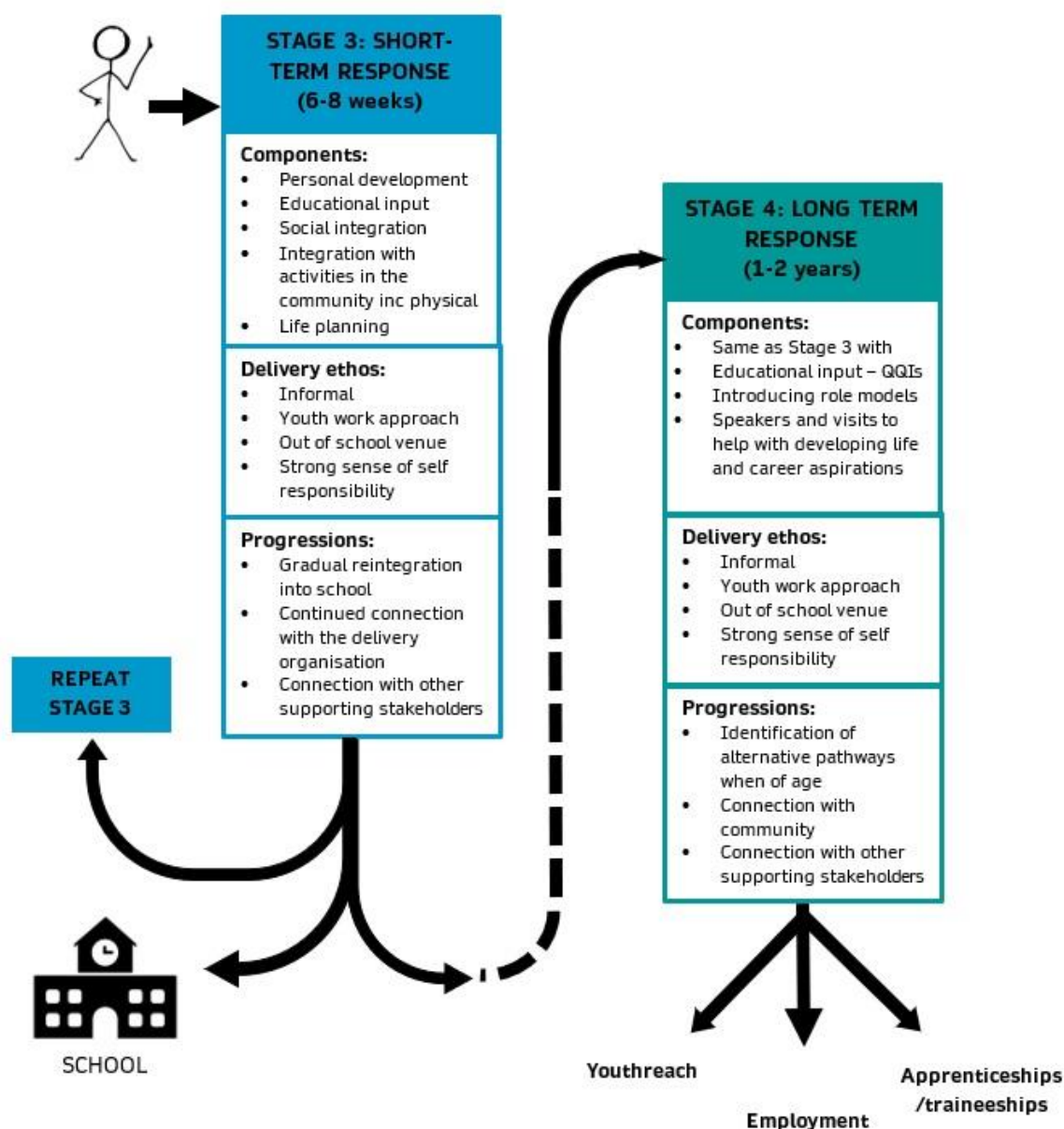
- Cavan CYPSC Plan
- Monaghan CYPSC Plan
- Tusla Area Commissioning Plan
- Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board Youth Plan
- Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board Area Profiles for Cavan
- Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board Area Profiles for Monaghan
- An inclusive Cavan: Needs Assessment for Young Travellers (10-24 yrs) In Cavan

Stage 3: Short-Term Response & Stage 4: Long-Term Response delivered through an ALP

It is clear that due to the diverse nature of contributory causes of early school leaving, there are some young people who with the right support will be able to re-engage successfully into full-time mainstream schooling, and others who will not. Some of those who will not be able to re-engage may be in this position due to school exclusion or reduced hours.

The author considered that it was important to distinguish between the response to both types need. Firstly there is a short-term response required and secondly a long-term response.

Figure 9: Stages 3 and 4 of the Whole System Response – in detail



The short-term response is designed with the aim of re-engaging the young person back into mainstream school – whether in their original school or another in the local area. The long-term response is for young people from whom mainstream education has been confirmed as being unsuitable for various reasons.

The majority of young people accepted into this service will commence with Stage 3- the short-term response and complete a period of 8 weeks engaging in a range of activities which are centred around their interests and which also work on the soft skills and personal development. A gradual introduction to mainstream schooling is integrated into the response which ideally result in the young person re-engaging in school or if it is deemed that more work is needed on a one-to-one basis, they may be considered for another 8-week engagement.

The author was impressed by the robust model of alternative learning provision that has been developed by Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB, which addresses all the key requisites that this study has identified as being important in working with young people to re-engage them in school. These pre-requisites are also key to longer-term engagement with young people.

If it is considered by the young person and other key stakeholders that they will not return to mainstream schooling, then the young person transfers over to Stage 4- which provides a longer-term approach to engagement and education until they are of an age where they can engage in other education/training pathways.

Key Characteristics required in an ALP

The pre-requisites of any alternative learning/education include:

1. **ESSENTIAL** - the service provision must be centred around the needs of the young person and start where the young person is at.
2. Assuming that all efforts within the school environment have failed to re-engage the young person, the model of alternative learning provision should be framed as an initial short-term intervention which actively accommodates the possibility of gradual re-integration of the young person into mainstream education.
3. The combination of a youthwork approach and youth worker balanced with educational tutor input seems to provide the best basis upon which to start the re-engagement process.
4. Delivery of the service in an informal environment which is trauma-informed and allows a range of activity set-ups to be arranged i.e. open space, easy chairs, table, and chairs.
5. Methodologies of small numbers, one-to-one support and group work featuring a combination of a combination of activities focussing on educational supports, social integration, psycho-social supports, life skills, motivational life planning skills and physical activity are recommended. Approach/methodology needs to recognise the cause of leaving school for the young person
6. Daily self-reflection, regular self-appraisal and responsibility are core themes which connect the young person with their role in their own education and development. The development of goals and long-term planning by the young person is critical to the discussion of progression and the process of self-evaluation.
7. Connection with community organisations and structures which help to integrate the young person into a wider range of interests and supports
8. Flexibility of service delivery and ability to respond to where the need is presenting in each county, with the potential of changing location of delivery year on year as is required.
9. Collaboration with and co-ordination of interagency support by relevant statutory and community services as is appropriate to the young person in order to provide a wraparound service and to ensure that there is a synchronisation of ancillary service provision i.e. therapeutic interventions, counselling, addition therapy etc.

10. Engagement of and liaison with parents/family and schools as is appropriate to the continued support of the young person towards re-engagement with learning.

Distinctions between Short-term and Long-term responses

The primary aim of the short-term response is a re-engagement of the young person in mainstream schooling and so it is considered to be a support to learning and education rather than a model of education.

The long-term response starts with the acknowledgement that the young person is not going to be able to engage with mainstream schooling and therefore the priority becomes engaging them in some form of accredited education model with the objective of helping them to progress to a point where they have a currency of some type of qualifications equivalent to the junior cert. They will at the very least be prepared for progressions when they reach the age of 16yrs.

Key to both provisions would be the focus on working with the young person to develop a personal plan for their learning and development which would become a measurement of progress reviewed regularly and adjusted based on performance.

The challenge of responding to the needs of younger Early School Leavers

One significant consideration in relation to the practical implementation of such a model is the age at which the young person can enter into the alternative provision so that they are able to continue on into mainstream pathways.

If the young person is aged 13 yrs and attends a DEIS school then there is the potential of accessing the support of Home School Liaison, School Completion Programme or if in Monaghan town the Family School Liaison Service to support reintegration. This is where the necessity for an extension of FSLs is seen to be important for both counties so as to offer early intervention and prevention supports to try all possible attempts to re-engage them in education at 1st and 2nd year of school.

If these measures fail, or if there are no services available to engage the young person, there is little for a 13 yr old to access which would fill the gap of school and keep them engaged and learning in some form, until they reach the age of 16 when they can access other progression pathways. Table 20 below illustrates the biggest problem area in context of age.

Table 20: Levels of intervention for young people according to age highlighting biggest problem area

	First level of interventions	Second Level of interventions
13 yr old	School intervention HSCL if available SCP if available FSLs if available EWO intervention	<p>Problem area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress to Stage 3 response for attempt at re-integration GYDP if suitable Bounceback if available Tusla - Youth Integration Programme if eligible If Stage 3 does not re-engage a 1-1.5 yr engagement with Stage 4 will still leave them too young for progressions
14 yr old	School intervention HSCL if available SCP if available FSLs if available EWO intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress to Stage 3 response for attempt at re-integration If fails, progressions to Stage 4 1+1.5 year engagement at alternative education provision

<p>15 yr old</p>	<p>School intervention HSCL if available SCP if available MFSL if available EWO intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • iScoil pilot if in Monaghan town • Progress to Stage 3 alternative provision for attempt at re-integration • If re-engagement fails, Stage 4 alternative provision until YP turns 16 yrs
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The type of alternative learning provision being considered for Cavan and Monaghan is not designed to be a like-for-like replacement for school which can accommodate a young person for 3 years to take them to the golden age of 16. Therefore accommodating 13yr olds is still a challenge without a robust solution which can be accommodated across all school types in both counties. DDLETB also struggles with the challenge of the early school leaving 13yr old. Early Intervention and Prevention interventions are the long-term solution to avoiding 13yr olds leaving in the first place.

Recommendation 2: The Role of Cavan Monaghan Education and Training Board in developing an ALP

The primary role to be played by Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board in relation to the Whole System Response is in relation to Stages 3 and 4. The ETB has as part of its remit, the delivery of second level education in both counties as well as the co-ordination and management of some of the funding to youth services in the area. It is in this context that the ETB can play the most relevant role as a partner in the delivery of Stages 3 and Stage 4 of the Whole System Response for Cavan and Monaghan in order to address the gap in provision in both counties. The ETB has the experience and structures in place to support such a project through:

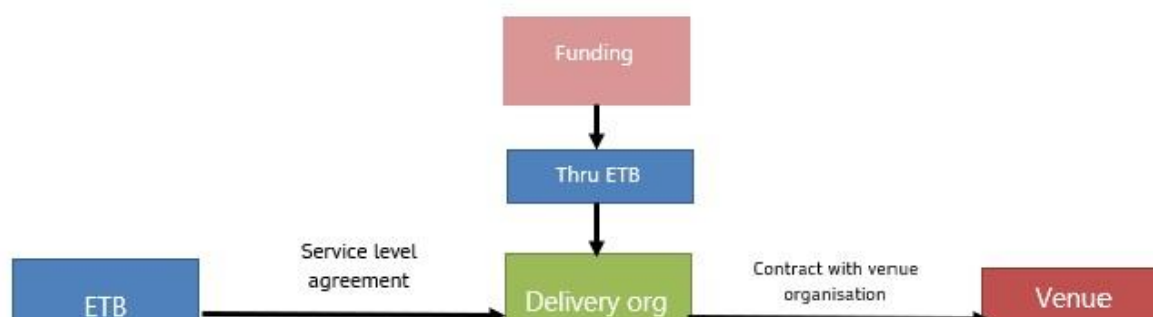
- providing governance,
- applying for funding from an appropriate source or collection of sources
- administering funding for an ALP
- supplying tutor support appropriate to the ALP
- engaging with other key stakeholders in keeping the issue of early school leaving on the agenda of both counties.

The early intervention measures of Stage 1 and Stage 2 (outlined above) are not within the responsibility or remit of Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board, and therefore the role of the ETB in this instance is to engage with other relevant organisations (Cavan CYPSC, Monaghan CYPSC, Tusla, Monaghan Education Centre, NEPS, Department of Education and Skills, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Primary and Second Level Schools) to share the learning and to enrol them in mobilising collaboratively to seek avenues of sustainable funding through which to progress the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report.

Recommendation 3: Governance of an Alternative Learning Provision

One of the important aspects of the development of any model of alternative learning provision for under 16s, is how it fits in with existing educational provision and how it is governed. The governance structure adopted by the DDLETB ALPs in Dublin presents as being robust with the ultimate governance responsibility falling under the remit of the ETB.

Figure 10: Governance model adopted by DDLETB for their ALP delivery



Important elements of the model are service level agreements with both the delivery youth organisation and also with the venue hosting the programme delivery. This will be especially important in Cavan and Monaghan if community venues are used that are not under the management of the delivery youth organisation.

The responsibility for governance of Youthreach centres in Cavan and Monaghan lies within the remit of the Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board and is subject to inspection by the Department of Education and Skills as centres of education, therefore it might be considered to be most appropriate for the Stage 3 and Stage 4 responses to lie within this governance structure also.

Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board would be able to support the provision of the educational element of the programme working in partnership with a youth organisation in the delivery of the programme. Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board is already in a position of being a conduit for other funding sources to youth delivery in both counties – Health Ireland, Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Peace IV.

Recommendation 4: Estimation of the number of young people in this cohort

There is a need for an exercise to be undertaken to provide a more accurate estimate of young people under the age of 16 who are at risk of early school leaving or who have already left.

This exercise needs to engage the following stakeholders:

- CAMHS HSE
- Tusla – SW and PPFS Tusla
- School Completion Programmes Tusla – TESS
- Home School Community Liaison Scheme Tusla -TESS
- Education Welfare Services Tusla - TESS
- GYDP JLO/Tusla
- Schools Dept of Education & Skills
- NEPS Dept of Education & Skills

With the willingness and capacity to share information, the aim would be to identify the number of individual young people – many of whom will be on the radar of several organisations.

Once this exercise is complete there would be a clearer idea of the potential number of young people for whom a Stage 3 intervention would be required and the number of those for whom a Stage 4 intervention would be more suitable.

Recommendation 5: Flexibility and Mobility of the ALP

Access to the Stage 3 and 4 ALP is of critical importance given the rural nature of both Cavan and Monaghan. Ideally the service needs to be adaptable and fit to move where it is needed in each county.

Fixing the location around the county towns just because it is likely that the largest number of young people are living in these towns, will result in young people in other areas of both counties being disadvantaged. The only condition of a fixed location venue which would avoid this disadvantage would be the incorporation of a transport service to bring the young people to the venue. This is what occurs with some of the Dublin services, although the distances are obviously shorter.

Stakeholder feedback has mentioned that the south of county Monaghan seems to be “the forgotten land” in terms of service provision. Additionally both south Monaghan and South-east Cavan have seen considerable changes to their population make-up and until three years ago South East Cavan and West Cavan could have been said also to be the “forgotten lands” in relation to youth services. However, through needs analyses and applications for specific funding, targeted interventions have been secured for these areas in Cavan and the level of support available to young people has improved significantly.

Recommendation 6: Catering for the needs of Minority Groups of concern

The Pre-Youthreach model being delivered this year in Cavan town has been greatly welcomed and the 5 out of the 6 young people engaged in the programme were engaging well prior to the COVID 19 lock down. However it is important to point out that this was a once off intervention in a situation where there were a number of young people with no place else to go for educational inputs.

Youthreach is a model which is familiar to Traveller young people and is considered to be a usual progression route for them if they are seeking progression into education and training at the age of 16. Therefore it would seem to be a valid consideration to consider developing this Pre-youth reach as a model of engagement for Traveller young people as part of the Stage 4 options. This would need to be funded through a different mechanism than mainstream Youthreach service, however. The real justification for this approach would come from the exercise in ascertaining the actual numbers of young people Traveller and non-Traveller who are confirmed as being out of school in addition to where they are located.

There is a case to be made for a stand-alone support programme for the Traveller community in both Cavan and Monaghan which would focus on improving the education experiences for children and young people and would support them to remain in education by working with children, young people, their parents and schools.

Supporting young people from new communities has to involve supplementary language tuition so as to be able to bring their literacy levels up to a standard which allows them to engage fully in other activities, education and supports.

Within the support of both these targeted groups, it is also suggested that there be some outreach supports to parents in order to ensure that parental understanding and support for the ongoing education of the young people is garnered.

Recommendation 7: Bolstering existing service provision and avoiding the scenario of “Robbing Peter to Pay Paul”

The overall educational system in Cavan and Monaghan requires additional resource input so as to effectively address the issue of early school leaving early and to avoid a movement of resources from one area to the other, which effectively can be described as “robbing Peter to pay Paul”.

Education Welfare Service

As has been mentioned earlier, the Education Welfare Service is currently staffed by two Education Welfare officers – one for each county. Both are working on a maximum case load of 49-50 cases each and even with this level of input, they are only in a position to work with the young people who have accumulated 40+ days of school absences. They don't have the capacity to work with young people at an earlier stage which might be more beneficial to achieving a re-engagement back into mainstream schooling. This therefore is one specific area where more resources are required in Cavan and Monaghan.

National Educational Psychological Service

The National Educational Psychological Service is also working to maximum capacity with 5 psychologists on the ground covering both counties. Therefore any additional request for NEPS to support an ALP in either county would require additional resources to be allocated to the service. Re-directing resources from the current level of service provision to supporting an ALP is not a remedy, it would create a deficit in existing work areas.

School Completion Programmes

While the introduction of an iScoil Pilot in Monaghan has been greatly welcomed, there is a cost to the system in delivering the pilot. In the current model of delivery of iScoil two School Completion Programme staff are engaged in supporting three young people to participate in the iScoil pilot in Monaghan Town five mornings a week, and are therefore not available to the students in Beech Hill College that need their support.

8.3 Funding considerations in relation to resourcing an Alternative Learning Provision and ancillary supports

The Whole-System Response suggested, addresses the deficits observed in the education system in Cavan and Monaghan in relation to retaining young people at school and is wider reaching than the initial objective of this study. However the gaps in the areas of early intervention and prevention of early school leaving, are too important to leave out of these recommendations, hence they have been included in the Whole-System Response.

In the event that a staged approach was adopted by the Cavan Monaghan ETB to implementing this 4-stage response, it should ideally begin with the priority areas of Stage 3: Short-term response followed by Stage 4: Long-term response – where no existing mainstream responses exist.

The author is however keen to restate the importance of the other elements of Stages 1 and 2 highlighted earlier:

- Universal Transition programme at primary school level
 - Targeted Transition support at primary and secondary levels by referral
 - Primary school transition tracking system
 - Extension of the FSLs in Monaghan Town delivered as a mobile support across both counties to primary and second level school that are without the resources of DEIS/HSCL/SCP offering to work on a universal and targeted basis as required
 - Targeted Traveller/Roma community school support programme
- and the need to work towards putting such supports in place.

Funding availability will continue to present one of the biggest challenges to supporting young people, especially vulnerable young people, adequately as they grow and develop. There may be an opportunity to develop a wide-reaching programme encompassing all four stages, under the upcoming Peace + programme, however this can be a difficult programme of funding to access and to administer.

As mentioned earlier in this study, one of the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic is that core funding for all government departments may be impacted. Added to this the recent constitution of a new Government, its new priorities also may impact the level of funding that is made available for new services. However this does not diminish the need to develop a response to the problem of early school leaving in the under 16 age group.

The type of supports being considered in the Stage 3 and Stage 4 responses in this report are by their nature intensive with small numbers of young people engaging with staff and therefore the cost per participant is likely to be comparable with Youthreach, however with the distinction that Youthreach operates from its own centres and that they operate for full days 5 days a week. The alternative education provision proposed is more likely to be a half-day provision.

The estimate given to the author for the annual cost of Youthreach per student was €10,000 per student. Currently 7 young people in Co. Monaghan are receiving home tuition as an alternative to mainstream school which costs in the region of €2500 per week, therefore there is a sound basis upon which to suggest an alternative model which could deliver a more rounded educational experience and could potentially cost less per year to run.

Once again the author points to the need to accurately quantify the numbers of young people who are to be considered for such a service provision, as a starting point in estimating the annual cost per year to run it effectively at Stage 3 and Stage 4 level of response. Currently the iScoil pilot programme is receiving €1000 per student per year to cover the licence fee for iScoil with no additional programme costs provided. This is not ideal, but in the context of no alternative options being available to support these young people it is a gladly received.

The author suggests that there may be a possibility of looking for a multi-agency approach to funding might be considered involving:

- Department of Education and Skills
- Tusla
- HSE

each of which is most likely to be working with the same “at risk” young people.

8.4 Next Steps to be taken

This study provides a starting point from which a number of key stakeholders will need to collaborate in considering what their contribution might be to implementing/lobbying for some of the recommendations made above.

The initial priority for Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board will be to circulate this report to interested parties as a pre-cursor for planned collaborative action.

Subsequently CMETB's focus should be primarily on addressing the required provision outlined in Stages 3 and 4 for both Cavan and Monaghan. There are other stakeholder groupings who are already willing to try to progress a solution on the ground in both counties. Consultation with key stakeholders collectively is also required as a priority to get a clearer idea of the actual number of young people who would be suitable for a Stage 3 or Stage 4 ALP at present as a pre-cursor for the service to be developed with the best location selected.

The table overleaf outlines the key elements of each stage of the Whole-System Response, potential drivers to co-ordinate actions, other collaborators, and possible funders for each stage.

As with some of the previous collaborative projects undertaken under the auspices of the CYPSCs in both counties, this is one which may lend itself to a cocktail of funding from several government departments rather than just from one source. Further discussion is required to explore options,

Table 21: Key Elements of the Whole-System Response proposed

	Key Features	Drivers	Collaborators	Possible Funders
Stage 1: EARLY INTERVENTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Transition Programme • Transition Tracking Programme • Existing SCP • Existing HCSL/DEIS supports • Mobile Family School Liaison Service 	Monaghan Education Centre	Monaghan Education Centre NEPS Schools EWS CYPSCs	Department of Education and Skills Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Stage 2: PREVENTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted Transition Programme • Mobile Family School Liaison Service • Targeted programmes/interventions for target groups of concern i.e. Traveller young people, young people from new communities 	Monaghan Education Centre	Monaghan Education Centre NEPS Schools EWS Youth Organisations CYPSCs	Department of Education and Skills
Stage 3: SHORT TERM RESPONSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight-week intervention model in non-school environment • Youth work approach • Continued connection with school • Gradual re-integration to school • Emphasis on personal development as well as educational input • Achievement of accredited modules • Opportunity to repeat 8-week model if required 	Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board	CMETB Second Level Schools Youth Organisations EWS Tusla/PPFS/BEACON CAMHS NEPS SCPs CYPSCs	Department of Education and Skills Tusla HSE
Stage 4: LONG TERM RESPONSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min 1 year in duration • QQI modules/accredited modules of education • Non-school environment • Youth work approach • Emphasis on personal development as well as educational input • Achievement of accredited modules • Possibly integrating iScoil or Youthreach methodology of learning supplemented with personal development and wrap-around therapeutic supports as appropriate • Potential of developing this response to incorporate Leaving Cert Applied (LCA) or Leaving Cert Vocational Programme (LCVP) 	Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board	CMETB Second Level Schools Youth Organisations EWS Tusla/PPFS/BEACON CAMHS NEPS SCPs CYPSCs	Department of Education and Skills Tusla HSE

REFERENCES

Source/Author	Title	Year
32 nd Dáil	Programme for New Partnership government and the 32nd Dáil	2016
Cavan CYPSC	Cavan CYPSC Plan 2018-2020	2018
Cavan LCDC	Cavan LECP	2016
Cavan Monaghan ETB	CAVAN AND MONAGHAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD youth Plan 2018-2020	2018
Cavan Monaghan ETB	Area Profiles for Cavan and Monaghan	2019
Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick	Students learning and satisfaction in an Alternative Learning Centre in Malta	2018
DCYA National Educational Welfare Board	Addressing the Participation, Attendance and Retention of Children in Education – A Review of Best Practice	2012
Department of Children & youth Affairs	Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF) 2014-2020	2014
Department of Education	Investigative research into alternative provision	2018
Department of Education & Skills	OECD Project Overcoming School Failure: Policies that work	2011
Department of Education and Skills	Retention of pupils in second level schools – Entry cohort 2012	2019
Department of Education and Skills	Education Indicators for Ireland	2019
Department of Education and Skills	Number of Pupils who are members of the Traveller Community	2017
Department of Education and Skills	Action Plan for education	2019
Department of Education and Skills	DEIS Plan	2017
Department of Justice & Equality	National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021	2017
Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB	Alternative Learning Programme	
Emer Smyth, ESRI	Growing UP in Ireland - Off to a good start	2017
European Commission	Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support	2013
European Commission	Education and Training Framework 2020	2009
Foroige in partnership with Tusla	Early School Leaving: Predictive Risk Factors, Dr. Louise Heeran Flynn	2017
iScoil	Annual Report	2019
Mitchel Institute	Counting the Costs of Lost Opportunity Report, Stephen Lamb and Shuyan Hua	2017
Monaghan CYPSC	Monaghan CYPSC Plan 2018-2020	2018
Monaghan LCDC	Monaghan LECP	2015
Niall Crowley for Cavan County Local Development	An Inclusive Cavan: Needs Assessment Young Travellers (10-24 years) in Cavan	2020
Tusla	School Attendance data from Primary and Post-Primary 2016/17	2018
Tusla	Area Commissioning Plan 2018-2020	2018

APPENDIX 1: STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED AS PART OF THIS STUDY

Name	Role/Title	Organisation
1. Maureen McIntyre	Youth Officer	Cavan and Monaghan Education & Training Board
2. Paddy Flood	Director of Schools	Cavan and Monaghan Education & Training Board
3. Aoife Heffernan	Senior Youth Worker	Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education & Training Board
4. Irene Loughran	Senior Psychologist	National Educational Psychological Service
5. Ann Finn	Psychologist	National Educational Psychological Service
6. Marlene Rice	Co-ordinator	School Completion Programme – North Monaghan
7. Sean McKiernan	Co-ordinator	School Completion Programme - Cavan
8. Catriona Carragher	Co-ordinator	School Completion Programme – Farney
9. Maria Kiernan	Education Welfare Officer – Monaghan	Tusla
10. Elaine Nolan	Education Welfare Officer – Cavan	Tusla
11. Colin McAree	Area Manager – Cavan & Monaghan	Foroige
12. Pamela Carney	Community worker	Breffni Integrated Development
13. Chrissie O’Sullivan	Development worker	Cavan Traveller Movement
14. Sabrina McEntee	Manager	Cavan YouthReach
15. Ste Corrigan	CYPSC Co-ordinator	Tusla
16. Cathal Grant	PPFS Manager	Tusla
17. Charlene Duff	Senior Child and Family Network Coordinator Monaghan	Tusla
18. Antoinette Brady	Senior Child and Family Network Coordinator Cavan	Tusla
19. Janice Niblock	Child and Family Network Co-ordinator	Tusla/ISPCC
20. Mary McKenna	Co-ordinator	Cavan Institute PLC Access Programme
21. Adam Treanor	Co-ordinator	Monaghan Institute PLC Access Programme

APPENDIX 2: EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING FACTSHEET – ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING FACTSHEET



definition

The European Union Education Ministers in the Council in 2003 (Council conclusions on "Reference levels of European Average Performance in Education and Training - Benchmarks") agreed on defining early school leavers as people aged 18-24 who have only lower secondary education or less and are no longer in education or training.

The early school leavers are therefore those who have only achieved pre-primary, primary, lower secondary or a short upper secondary education of less than 2 years. The definition of early school leavers excludes anyone participates in some form of education or training. Likewise, young people who initially drop out of school but then return to finish upper secondary education before the age of 25 are not regarded as early school leavers.

While the expression "early school leaving" includes all forms of leaving education and training before completing upper secondary education or equivalents in vocational education and training, the term "school drop-out" is used with a much more restricted meaning; it refers to discontinuing an ongoing course in general or vocational education and training.

why is ESL a problem?

Individual early school leavers are more likely to be unemployed, to be in precarious and low-paid jobs, to draw on welfare and other social programmes throughout their lives, and to encounter difficulties in gaining a place in vocational training. They are much less likely to be "active citizens" and to become involved in lifelong learning. One European estimate puts the additional lifetime income for a student staying at school for an extra year at more than €70,000.

The wider "economic" costs in terms of lower productivity, lower tax revenues and higher welfare payments, are huge. Early school leaving generates very large "social" costs (it has been shown to lead to later social breakdown, increased demand on the health system, and lower social cohesion). It perpetuates the cycle of which it is part.

Finally, early leavers may be more prone to poor physical and mental health and may run a higher risk of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. According to the Audit Commission's 2010 report 'Against the Odds', in the United Kingdom (England) young men who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are three times more likely to be depressed, and are five times more likely to have a criminal record than their peers who had been in education, employment or training throughout their late teens.

In the long-term, ESL constitutes a tremendous waste of potential, for individual, social and economic development.

1 year extra of school attendance
 70,000 euro richer lifetime income

causes

Leaving education and training early is acknowledged to be the result of factors which belong to two main categories that interact with each other: school-based factors and factors related to the individual, family and social background. Although early leaving is often based on an individual's decision, it is nevertheless possible to identify some common factors that can have an impact on students' educational outcomes and consequently on their decision to leave school prematurely. Socio-economic status, coming from a migrant background as well as gender have often been referred to as factors that influence early leaving, implicated in the multi-faceted process of early leaving from education and training.

socio-economic status

According to the European Commission there is a strong link between leaving education and training early, social disadvantage and a low level of parental education. Many studies confirm that low socio-economic status is one of the key factors that can increase the risk of early leaving. In general, early leavers are much more likely to come from families with a low socio-economic status, i.e. unemployed parents, low household income, and low levels of parental education.

Other family-related factors such as parenthood relationships and parental involvement in children's education can also play a role. Related to the employment status and income of parents, which are commonly referred to as risk factors for early leaving, a low level of parental education is also considered as a major contributing risk factor. The level of education of the mother, in particular, is associated with a higher risk.

A number of family-related factors such as family instability and lifestyle, single parenthood, poor living conditions, physical and mental health and domestic violence can, moreover, increase young peoples' likelihood of giving up education and training prematurely.

migrant-minority background

Young migrant people born abroad are largely over-represented among the early leavers from education and training in many European countries. The rates are particularly high in Greece, Spain and Italy.

Non-participation in early childhood education and care, difficulties in accessing high quality education, not least as a result of socio-economic segregation, lack of parental support and insufficient skills in the language of instruction, all have an impact on the attainment of migrant students (European Commission, 2013).

Students with a migrant background constitute a rather heterogeneous group and diversity prevails over common characteristics. For instance, differences exist between newly arrived migrant children and second generation migrants. The latter group usually experiences greater success at school than the recent arrivals.

gender


According to international and national research, in comparison to girls, boys are almost twice as likely to leave school with low or no qualifications. Almost all studies confirm that male students are more likely to be early leavers than female students.

education system related factors

Some school-related factors exert a direct and significant impact on early leaving. These concern the school climate, including conflicts with teachers, violence in school, bullying, etc. Furthermore, individuals' school-related problems are not elaborated here; however, they often play a role in students' decision to leave school early.










For example, grade retention (i.e. the process of holding students back to repeat a year when they are considered not to have made sufficient progress) does not necessarily improve academic performance. On the contrary, research results have consistently highlighted the negative effects of grade retention. They provide, in particular, evidence of the detrimental effects of grade retention on students' academic, socioemotional and behavioural outcomes, which further increase the risk of poor performance and in many cases may lead to them to leave school prematurely.

A mix of students from different backgrounds in schools can be beneficial for all students, in particular for those from disadvantaged backgrounds of those whose parents have a low level of education. However, socio-economic issues are often the main cause of segregation in education, and frequently interplay with other factors such as racial or ethnic background (migrant or minority status). School systems with a high level of segregation have worse educational achievement results.



Prevention

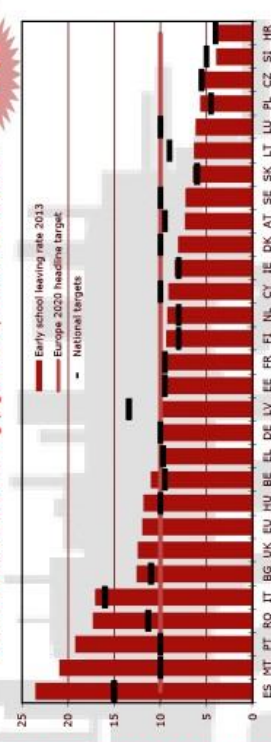
Preventing ESL requires initiatives at system level, while intervention takes places at the level of individual schools. It should be reached the right balance between central and local measures, and between preventative, intervention and compensation measures. At system level there are characteristics that can help reduce obstacles to completing upper secondary education.

	Access to good quality early childhood education and care. Evidence shows that access to good quality education at an early age facilitates the development of key competences. Moreover that good quality increases educational achievements and reduces the risk of Early School Leaving at a later stage.
	Relevant and engaging curriculum. The curricula should be designed in such a way that it reflects the different affinities of the pupil, takes into account different starting points, and is adapted to the pupil's ambitions.
	Flexible educational pathways. The strict design of educational pathways can create severe obstacles to complete upper and secondary education. Research shows that the grade repetition risks undermining pupil's confidence. Many countries have started to substitute grade repetition with investment in individualised learning and targeted learning support.
	Better integration of newly arrived migrant children. Migrant children should be placed within the same age group as their native peers to ensure their successful inclusion.
	Smooth transition between different levels of education. Close cooperation between schools, induction programmes and targeted support for children facing difficulties, in adapting to the new school environment, can avoid alienation as a result of difficult transition experiences.
	High quality, attractive and engaging vocational education and training (VET). It is important that high quality VET allows progression to higher education in the same way general upper secondary education does. VET can help reduce ESL through the provision of high quality, structured work-based learning opportunities.
	Involvement of pupils and parents in school decision-making. There should be space for pupils to influence their schools and take ownership of their educational path. They should have the opportunity to voice their opinions and be involved in decision affecting
	Whole school approaches. A whole school approach encourages and supports positive and caring relationships for and between teachers, school staff and pupils. A strong and well developed system of emotional support in schools is needed, especially for those at risk of ESL.
	Strong and well developed guidance system. Helping young people understand their own strengths, talents, different study options and employment prospects is essential. It is important that guidance goes beyond the simple provision of information and focusses on the individual in relation to their particular needs and circumstances. Guidance could be provided through interactive methods (mentoring, coaching, on-to-one guidance, work placements) and through online services.

Europe

ESL is an obstacle to economic growth and employment. It hampers productivity and competitiveness, and fuels poverty and social exclusion. With its shrinking workforce, Europe has to make full use of its human resources. Young people who leave education and training prematurely are bound to lack skills and qualifications, and to face serious, persistent problems on the labour market. The latest Education and Training Monitor showed that there are nearly 5.5 million early school leavers across Europe and that the average unemployment rate amongst them is about 40% (2013).

EUROPE 2020 TARGET: by 2020, the share of early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) should be less than 10%



According to the European Commission there is a strong link between leaving education and training early, social disadvantage and a low level of parental education. Many studies confirm that low socio-economic status is one of the key factors that can increase the risk of early leaving. In general, early leavers are much more likely to come from families with a low socio-economic status, i.e. unemployed parents, low household income, and low levels of parental education.

In December 2011, a **Thematic Working Group** was established by European Commission to help European countries implement policies on Early School Leaving.

Based on the work of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving, 12 key policy messages identify the critical condition for successful policies against ESL. We consider some of them are particularly relevant in our contexts:

- Ensure policy development and implementation is based on a strong, long term cooperation between national, regional/local authorities and stakeholders, as well as between different policies, through for example establishing a coordinating body.
- Support schools to develop a conducive and supportive learning environments that focus on the needs of individual pupils. Promote curriculum that is relevant and engaging.
- Support cooperation between schools, local communities, parents and pupils in school development and initiatives to reduce ESL. Promote strong commitment from stakeholders in effort to reduce ESL at local levels, including local business.
- Promote a better understanding of ESL, in initial education and continuous professional development for all school staff, especially teachers. Enable staff to provide differentiated learning support for pupils in an inclusive and individualised way.
- Strengthen guidance to ensure young people are aware of the different study options and employment prospects available to them. Ensure counselling systems provide young people with both emotional and practical support.
- Reinforce accessibility to second chances schemes for all young people. Make second chances scheme distinctive and ensure they provide a positive learning experience. Support teachers who work in second chances schemes in their specific role.

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

APPENDIX 3: SCHOOL COMPLETION PROJECTS IN CAVAN

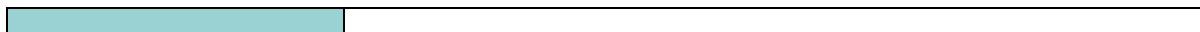
Academic Year: 2019/20 CAVAN	No. Schools	No. of Pupils	%
Total Primary Schools	75	10,010	100%
Primary schools with Schools Completion Programmes	3	1,054	10.5%
Cavan SCP			
<i>St. Clare's PS, Cavan Town</i>		534	
<i>St. Felim's PS, Cavan Town</i>		252	
<i>St. Michael's PS, Cootehill</i>		268	
Total Post-Primary Schools	11	5,701	100%
Post-Primary Schools with Schools Completion Programmes	2	964	16.8%
Cavan SCP			
<i>Breifne College, Cavan Town</i>		734	
<i>St. Mogue's Bawnboy</i>		230	

APPENDIX 4: SCHOOL COMPLETION PROJECTS IN MONAGHAN

Academic Year: 2019/20 MONAGHAN	No. Schools	No. pupils	% pupils with access to SCP
Total Primary Schools	62	7,992	100%
Primary schools with School Completion projects	8	1,412	17.6%
Castleblayney & Clones SCP			
<i>Convent Junior School, Castleblayney</i>		140	
<i>Convent Infants School, Castleblayney</i>		181	
<i>Scoil Mhuire BNS, Castleblayney</i>		170	
TOTAL		491	
Farney SCP (Carrickmacross)			
<i>Killanny NS</i>		216	
<i>St. Daigh's NS, Inniskeen</i>		235	
TOTAL		451	
North Monaghan SCP			
<i>St. Mary's Boys National School</i>		277	
<i>St. Joseph's, Knockatallon</i>		37	
<i>Edenmore NS</i>		156	
TOTAL		470	
Total Post-Primary Schools	12	5,417	100%
Second level schools with Schools Completion Programmes	4	1,626	
Castleblayney & Clones SCP			
<i>Largy College, Clones</i>		411	
<i>Castleblayney College</i>		269	
TOTAL		680	
Farney SCP (Carrickmacross)			
<i>Inver College</i>		369	
TOTAL		369	
North Monaghan SCP			
<i>Beech Hill College</i>		577	
TOTAL		577	

APPENDIX 5: PROGRAMMES OF SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 16YRS IN CAVAN AND MONAGHAN

Programme Name:	Integrated Youth Programme, Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney,
Funder:	Tusla - mainstream
End date (if applicable)	Ongoing Started in Jan 2019 but it was April 2019 before staff in place and intervention started – almost 1 year of work done
Geographic coverage:	Co. Monaghan
Number of staff:	2 full time based out of Castleblayney Eithne Daly and Regina Gillick – out of post, now vacant
Number of volunteers:	2 volunteers
Age range catered for:	8-18 yrs
Number of places:	Up to 25 YP
How many hours of engagement	Monday to Saturday After school to 9pm Regular Saturday every second week about ½ day
Criteria for a YP to get a place on the programme Referral process	Referred directly from Youth Forum Tusla funded service – YP known to Tusla For YP who need additional support/are at risk
Components/contents Engagement approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st 6 weeks assessment and engagement • Identify needs – arrange to do any formal assessments • Design programme to suit • Sit down with family/foster family and YP and agree key goals for YP • Individual work and group work • It goes on for as long as it needed - Each case is reviewed regularly for this purpose • Many young people are fairly socially isolated, with issues emanating from family, chaotic home, behavioural, out of school • A lot of the work focuses in getting them integrated into community, connecting them with decision makers, developing social skills, dealing with LGBTI issues • They are referred to local groups that can support their development • Individual work is done – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ focussing on building self confidence ◦ Enhancing pro-social behaviour, ◦ helping them to develop decision making skills, • They are referred to counselling and other interventions if needed by making appointments with the services required • Development of life skills • Empowering them to enable themselves in their lives
Progressions/outcomes	
Parental involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents involved at 6-week review • This is a stage at which the progress will be compared to a pre programme assessment • Working with parents/foster parents to discuss the programme of work and their involvement in the process • A home visit is carried out, work is done with YP and their siblings
What works well?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong partnership between Tusla and Foroige • Clear remit of the project • Youth forum referrals come through Tusla – the gate keeper • Fairly flexible • Project in infancy • Can respond to needs • Starts with where the kids are at • Based in Castleblayney but uses Monaghan premises and can go out to the YP where they are • Getting the YP out into the community • Making links with local sporting orgs etc • Staff are very highly trained and skilled • There are very clear outcomes for the YP and what the YP want to achieve • YP becomes aware of their social isolation



Programme Name:	Amplify
Funder:	PEACE IV
End date (if applicable)	Sept 2021
Geographic coverage:	Co. Monaghan
Number of staff:	1 worker
Who is it funded by	Peace IV
Age range catered for:	At first it was to be 16-24 yrs but then it was amended to be 14-25yrs
Number of places:	15 in each block
How many hours of engagement	Offer YP a 26 week programme (6 month programme – rolling intake twice a yr)
How many days of the week	They complete 249 hours all together 12 hours per week
Criteria for a YP to get a place on the programme	Targeted at NEETs – those out of school or those not engaged in learning or employment
How to YP get a place on the programme: Referral process	They are signposted to the programme From those at risk to those very much at risk Benefits their personal development
Components/contents Engagement approach	1-1 work tailored to the needs of the YP Group work too Core components <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active leadership • Personal Development • Good relations Referral to other relevant services Development of a Personal Development plan Bespoke case plan with outcomes
Progressions/outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration into the local community • Potential progression to work • Beneficial skills developed in the area of conflict resolution, negotiation which will be useful in the workplace
Parental involvement?	No so much
What works well?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with the other organisations involved • Regular cluster meetings • 20+ staff across the project • Support of Youth Action is class • Raft of really good training • Its all about the YP and what motivated them
What are the limitations?	Different focus of the programme from Belfast to Cavan/Monaghan – more subtle in Cavan Monaghan where there is a relevance to paramilitary connections, identity and criminality
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amplify works from different venues • YWI work on the programme in the south of the county – Carrickmacross/Blayney • Foroige work on the N Monaghan - Monaghan town – Clones is next • Cavan has no services at present – no dedicated Foroige worker • The programme was designed to move around the counties in blocks • YWI – South East and West Cavan

Programme Name:	GYDP
Funder:	Dormant Account, ESF, POBAL, Department of Justice
End date (if applicable)	On-going, reviewed each year
Geographic coverage:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co. Monaghan – Neighbourhood Youth Project, Cootehill Rd, Monaghan • Co. Cavan – Cavan 365 Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cavan town - covering the North of the county and ○ Bailieborough – covering the SE of the County
Number of staff:	4-5
Number of volunteers:	3 volunteers
Age range catered for:	Officially 12-17 yrs up to 18 yrs In practice 8-17 and in some exceptional cases up to 19 yrs
Number of places:	Not set 8-12 intensive places 20-35 group work and activities
How many hours of engagement	10-12 hours per week Focuses on after school, late evenings and weekends No time line – depends on the assessment Do the YLS assessment at outset – work with medium to high rated Do the work and do the assessment again in 6 months
Criteria for a YP to get a place on the programme	Assessment done using YLS/CMI 2.0 tool YLS assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low – refer to Integrated Youth Programme or Foroige programme with Tusla • Med - GYDP • High -GYDP • V. high – not suitable for GYDP A YP referred from SCP could score higher on YSL than one from JLO
How to YP get a place on the programme: Referral process Who can refer?	Primary referral from the local JLO Secondary referrals from schools, Social work, self-referral, if siblings in the programme, Referral goes to an assessment committee made up of community gardai, FRCs, Tusla, SCP, Social work
Components/contents Engagement approach	Primary aim is to reduce anti-social behaviour and criminal behaviour Evidence based project from the Justice Programme Interest in engaging them socially One-to-one work and group work 3 areas of work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance pro-social behaviour • Reduce impulsivity • Enhance empathy YSL Tool sets out what the prioritised needs are then the programme is designed around this and directs the work done with the YP
Progressions/outcomes	Difference – formal assessment tool different to Foroige – develops specific work geared towards YP and the justice system Structures Exit strategy – YLS done again, identify progress made Ideal progressions education, employment, back to school
Additional supports i.e. counselling, CAMHS, assessments?	Signposted to other services as needed – CAMHS, Addiction counsellors, GP, Tusla

Parental involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with family • Need formal consent, home visit which sets the context for the YP and their family
What works well?	<p>Similar to Integrated Youth Programme Strong relations with Gardai and project staff Garda Local inspector Able to mobilise local gardai when they need to get student placements, day-to-day drop into the project</p>
What are the limitations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding – ensuring it continues on an ongoing basis • In September they develop the annual plan for the following year • End of year there is a review • No guarantee at the end of the year
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 really good premises, one in each county • Largest population of YP involved is in Cavan town and Monaghan town • High level of youth crime • Experienced staff • YP buying into the programme and volunteers • Local knowledge is very nb <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have local advisors and board of management • YP have to participate voluntarily • Everyone is clear with the purpose, clear about what they are working towards

Programme Name:	Bounceback
Funder:	DCYA
End date (if applicable)	On-going with annual review
Geographic coverage:	South East Cavan – Ballyjamesduff with outreach to Bailieborough and Virginia West Cavan – Belturbet with outreach to Ballyconnell and Swanlinbar
Number of staff:	4+
Age range catered for:	10-24 yrs in theory, but primarily 10-17 yrs in practice
Number of places:	Variable
Criteria for a YP to get a place on the programme	Not a programme per se
How to YP get a place on the programme: Referral process Who can refer?	Signposted by other stakeholders, school, parents.
Components/contents Engagement approach	1-1 Resilience building work with ISPCC 1-2 Ancillary youth services
Progressions/outcomes	Building confidence Building self- esteem Reducing social isolation Better able to cope with life
What works well?	ISPCC and YWI partnership and approach Detached Youth work Ability to build relationships with YP and their trust which allows for them to be signposted to further engagement
What are the limitations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of suitable premises – limited size of engagement • Must only engage with YP in target areas

APPENDIX 6: ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES FOR DDLETB ALPS



Alternative Learning Programme

Roles and Responsibilities Agreement for 2018/2019

The role of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) with regard to the programme listed above is to provide an appropriate individually tailored learning programme to the participants. The programme enables participants to acquire new knowledge, skills and attitudes that will equip them to be better able to access and sustain involvement in school, alternative education settings and training centres.

Participant needs which arise outside of the programme provided by DDLETB should be referred to relevant service providers / agencies.

Operational Procedures

Referral criteria

- Referrals will only be accepted in accordance with the legislative requirement of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Education Act 1998.
- Referrals will only be accepted along with written consent from parents or Guardian
- Medical Consent form must be received for all participants
- A designated liaison person must be provided by the referral agency
- All referrals are confidential
- Age of the young person



Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board will ensure that for each applicant there is:

- Meeting with relevant parties such as; the Educational Welfare Officer, school, parents/guardian and young person. This will ensure that all involved play an active role in sourcing additional supports
- A continuous and structured referral, placement and monitoring process
- The relevant parties will be kept informed of the young person's progress on the programme, to ensure that the young person's needs are being met and that all involved are taking an active role in sourcing additional support
- An initial eight-week period to attend. After this time a review is carried out with the ALP staff, Parents/Guardians, EWO and School or other relevant supports. The review is used to discuss the progress of the young person on the programme and the possible transition back to school or other appropriate educational setting. If a transition is not possible at that time the young person may be offered another eight-week cycle after which another review meeting will be held

Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training will:

- Provide tutors to be present as per timetable; where unavailable a substitute will be provided where possible.
- Provide an individually tailored learning programme for participants
- Work in partnership with schools to facilitate the young person returning to school where feasible
- Work in partnership with other agencies to ensure appropriate progression options for young people are identified
- Apply the six key areas of ALP

The referring agent will ensure that there is:

- Clear, detailed information on each applicant / referral
- A designated contact person **must** be provided from the referral agent who will be involved with the young person and their family throughout the duration of their placement on the programme
- In such circumstances where supports are being provided by the school, a designated person in the school will coordinate the delivery of these supports and liaise with the project coordinator.



Youth Service Provider/Agency Will:

- Provide a Youth Worker to be present as per timetable; where unavailable a substitute will be provided where possible
- To provide time for administration duties relating to ALP
- Apply the Six Key Areas of ALP
- Provide an individual tailored youth work initiative for participants
- Provide links to the youth services facilities and programmes outside of ALP time
- Work in partnership with schools to facilitate the young person returning to school where feasible
- Work in partnership with other agencies to ensure appropriate progression options for young people are identified
- Liaise with relevant DDLETB staff regarding structure and procedures of ALP
- Attend meetings and training
- Comply with all relevant legislation e.g. health and safety, children's first, GDPR etc.

Alternative Learning Programme- Tutor Role

- The day to day planning of sessions.
- To keep file management systems which includes – attendance records, individual learning plans/session plans, evaluation sessions, keeping records of attendance and correct storage of information
- Devising individual plans for each participant in conjunction with Youth Workers and ETB staff member
- To carry out assessments to gauge where participants are at
- Conducting fortnightly review meetings with participants
- Monitoring the progression of participants
- To attend weekly progress meetings
- Links with schools, EWO and Youth Service with regard to re-integration and additional supports needed
- Monitoring and evaluation of programme
- Comply with all relevant legislation e.g. health and safety, children's first, GDPR etc.
- To supervise the group of young people at all times (including break time)



Alternative Learning Programme – Youth Worker Role

- Day to day running of programme
- Work in partnership with schools to facilitate the young person returning to school where feasible
- To build capacity and confidence of young early school leavers
- To combat educational and other forms of disadvantage
- To engage with young people in a developmental process on the basis of their voluntary participation
- To enable young people, take responsibility and become active in their own development and that of their community
- Follow up on absenteeism/keeping records of attendance and correct storage of information
- To attend weekly progress meetings
- Planning, developing and delivering programmes and activities in response to the issues for young people, their needs and/or their interests
- Developing and implementing developmental/educational programmes to meet the needs of early school leavers
- To follow up with parent/guardian on any relevant assessment reports
- To collect data, evaluate programmes and compile reports as deemed necessary
- To ensure a youth work approach and youth work methodologies are adhered to
- To link with appropriate initiatives that will enhance participants learning
- Complete a 3 month follow up with the young person and /or agencies on status of the young person (after they have progressed)
- Comply with all relevant legislation e.g. health and safety, children's first, GDPR etc.
- To supervise the group of young people at all times (including break time)
- The youth worker is the main link with schools, EWO and Youth Service with regard to reintegration and additional supports needed.



Attendance / Non Attendance at Programme

The youth worker will:

- Notify the parents, Educational Welfare Officer and the designated liaison person if a young person's lack of attendance becomes an area of concern
- In the case of recurring non-attendance at the Alternative Learning Programme the youth worker will arrange to meet with the young person / family to discuss this
- The Educational Welfare Officer will be notified of non-attendance and interventions to date, to decide how to proceed

Negative Discharge:

When a young person has to be discharged the tutor and youth worker will:

- Identify when the programme cannot meet participant's needs
- Persistent breach of code of conduct (three verbal warnings **may** result in discharge)
- Respond when a young person's behaviour is placing him / herself or others in danger
- In the event that a young person has to be discharged suddenly following a major incident the Parent/Guardian and Educational Welfare Officer will be informed immediately

Progression

The tutor and youth worker will:

- After eight weeks arrange meeting with EWO to put progression plan in place
- Ensure the development of individual education / progression plans for each participant, and review these regularly
- Assist young people with the application procedures for other training centres
- Inform young people of all educational options available to them
- Complete a 3 month follow up with the young person and /or agencies on status of the young person



*Signed on behalf of
DDLETB Youth and Sports Development Service*

Signed

Title

Date

Signed on behalf of the Service Provider

Signed

Title

Date

APPENDIX 7: STAR Project, North Dublin (Supporting Travellers and Roma)

Meet the Team



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Based in Northside Partnership, Kish House, Greendale Road, Kilbarrack Dublin 5



The STAR Project - North Dublin

Information for Parents

The STAR project, supported through the National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy, aims to help the children of Traveller and Roma families in North Dublin get the most out of school

What is the STAR Project?

We can help your child:

- Go to school every day
- Reach their full potential when in class and in school activities
- Make school a happy place where children want to stay

What should I do if I would like to discuss my child's education?

1. Talk to the teacher/school principal
2. If you or the school feel our team can support your child, we are here to talk

Some of the supports we offer:



Why should my child get involved?

What happens if I want my child to get involved on an individual basis?

1. **What will we do first?** With your permission, we will talk to you, your child and the school and anyone else you feel would be positive.
2. **How am I involved?** You will be involved at every stage that we are working with your family. At the beginning, we will meet with you in your home or wherever suits you best. We will use this time to hear about your child's strengths and experience in school. We will ask you to sign consent forms for us to work with your child.
3. **What happens next?** We are interested in what is working well with your child in school and to see how we can make their school experience better. We will discuss how we think we can help with this
4. **Did it work?** We will continue to talk to you, your child and the school to see how things are and if there is anything more that needs to happen.

