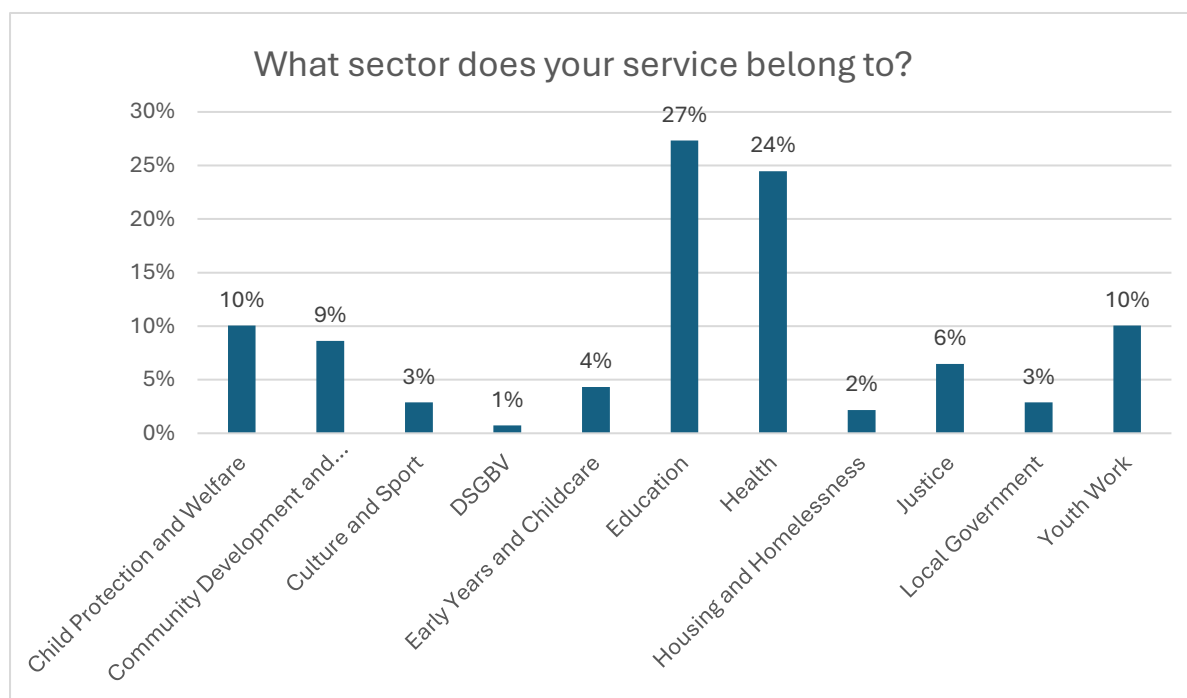
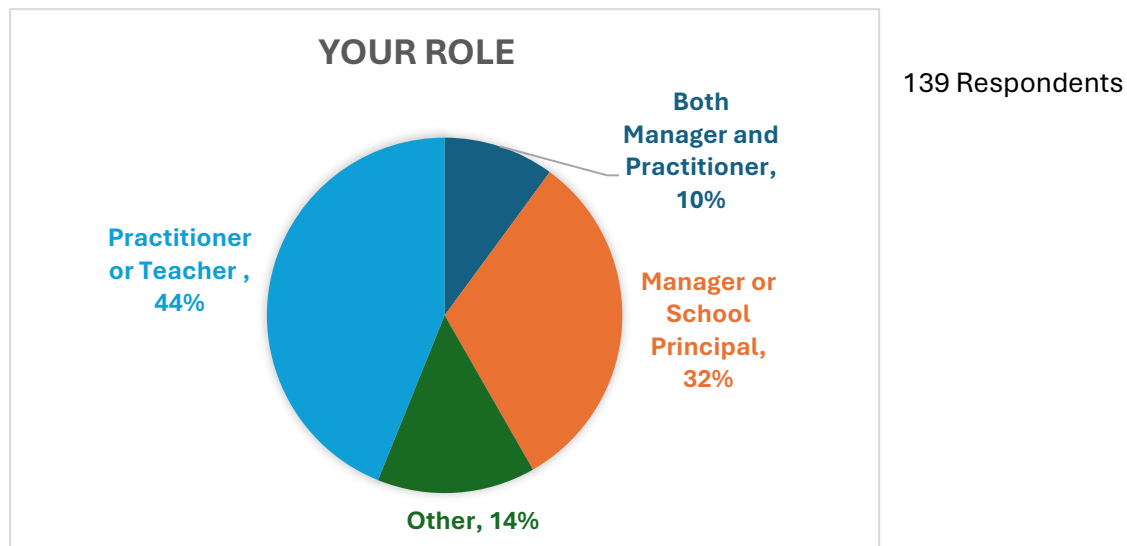
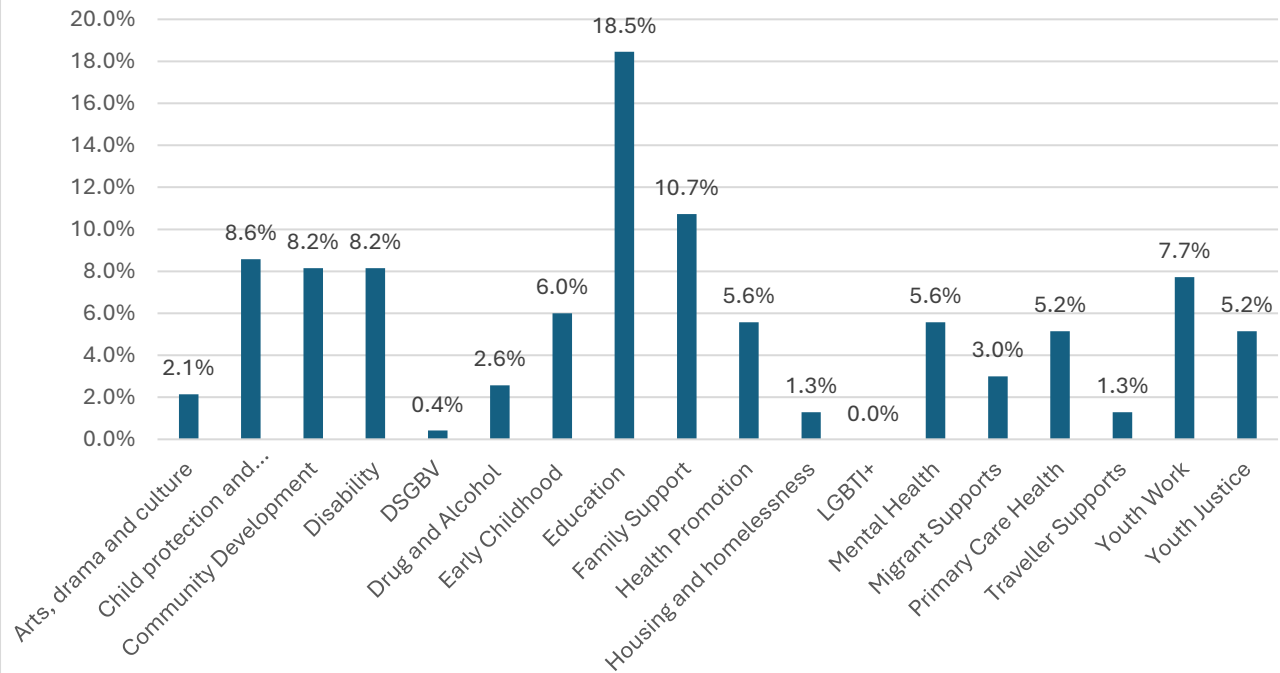


PRACTITIONER SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

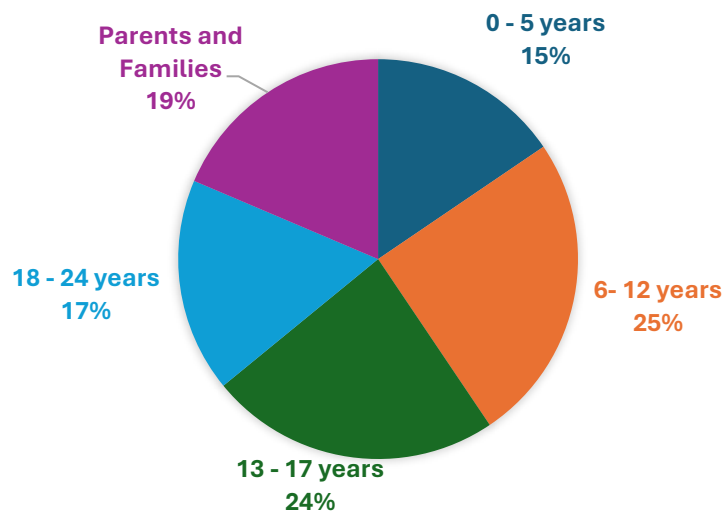
Section 1: You and Your Organisation



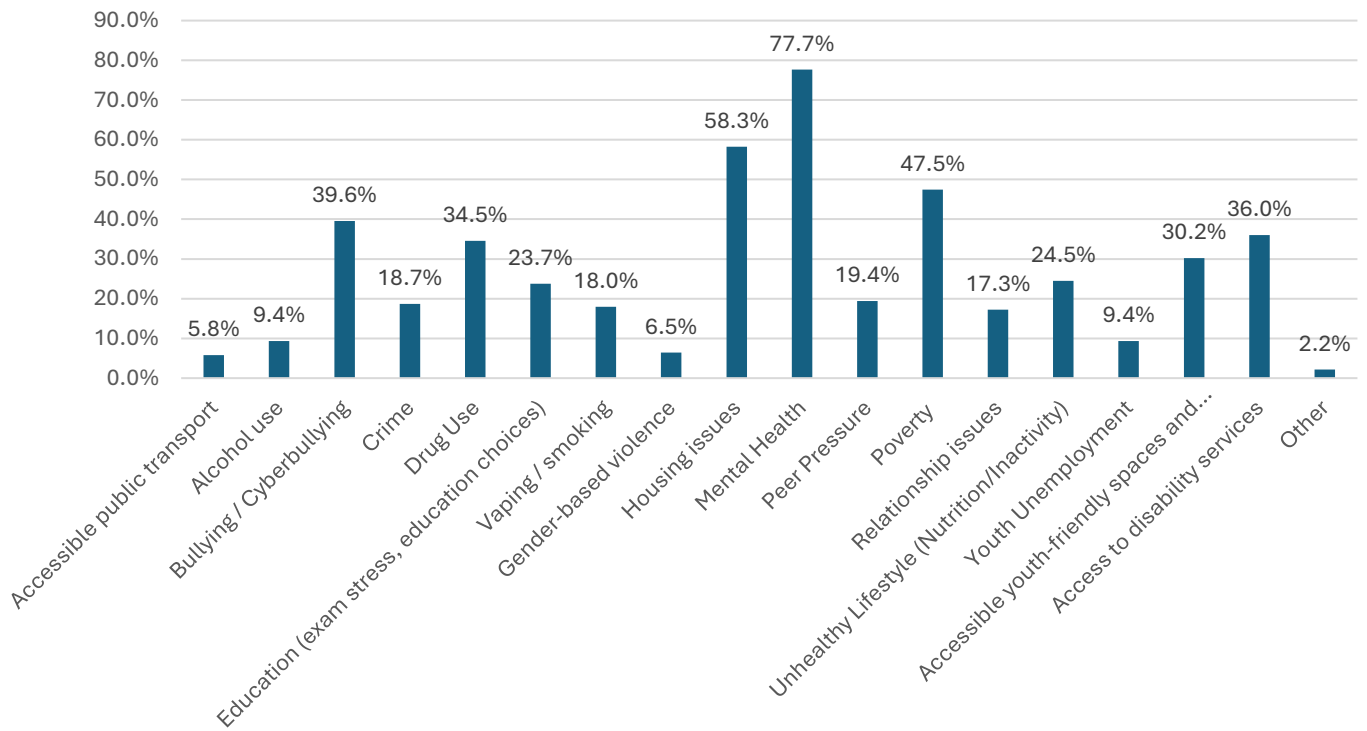
Which of the following best describes your service?



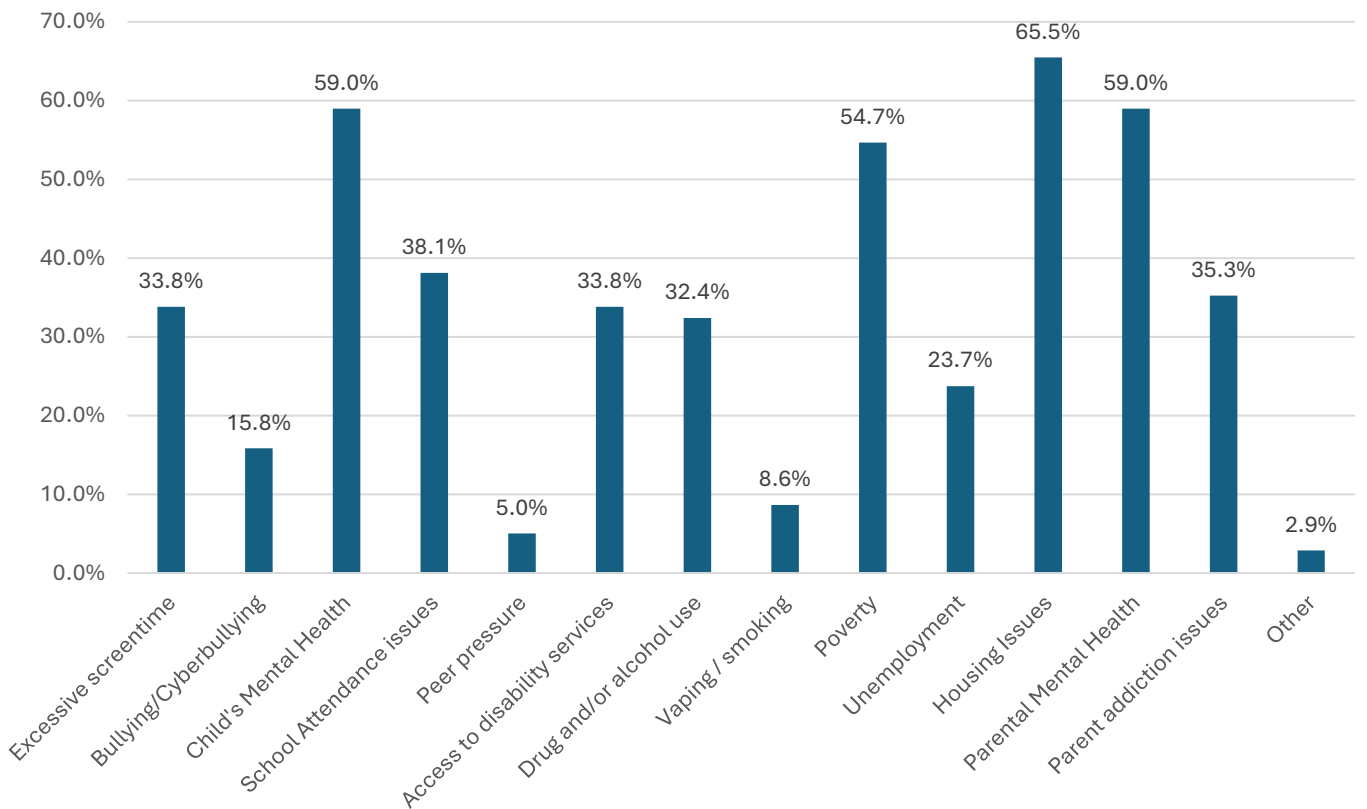
WHAT AGE GROUP(S) DOES YOUR ORGANISATION MAINLY PROVIDE SERVICES TO?



What do you think are the biggest issues for children and young people in Limerick? You can select a maximum of 5 issues.



What do you think are the primary challenges that are presenting for parents in your area? You can select a maximum of 5 issues.



Section 2: Assessing Sectors

This section sought the opinions of respondents on service provision across a range of sectors based on their professional experience through a fixed scale question. The second question sought the respondent to elaborate on their views in free text asking:

- what you feel is working well;
- where there are challenges;
- where there is potential for interagency collaborative working.

In general, observations of what was working well focused on the quality and dedication of staff across all sectors, contrasting their commitment against the systemic challenges they are facing.

Across respondents a clear message came back – services are understaffed, under-resourced, inexperienced (in some instances) and lack capacity to engage in broader interagency collaboration. These challenges are underpinned by a poly-crisis of cost of living, homelessness, addiction etc. Children and families are presenting with increasingly complex cases that require multiple agency responses, but the infrastructure is not designed in way or organically facilitate this.

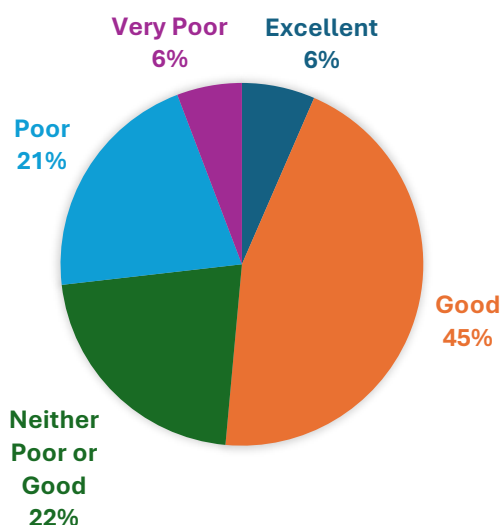
Unsurprisingly, the observations of many respondents towards services are quite negative. This is reflective of the frustration of practitioners supporting children, young people and families. The below quote reflects the challenges services have when they are understaffed and external partners not having full context to service responses:

I feel that there is a limited understanding of how disability works when liaising with other services. On a weekly basis, teams encounter service users & other services that are very disparaging towards disability services & ask why we can't do more. Within disability, we don't have huge clinician numbers & this is reflected in national comparisons. Teams only wish they could offer more to families, and find it so disheartening when colleagues from other services also are disparaging.

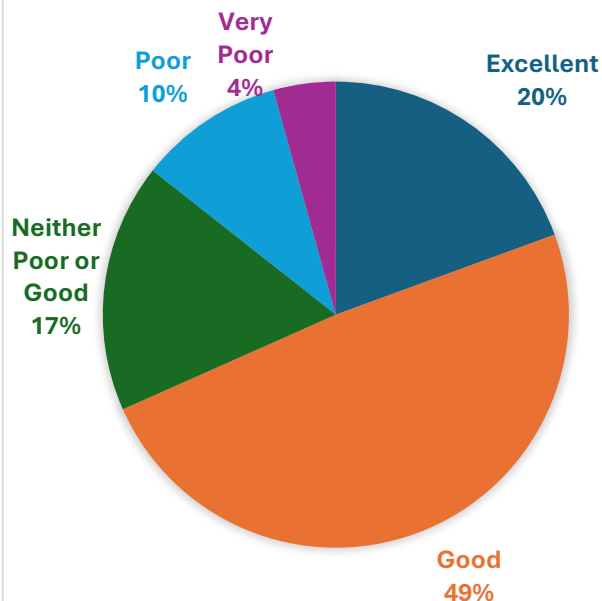
Interagency Working

Respondents were invited to respond to three statements on a 5 point scale ranging from Excellent to Very Poor:

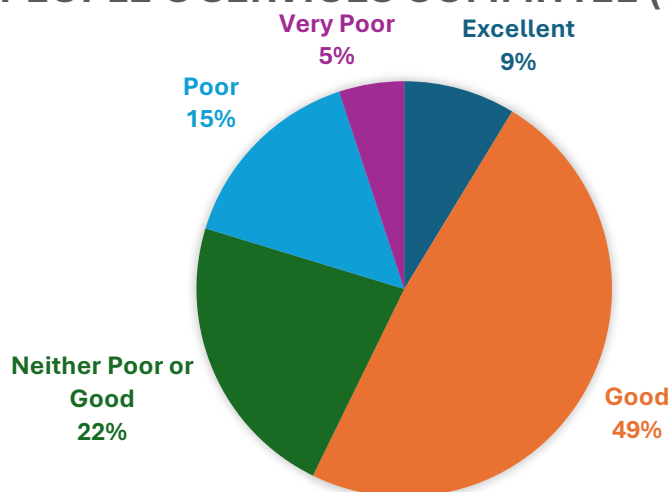
HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR EXPERIENCE TO DATE OF INTERAGENCY WORKING AMONGST SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?



PLEASE RATE TO WHAT LEVEL INTERAGENCY MEETINGS HAVE BENEFITTED YOU AS A PRACTITIONER OR YOUR SERVICE?



HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE OF LIMERICK CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE (CYPSC)



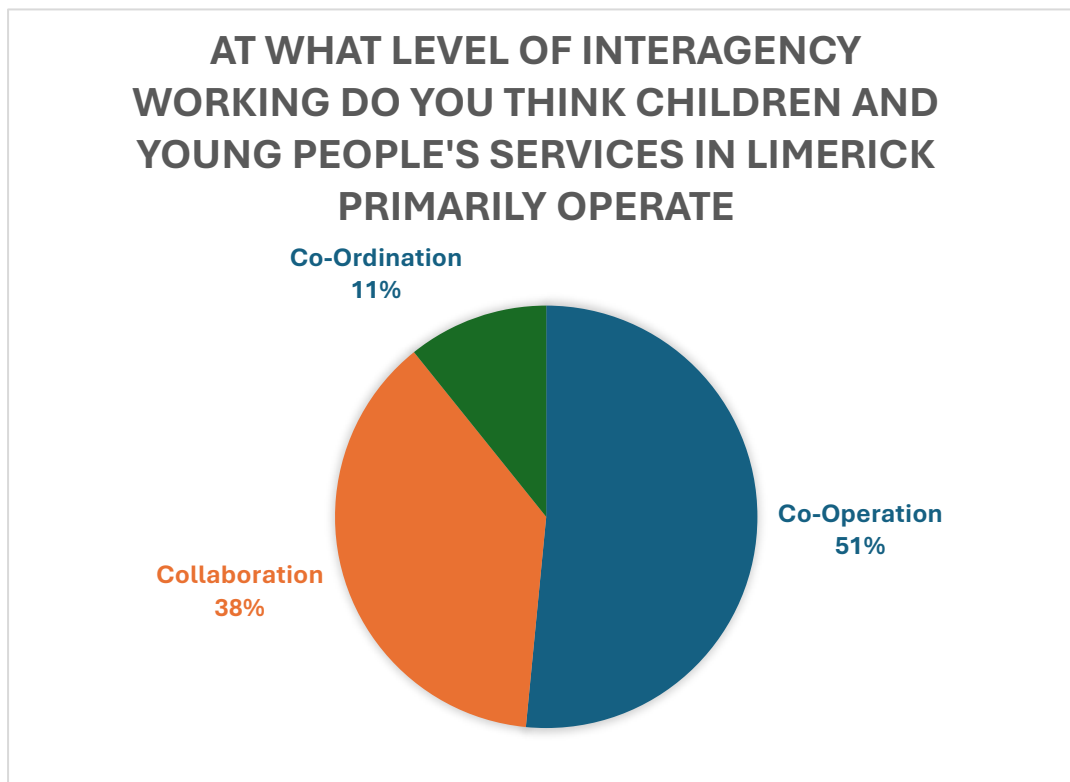
Respondents were then asked to respond to the following statement:

Below are three levels of Interagency Working. At what level of interagency working do you think children and young people's services in Limerick primarily operate.

1. Co-operation: Services work together toward consistent goals and complementary services while maintaining their independence

2. Collaboration: Services plan together and address issues of overlap, duplication and gaps in service provision towards common outcomes

3. Co-ordination: Services work together in a planned and systematic manner towards shared and agreed goals



Respondents were invited to explain why they chose either Co-operation, Collaboration or Co-ordination:

In general there was common agreement that there are some strong networks in operation around the city and county which provide a good opportunity to share information and ideas

Some respondents noted that meaningful collaboration and coordination is constrained by services funding and organisational requirements. It was noted that services are all really busy and collaboration can be perceived as a luxury at times.

Funding constraints mean that while services would like to work together more their funding or strategies may not align. As such, services are good at focusing on goals and services while maintaining independence but struggle in terms of planning together to address overlap, and work systematically.

Respondents in general felt that information can often be held by those within their service who participate on interagency fora.

Finally, respondents were asked how they think interagency working amongst services could be improved?

A range of replies were given – some quite detailed, others more succinct. Many respondents suggested that communication between organisations needs to be clearer, particularly when it came to service delivery models and approaches.

Training or learning events were consistently suggested as a way of building up interagency relationships and trust.

There was an acknowledgement that staff capacity and resourcing of the overall sectors that work with children, young people and families mean that the option to engage with and participate on interagency structures is not always there.

Synopsis of Survey Responses

Early Years services

Working Well

- High-quality services offered by community crèches and preschools.
- ECCE & NCS & AIM are, for the most part, working well

Challenges

- Supply: Severe shortage of full-time childcare services, especially for babies and toddler
- Recruitment & Retention: Low wages and inadequate working conditions contributing to high staff turnover and retention issues.
- Attendance: In some disadvantaged communities, a number of children still do not attend early years services regularly, or at all. In some cases, children are discharged from services due to poor attendance, rather than services having the capacity or resources to work intensively with families to increase participation
- Transitions: There continues to be a disconnect between Early Years and primary settings in terms of communication and transition planning. The sharing of information about children's learning and development remains inconsistent

Potential for Interagency Collaboration

- More structured and sustained collaboration between Early Years educators, primary schools, and support agencies. Initiatives such as transition-to-school projects, shared professional development sessions, and transition meetings for children with additional needs could help bridge the gap. CFSNs, (TESS), and HSCL coordinators could play a key role in developing these partnerships.
- Establish more baby and toddler groups that link in with schools and run from schools where parents are already visiting every morning.

Health Services

Working Well:

- Once in the system, a good service is provided.
- Incredible commitment of staff working in the health services and their expertise and commitment to the children and families they are working with.

Challenges:

A self-perpetuating set of challenges were highlighted in the survey, with each issue below putting pressure on the system

- Low staffing levels that are not at level to meet needs of the community in a timely manner. This was emphasised in disability, mental health and public health nursing.
- Long waiting lists, particularly in mental health and disability services – a gap exists between available services and the actual needs of the community.
- Increasingly complex cases in a growing population
- Vulnerable parents struggle to understand and navigate the health system.
- Staff shortages leading to poor interagency collaboration – no capacity

- Communication is very good from some staff members, but it is very dependent on the individual in the role, i.e. no consistency

Potential for Interagency Collaborative Working:

- More networking/opportunities to collaborate: *“we have no connection really with the public health teams. We do not interact, meet or collaborate. It would be really beneficial for families we work with if we worked collaboratively or if we could contact them.”*

Mental Health Services

Working Well

- There is a growing openness among children, parents, and staff to discuss wellbeing and to seek help when concerns arise.
- Community Services (e.g. Jigsaw, Be Well) have a low threshold and are responsive
- Youth Mental Health Strategic Implementation Group [interagency group of statutory and community mental health services] works well
- HSCLs, SCPs and NEPS collaboration tends to work effectively in school who have access to them

Challenges:

- Significant waiting lists in statutory services, underpinned by understaffing and under resourcing
- Co-morbidity / dual diagnoses (e.g. mental health and disability issue)
- High thresholds and capacity to respond to ADHD within CAMHS
- Accessibility in rural areas (despite some local services increasing offerings)
- Communication between services is inconsistent

Potential for Interagency Collaboration:

- There is a need for clearer pathways to services. Referring professionals should also be supported to identify the most appropriate services
 - More community-based connection pieces. More open days where different services showcase what it is they do and the supports they can offer.
 - Interagency collaboration tends to work best where they come together for training and they have opportunities to meet and develop as a team in another environment this creates professional friendships that can improve communication.
-

Disability Services

Working Well:

- Commitment of staff – they are working to capacity to delivery the best service possible within constraints of lack of resources.
- Awareness and inclusion of children with additional needs within mainstream education.
- Community-based organisations, such as Dóchas and Down Syndrome Limerick, provide excellent family support, early intervention, and advocacy
- Several respondents felt Progressing Disabilities and the family centred model works well

Challenges:

- Significant waiting lists, underpinned by understaffing and under resourcing of CDNTs
- Referral pathways are very confusing
- Communication from CDNTs inconsistent
- Partner organisation unclear about National Access Policy
- Poor collaboration with HSE Mental Health services
- Poor staff knowledge of services available outside of CDNTs

Potential for Interagency Collaborative Working:

- Regular joint case conferences between CDNT members, SENOs, NEPS psychologists, and school staff would enable shared understanding and coordinated planning.
- Shared professional development amongst educators and therapists could build relationships and develop common understanding.

Social Services**Working Well:**

- Family support services work really well. It is the only service where parents/families can access support without a complicated referral process or long waiting lists.
- Some social workers and family support workers are fantastic and are so supportive and encouraging to families
- Community-based Parenting and Family Support Services and local partnerships through Family Resource Centres and other community services
- The services that are there (homeless & addiction) do trojan work but does not have capacity to meet the ever-growing demand.
- Most of these services work collaboratively with other services to try and meet the need of children and families they work with.

Challenges:

- Staffing shortages, increasing complexity of cases within Tusla
- Normalisation of high threshold to access support from Tusla
- Lack of fostering and residential capacity
- Poor practitioner experiences engaging with Tusla
- Perception that cases within Tusla are closed too soon
- Limited DV refuge places
- Cost of living, homeless and addiction crisis
- Families often face complex, overlapping issues — homelessness, addiction, domestic violence — yet services still tend to operate in silos
- Housing instability is a major barrier to school attendance and engagement, and coordination between housing services, Tusla, and schools is inconsistent.

Potential for Interagency Collaborative Working:

- Establishing local interagency networks or case management teams, where school leaders, Tusla representatives, family support services, and community organisations meet regularly, would help ensure earlier and more coordinated intervention.

Youth Work and Youth Justice Services

Working Well:

- Youth diversion projects are offering a wide range of services and supports to young people you are referred in
- Youth work works extremely well. A wide range of age groups supported and catered for. Summer / Easter/Mid-term programmes also work really well.
- Relationships between schools and youth organisations are positive
- This sector is very collaborative

Challenges:

- Gaps in range and scale of young work provision in county Limerick
- Targeted youth work projects are coming at the expense of universal youth work
- A need for significant investment in facilities
- Youth workers and youth justice workers are working with increasingly complex cases
- Sector is losing a lot of staff to statutory sector where there is better pay and conditions
- need to apply for annual funding is taking time and effort away from key work
- Young people out of school and unable to be supported by youth work – a lack of creative responses in this area
- Collaborative working between providers can only happen if services don't feel that they are all competing for the same pot of funding. There

Potential for Interagency Collaborative Working:

- more interagency communication and knowledge around what organisations can offer and do in practice

Education services

Working Well

- School Completion Programmes are valuable in those areas that have them
- HSCL coordinators' service is a vital link between school, families, and the community.
- In general, there is strong collaboration within local school clusters.
- There are innovative and creative responses being facilitated through schools to address need (e.g. HAPPEE programme)

Challenges

- School attendance issues and anxiety are significant issues
- Accessing special classes or special schools very challenging
- NEPS have small number of hours for schools
- Challenges around number of school places in Limerick city
- St. Augustines School is over subscribed – not enough alternative education options
- Expulsions and reduced time tables are being used by some schools without following policies.

Arts, Culture, Creativity and Play services,

Working Well

- Music Generation in Limerick County is very well received
- Playgrounds and indoor play spaces in some areas are well maintained and offer inclusive opportunities for younger children.

Challenges

- Very few child friendly spaces across the city or county – they exist in pockets rather than being part of a wider planning approach
- More activities accessible for children with additional needs are required.
- There are limited opportunities for sustainable recurring funding to develop and grow creative and arts-based activities
- Cost of many arts and cultural experience limited their engagement from a large cohort of the population