



WHAT PARENTS SAID, WHAT PARENTS WANT

2019



Introduction

In 2017 and 2018 Tusla Prevention Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) undertook a comprehensive consultation process with parents across Galway. This was done in partnership with other organisations that provide services and supports to families in the City and County. The aim was to give a voice to parents on issues that matter to them and their children. Over 800 parents took part.

Parents were invited to participate in two ways: by completing an online questionnaire or by taking part in a focus group.

- Over 700 parents completed the survey
- Almost 100 parents took part in focus groups

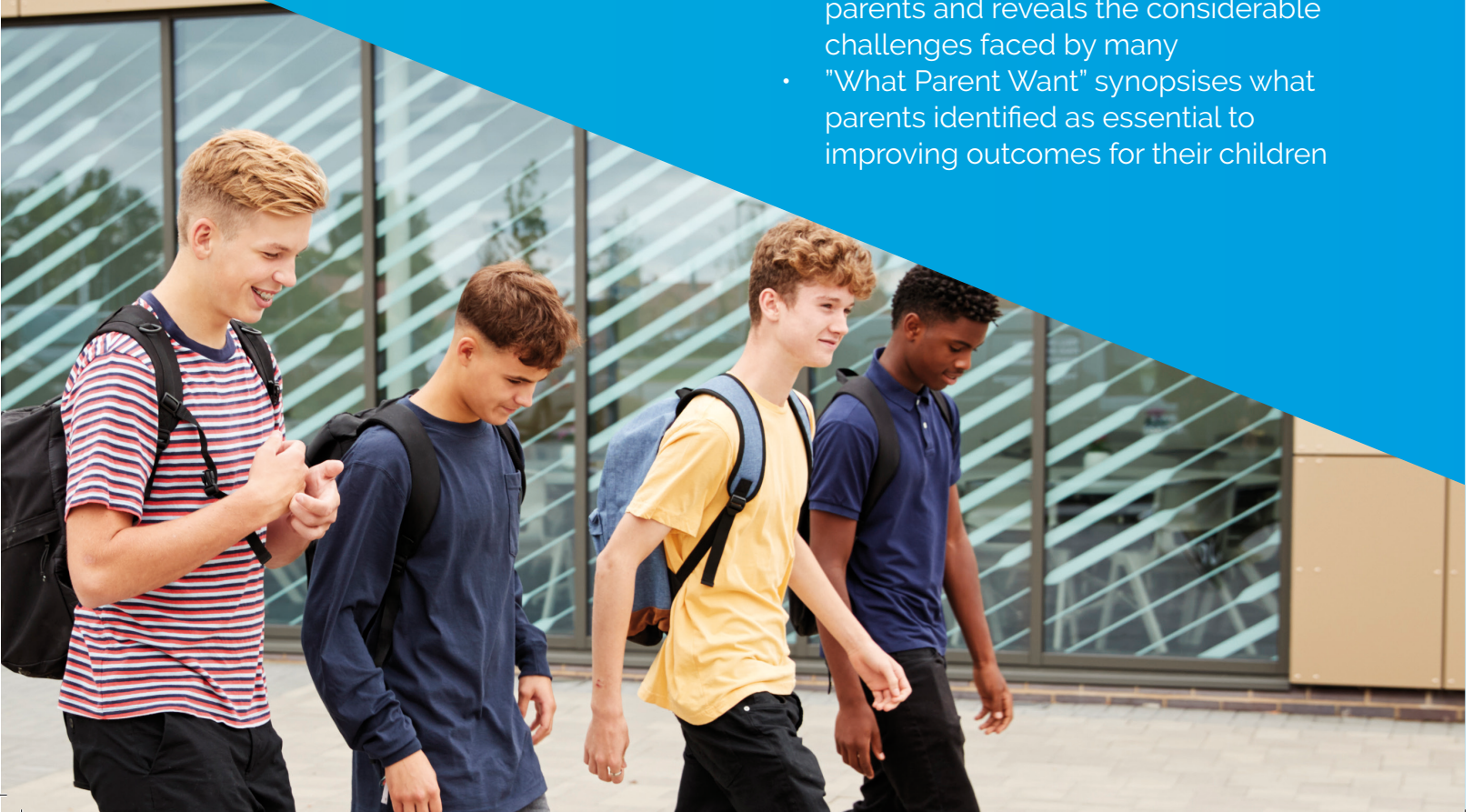
Focus group participants were selected to ensure that the views of 'seldom heard parents' were captured. Sixteen focus groups took place, in both urban and rural settings.

A full report of the consultation process "In Their Own Words - Feedback from Consultation with Parents across Galway City and County 2017/2018" is available on www.positiveparenting.ie.

This document, "What Parents Said What Parents Want" accompanies the full report. It gives key insights from parents and gives a glimpse into their experiences, needs, concerns and hopes.

Parents' insights are presented here under two headings:

- "What Parents Said" gives quotes from parents and reveals the considerable challenges faced by many
- "What Parent Want" synthesises what parents identified as essential to improving outcomes for their children



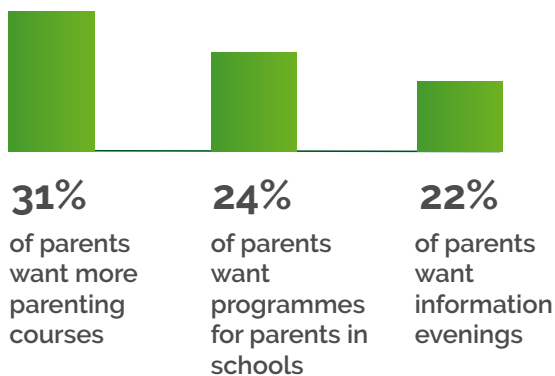
What Parents Want

Key Messages from the Survey Questionnaire

What Services and Supports would Help You as a Parent?

- More age-appropriate services/supports for both younger and older adolescents
- Youth clubs (e.g. Foróige)
- Activities other than sport
- More support and access to information on mental health, nutrition, internet safety, anxiety, bullying, suicide and drug awareness
- More opportunities to network with other parents, particularly for parents with older children, providing both a support and social network
- Homework supports and guidance for parents and children
- More access to community centres and Family Resource Centres
- More green areas/playgrounds
- Shops and bus routes
- More information on the services Tusla provides
- Parents want services and supports to be affordable and flexible

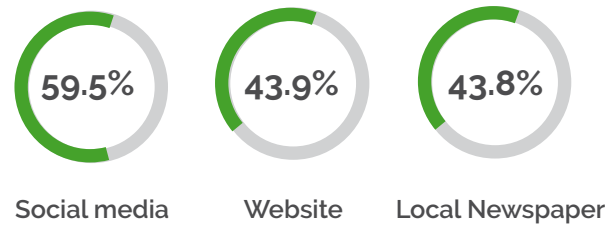
Parenting Courses, School Programmes and Information Evening



Parents wanted parenting courses, school programmes and information evenings to cover topics like:

Internet safety / technology overuse; Bullying; Special educational needs; Mental health; Dealing with anxiety; Communicating with teenagers; Preparing parents and children for adolescence; Nutrition; Drug awareness; Sexual health; Information on services available to parents

Best ways to find out about services and supports



Other: texts, emails, school/church newsletters, community Facebook groups, Tusla app, websites need to be regularly updated

Parents were asked about the services and support they currently access:

- **60%** of parents said that they did not access any service/support
- **28%** said they access one service/support
- **11%** said they access two or more services/supports

The most common supports currently accessed by parents:

Family Resource Centres
Public health nurse
Parent and toddler groups
Breastfeeding support groups
Parenting courses
Foróige
School-based supports
Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
Other counselling supports.

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Play, Recreation and Fun

What Parents said...

"Traveller children not encouraged to participate"

"Activities are too expensive for parents – prohibitive to children having access to them. i.e. swimming and horse riding. Develop a voucher scheme that can be accessed by parents to keep children in main stream activities"

"Having a back garden, access to nature, trees and green areas"

"Racism lingers, always in the background in school activities"

"Sport is key, but often is cost prohibitive"

"Not all kids shine at sport activities. Schools encourage isolation through competition"

"There are no groups for 12-18 year olds"

"Reading clubs for children"

"Playgrounds need to be near residential areas, have proper fencing and be kept clean and free from broken glass"

"There should be alternatives to group activities, such as yoga, mindfulness and meditation"

"There's an over reliance on volunteers and inadequate funding for clubs / activities this puts a lot of pressure in parents"

"Include an exercise activity as part of nightly homework"

"Foróige in my area is full to capacity with waiting lists"

"Children not interested in GAA have fewer options Children need alternatives such as arts, crafts, gardening, dance, music"

"Insurance is a big issue for parents trying to run an activity"

What Parents want...

More activities for under 4-year olds: baby yoga; parent/toddler groups; playgrounds, play centres with cost subsidies; sensory activities, walking group for parents & babies.



More information on, and spaces in, summer camps.



More activities in school - boxing, dance classes.



More hands-on support to set up local clubs and run activities; advice, expertise, capacity-building.



Playgrounds need seats for parents (especially nursing mothers) and gates that close. They should be well maintained and monitored (Community Warden / Garda).



More inclusion of Traveller children in GAA and soccer leagues.



Venues should be warm and comfortable.



More affordable activities, including

- summer camps, particularly for larger families
- music and art activities
- swimming lessons, without having to join a private gym
- family fun days in local areas
- community walks



Transition Year students could set up and run a local information site on things for young people to do in the area.



Targets for activities should be built into the school curriculum with emphasis on children being healthy and active.



More opportunities for like-minded teens to meet and engage outside of sport - song writing, music, recording, drama, dance, art, crafts, gardening, mindfulness, meditation.



Develop a voucher scheme/ subsidy that can be accessed by parents to keep children in mainstream activities. Enable parents to book directly without stigma.



More youth clubs, youth cafes, Foróige, snooker halls. More groups/activities for 12-18 year olds.



Education and Learning

What Parents said...

"At school kids know who to go to for hurling and soccer, but they don't know who to go to if they have a worry or just want to be listened to or heard. Who's is the person they go to for a chat?"

"Junior Cert and Leaving Cert is not the be all and end all for everyone."

"Schools should adapt to a child's learning style and support them to fulfil their individual ambitions i.e. not every child wants to go to college - some want to be builders/plumbers etc."

"Transport to school in rural areas can be a big problem for parents."

"Schools encourage isolation through competition."

"Ensure better communication with parents, particularly re school trips, e.g. who is accompanying the group."

"Schools need to be more sensitive to needs of single parent family (e.g. when doing family tree projects)"

"There should be more activity in schools, e.g. GAA Stretch & Grow."

"Role of Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) is key, particularly at transition times, it gives the child a break from class, safe space, focus on personal development."

"If your child (with disabilities) attends mainstream school, getting supports and services is a challenge and a fight each year."

"Homework is not beneficial, children need free time, activity and fresh air. It puts pressure on parents/children, prevents them doing other important things."

"Homework clubs are very beneficial."

"Schools are forbidding children to run in school yards, preventing them from being healthy and active."

"Racism still exists in the education system but it is subtle."

"Provide an outline of learning outcomes for students individually."

"School focus is on books, learning, targets, deadlines. More time needed for support and development."

What Parents want...

Provide more information and support on the points system, completing the CAO and on selecting college courses, such as what subjects are needed to do particular jobs.



More availability of "Leaving Cert Applied" to suit the different approaches of young people.



More resources for schools.

Schools should have anxiety rooms, beanbags, chill out, quiet rooms, headphones, use of iPad (as needed). Equipment for sensory use. Yoga, mindfulness, meditation, especially in secondary schools.



Career guidance counselors need to have more hours / contact with the pupils. Have career fairs in the school with parents/ students. Strengthen links between parents and guidance counsellors



Less homework. Include an exercise activity as part of nightly homework.



Irish should not be compulsory for children of migrants.

Native Irish speakers are sometimes discriminated against, might not get resources needed. Focus is on non-native learner. Talks/support on sensitive issues should be given to native Irish speaking children by native Irish speaking adults.



Colleges should have an open day for parents and a YouTube channel.

Parents need information on career guidance, access information through a central site "One stop shop".



Ensure a multi-disciplinary approach to working with children with special needs. Mandatory training for teachers on meeting the needs of children with special needs.



More structured Transition Year with research, career guidance and work experience.



Ensure more support and equality in schools for children of migrants, so they have the same choices as other children (including financial support for children in school).

Educate children at school on other children's behaviour, i.e. the reasons and understanding needed behind some of behaviours.



Parents should be given accessible information on the annual curriculum.



Strengthen links between 3rd level and secondary level students – help young people to be informed of their choices by talking to a peer.

Internet Safety & Cyberbullying

What Parents said...

"Schools' attitude is that if cyber-bullying is happening outside the schools grounds, it's not their problem"

"We're battling with screen time"

"Parents understand that children cannot be idle, they have to be busy, otherwise they will spend time on screens."

"Parents should have contracts with their children in relation to no internet one evening a week."

"Games that are interactive can be aggressive and threatening"

"It's like having a computer in their pocket"

"Children are spending a lot of time on their phones - they are open to bullying and other peer pressure. Parents need to be alert, monitor activity, have key stroke recorder for safety"

"Facebook has them destroyed"

"There's a problem with parents buying inappropriate age games - parents need to be willing to learn about new devices and programmes"

"Children are communicating through Snapchat"

What Parents want...

Information and awareness-raising should be community-wide, not just in schools, to ensure a consistent message.



Promote "parent-child contracts" re screen free evenings.



There should be a "no phones" rule in school.



More accessible information (such as information evenings) guidelines and support on managing screen time on the different type of Apps (e.g. Snapchat) and on cyber-bullying.



All information should be available in Irish.



There should be a national policy on no Facebook for children under 13 years of age and ensuring that pictures of children cannot be put up on Facebook.



Gardaí should give talks in schools to children on cyber bullying and its consequences.



Produce a two-minute video clip to show parents how to set privacy and safety on internet and phones.



Mental & Physical Health

What Parents said...

"It's not easy to ensure a healthy diet when children will only eat certain foods and you are already busy and stressed"

"Run funded Halloween camps on nutrition"

"Once in NUIG there are great supports, but you first have to negotiate the pathway to NUIG for your child. Impossible"

"Advocating for your child is exhausting, and never ending and alienating. There is never any change. Think outside the box (Parent of a child in CAMHs)"

"Lack of healthy food choices can lead on to drink and drugs for young people"

"Listen to children's voices"

"There is always the problem of waiting lists and feeling that you cannot get the service that your child needs. It's very stressful for parents, not meeting the needs of their children"

"Services should be better defined and organised better"

"Parents need a place they can go as things are presenting to prevent them from getting worse"

"What we are lacking all along is constant help with social skills. From early childhood to teens."

"As a parent I know my child, all I want is someone to listen to me. I felt I was not heard"

"I don't know what's out there. I feel completely ill-equipped on every level"

"Children in this group are always missing out"

"Will their diagnosis burden them or does it have to be disclosed?"

"When I told my son I was coming here today he wanted me to say that schools need to talk to us all more about depression and suicide and how horrifically bad it can all feel. Not the glorifying of the act. It's permanent."

What Parents want...

More streamlined information on the health services. Also. more information and training for GPs on services available to families



More support and advice on antenatal classes, breastfeeding and weaning



Shorter waiting lists.



A system in the Outpatients Dept in UHG Paediatrics where parents waiting for an appointment are given a buzzer to alert them when the doctor/nurse is ready to see the child. Parents could then leave the waiting room and find something to occupy the child. This would limit distress.



Workshops for parents on healthy eating and living – obesity, BMI, blood pressure, sugar levels. Better access to Dieticians. Also, courses for children in schools on healthy lunches, eating and nutrition. Food Dudes should be more consistent.



Crisis helplines: Out-of-hours and locally-based for parents of children in need of, or attending, CAMHS. Also, information evenings.

Schools:

- A dedicated person in every school for children to talk to/advocate for them. Better mental health supports in schools and elsewhere. Mental and physical wellbeing classes.
- Schools should have anxiety rooms, beanbags, chill out, quiet rooms, sensory equipment, headphones, use of iPad (as needed). Yoga, mindfulness, meditation, especially in secondary schools
- In every school, training/support programmes for parents and teachers on autism, dyspraxia, anxiety and special needs (e.g. Middletown Centre for Autism). Mandatory training for teachers



Parenting courses with practical advice and guidance about mental health. Parent peer support groups



More accessible play therapy and art therapy, in community & schools

Timely, in-depth, accessible information on drugs and addiction, delivered by professional drug workers.



Provide support to siblings when their sister/brother is going through mental health crisis. More mentoring programmes like Foróige's Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS).



More child and adolescent mental health services. Early intervention services for children struggling. Shorter waiting list for child psychology. Easier access to assessments and NEPS. More Jigsaws needed

Sex education should be staggered in accordance to age and information shared.

Social skills group – these need to be on-going throughout childhood. CAMHS offer a number of sessions but a long-term approach is needed so children can sustain real friendships and build resilience.

New Communities

What Parents said...

"In her head she is Irish, same as everybody else and it breaks my heart"

"They have to start to deal with us as people as a group. We are surviving day by day"

"I am sorry" (a feeling of having to walk on egg shells in Direct Provision)"

"Transport is very important to us"

"I was allowed do Level 5 in Mayo, but only level 4 in Galway"

"Space to play is very important for us in these conditions"

"Children feel different, not the same. There needs to be something so it feels more inclusive."

"Children find comfort in school but not in their own home"

"I don't know why they should deprive us of simple, simple things"

"We are here to live and contribute"

"Our children do not have the same educational opportunities as other children because we are undocumented. It feels like our children are not children in this country"

"There is an intolerance. It's like I see you on the road, I don't like you. But see me and know me"

"As immigrants we did not plan to be here this long. Now we have to re-plan. I am afraid for my children because we are being treated so differently. I believe my children are not seen as part of the community (traveller??)"

"I am happy with my son's school"

"It is hard to get support especially if you do not have good English"

What Parents want...

Being able to make school lunches ourselves, eating the right food, having control of our food.



Help with paper work, more information on what to do in their situation.



Access to employment and education: working empowers you to provide opportunities for your children.



Safe spaces for children to play. There is a lack of indoor play activities and places for children.



Being Citizens

Right to adult education



Ensure more support and equality in schools for children of migrants. They should have the same choices as other children (e.g. financial support to facilitate inclusion).



Ability to be a role model and proud for our children.



Right to driving licence



Transport to school and activities (cost and availability)

Help with parenting skills would be helpful, how to manage behaviour.



Change in accommodation, even on a smaller scale would improve, sense of connecting within the family, e.g. living room as well as a bedroom for family.



Provide support to migrant parents and children on 3rd Level courses as they are not familiar with them.



Children with Disabilities

What Parents said...

Will there be opportunities and choices for them so that they can lead a full life.....?

"Everything is "special" – nothing is mainstream."

"The only place we experience inclusivity is at his birthday party."

"At times there is almost complete ignorance to disability."

"He is never invited to birthday parties."

"Professionals need to be competent when advising parents of their options. Parents expect that professionals will know more than them. You assume they are right when you are an inexperienced parent. It's very confusing for parents, we don't know where to go and is not clear who does what."

"Bureaucracy is a major obstacle for families."

"Work is a break!!!"

"Respite is a life-support, but we have to fight for it, to spend time together as a family, to take one week's holiday per year."

"Everything is verging on a crisis so you don't always have the mental strength."

"Looking after siblings with additional needs is a big weight on children's shoulders."

"There is no system on how to deal with child with special needs."

"Know your rights!"

If your child attends mainstream school, getting supports and services is a challenge and a fight each year.

"Talk to someone else/meet other people."

"You get really nice situations....really nice staff that take their time and look you in the eye."

"Having to go to Dublin for procedures is very difficult, sitting for hours for a short procedure (e.g. botox)."

"Parents know what is best for their child, services should listen to parents more."

What Parents want...

More education and awareness-raising for the general public on children with special needs



More supports for siblings. More parent peer support groups.



Services need better systems to get the views of parents of children with special needs.

More opportunities for children to get involved in sport and activities, such as basketball, swimming, bowling, Special Olympics. More accessible facilities. Transport to afterschool clubs or summer camps.



Schools:



- More resources and supports in mainstream schools for children with special needs
- Mandatory training for teachers on special needs
- More independent information and advice regarding school options, and on rights in general



Primary care settings should support children with special needs. More localised services are needed.

Young people with disabilities should have access to a jobs coach to facilitate economic participation and independent living.

Managing behaviour training

- Provide regular self-defence for aggressive behaviours, especially with older children
- Train parents to teach other parents, they have a better understanding
- Focus on parents of younger children, on early intervention



An increase in Carer's Allowance. Summer in particular can be very expensive when children are out of school.



A dedicated website and easily accessible information on supports/services available for children with special needs. Information packs at different stages with options, courses, supports.

First aid and manual handling courses for both parents and professionals, for self-care and safety.



More disability access programmes in 3rd level institutions. Also, information on alternative education and training pathways, and on funding options



More respite hours/ facilities. Also, a list of respite/ babysitting services – people with experience of children with special needs.

As children approach adulthood, parents need more information on appropriate services and on work opportunities available to their children.

Training centres and day centres that offer employment and work experience to young people with special needs.

Travellers

What Parents said...

"Being in the travelling community I did not want to be the traveller making a scene."

"The Traveller is always the first to be blamed if anything goes wrong or missing in the education/work place"

"If children feel discriminated against they won't feel included"

"Why is a Traveller girl who got A's in her Junior Cert Irish and Maths only doing 3 subjects for her Leaving Cert"

"Travellers with qualifications (e.g. teaching qualifications) should get jobs as they understand what Traveller children are going through"

"There is nothing for 14 - 16 year old Travellers"

"Racism lingers, it is always in the background in school activities"

"Travellers constantly have to prove themselves"

"Some young Travellers can make a laugh of other young Travellers who want to stay in education. There is peer pressure."

"Traveller children are not encouraged to participate"

"Sometimes educational attainment does not always help Traveller young people to access meaningful employment. Travellers in mainstream employment hide their identity."

"If the generation before didn't have good experiences in education, they find it difficult to help their own children with school work"

"Racism still exists in the education system but it is subtle"

"Don't tar everyone with the same brush"

What Parents want...

Traffic calming in estates and halting sites. Clean and safe play areas in estates and Tuam Halting Site, adequate lighting to prevent accidents and loitering



Deliver the school curriculum to cater for the way Traveller children learn.

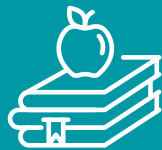


Literacy supports for older teenagers and young adults.



Treat Traveller children equally and as individuals in schools. Encourage Traveller parents to attend and make them feel welcome at parent/teacher meetings.

More Traveller specific books and resources in school. Travellers should be more visible in school books and curriculum.



Workshops on how to manage their children's use and access to social media.



Personal Development and Education Plan for Traveller teenagers and young adults.



More support and encouragement for children to participate in activities and clubs. Support for parents in delivering and running activities (insurance, venues, capacity building)



Locally based activities after school and during school holidays to keep children occupied, such as boxing and dance.



Confidence building supports before applying for jobs.



Be more open to "Travellers ways" e.g. early marriage part of culture and tradition but it should not stop their educational opportunities.



Community Garda presence to monitor underage drinking and loitering in the town and park.



Support worker to help young Travellers to transition from Junior Cert to Leaving Cert to help prevent early school leaving.

Homework support in afterschool programmes. Transport to afterschool services.



Awareness raising with parents on signs and symptoms of drug/alcohol use, and the services available.



More focus on vocational options, trades and apprentices. Access to job readiness certs e.g. Safe Pass, tool certificates etc.

Connected, Respected & Economically Secure

What Parents said...

"You do your best to expose your kids to as much as possible to keep them interested and out of trouble – but everything costs as they are all privately run."

"Learn about relationships / domestic violence in schools"

"Social media: plant the seed with children at an earlier age about what is ok and not ok"

"Sometimes educational attainment does not always help Traveller young people to access meaningful employment"

"If children feel discriminated against, they won't feel included"

"Get Children involved in Tidy Towns"

"Teach girls self-care, self-worth, how to respect themselves, what's ok and what's not ok"

"Educate children on becoming blood donors"

"Percentage of the workforce should be those with special or additional needs"

"A child with special needs is not connected to their community. The only place we experience inclusivity is at his birthday party (child with special needs)"

"I am afraid for my children because we are being treated so differently. We are here to live and contribute. In her head she is Irish same as everybody else and it breaks my heart (New Communities)"

"Support children to stay in school and achieve their ambitions"

"Children are educated to leave Clifden"

What Parents want...

Use schools as community hubs, e.g. schools could host information events on important topics, such as addiction, internet safety and mental health.



More youth groups, to combat isolation and build resilience.



Inter-generational programmes, to sustain a sense of community connectedness and engagement.

Parent support groups to combat isolation. Empower parents to take part in activities, such as drama classes and social dancing.



More community groups and activities in local settings to bring families together. More community development supports and supports for local residents' groups.



Subsidised childcare



Better sex education for children and young people.

Improved Garda involvement with children in schools, to build positive relationships.

More initiatives to encourage inclusion between cultures. Preventative, anti-discriminatory policies and procedures. More programmes in schools about inclusion and cultural diversity.



Community gyms – social meeting for men, as well as a facility for parents and children.

An App for parents in Galway with events, groups, activities, services and supports.



LGBT+ groups for visibility and to support families.



Training and supports for employers relating to responding to the needs of people with special needs.



Classes for children on budgeting and the value of earning. Information on opening bank accounts and filling in forms.



Career guidance: better information for parents, more comprehensive career guidance in schools, more help with doing CVs.



More alternatives for early school-leavers.

Greater emphasis on vocational options, trades and apprentices.

Community transport to connect people, young and old, to local towns, services and activities.



More choice for parents regarding non-religious school.





An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Susan Forde

Prevention Partnership and
Family Support Manager - Tusla
Galway
Susan.forde@tusla.ie

Orla Curran

Senior Child and Family Support
Network Coordinator - Tusla
Galway
Orla.curran@tusla.ie



Morgan Mee

Co-ordinator
Galway Children and Young
People's Service Committee
morgan.mee@tusla.ie