

# CYPSC responses for children and young people experiencing inadequate housing or homelessness

## Background

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) are an interagency structure identified by Government to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. They are county-level committees that bring together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children and young people. Their purpose is to provide a strategic forum for joint planning and co-ordination of activity to ensure that children, young people and their families receive improved and accessible services. Their role is to enhance interagency co-operation and to realise the five national outcomes for children and young people.

In realising their strategic role CYPSC develop 3-year, evidence-informed Children and Young People's Plans that profile their county, consult with children and young people and identify strengths and needs and then respond strategically to prioritised need.

**In some counties/CYPSC areas, particularly those with large urban centres, CYPSC have identified a priority need to respond to the negative impact that inadequate housing and homelessness can have on the development of children in their county.** The following provides a brief summary of some local action in response to emerging needs:

**Cork CYPSC** with its members has developed a weekly youth club for children residing in emergency accommodation. It is creative, flexible and structured to support the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of children in emergency accommodation. This work is supported by a multi-disciplinary team including social work, psychology, counselling, youth work and childcare; equipped to support vulnerable children with complex needs. Benefits have included

- Reduction in child protection and welfare referrals
- Improvement in children's physical, social, emotional and nutritional wellbeing
- Support for parents social and emotional wellbeing

**Dun Laoghaire Rathdown CYPSC** identified the need to support protective health factors for children and young people experiencing homelessness. Working through a Local Development Company, a Family Hub and DLR Sports Partnership they delivered a holistic response that provided Cooking-on-a-budget courses, Movement and play opportunities for babies and toddlers, and sensory, imaginary and physical play for pre-schoolers. These interventions promote attachment and support security, health and well-being for the children and their families. At all activities staff from homeless services were present to support relationship and capacity building.

In the Summer 2018 **Dublin City North CYPSC** worked with a number of Family Hubs, Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and Dublin City Council Sports Partnership to provide summer programme vouchers and passes for children and families living in hubs, an end-of-Summer trip and family fun days [on-site in family hubs.] Learning from this effort indicates that

## CYPSC responses for children and young people experiencing inadequate housing or homelessness

- The LEAP card scheme was not available to children and families over the Summer months and this impacted transport accessibility and therefore accessibility by families to leisure options.
- Vouchers and passes were well-received by all families
- Families' privacy and independence must be respected. Equally it is imperative not to 'label' children living in homeless circumstances as different.
- Co-ordination by one family hub for all was time-consuming and any future funding needs to be allocated directly to each hub. Administrative burden needs to be proportionate to the level of funding.
- Funds need to be received no later than end of May.
- Sports camps, Summer Camps and facilities and opportunities in the neighbourhoods surrounding Family Hubs need to reach out and be inclusive.
- Conducting this project in 2018 served to highlight to the local authority and homeless service providers structural gaps in provision for families living in family hubs.

Another **Dublin City North CYPSC** response called "My Place to Play" worked through Area Based Childhood Programmes in North Dublin, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive and Focus Ireland to provide a play resource for babies living in emergency accommodation. This project provided play mats to families to support physical development and opportunities for play for their babies, and to support parent-child bonding. It has been awarded the 2019 Irish Healthcare Centre Award for a Healthcare Initiative / Project - Child Health & Wellbeing.

**Longford Westmeath CYPSC** is supporting the organisation of local agencies around the theme of homelessness and hidden homelessness. The group has met twice with and is exploring options with a view to testing an appropriate locally developed response to the needs of families experiencing homelessness.

In 2017 **Galway CYPSC** facilitated the development of an operational protocol between Tusla and Galway City Council in relation to providing services to homeless families and the development of materials for use within Community and Voluntary Services that might improve referrals to Tusla.

**Limerick CYPSC** is at early stage planning to carry out local research to develop a comprehensive insight into the needs of children experiencing homelessness in Limerick across the five national outcome domains.

**South Dublin CYPSC** commissioned research into the needs and priorities of families experiencing homelessness within the South Dublin CYPSC area. The report is titled '[Many Hearts, No Homes – Voices from the front line of Homelessness](#)' and documents the experiences of those experiencing homeless and frontline service providers. It offers recommendations regarding shorter- term practical solutions which families experiencing homelessness would benefit from, and longer-term policy recommendations.

## CYPSC responses for children and young people experiencing inadequate housing or homelessness

**Meath CYPSC** is supporting the Meath Homeless Families Link Project which aims to limit and reduce the potential negative impact of homelessness on the developing child. It supports parents to integrate their child into the health, education and peer/ family networks within the physical location and community of their emergency accommodation in a positive and stress-free manner. Settlement Officers of Meath County Council offer each homeless family an initial meeting with a Family Support Worker from Meath Springboard Family Support Services. A Family Support Worker then assists and supports parents to look at how they will support their children to be linked to a local GP, education, either via their current crèche / school or a new crèche / school and maintain supportive kinship networks, links with friends and join interest groups in their locality, sports, scouts etc. The project began in September 2019 and is intended to support 20 families and their children during a 6 month pilot phase.

**There is considerable learning and positive outcomes being generated by this range of CYPSC responses to the development needs of children experiencing homelessness. It is the desire of CYPSC that these exemplars are adopted by core service providers and scaled up appropriately within local authorities in partnership with those services working to respond to homelessness. Through their strategic plans each CYPSC can support evidence-informed innovation. It is necessary following testing that core service providers build on successful, effective work by allocating requisite resources.**