

Sligo Leitrim Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC)

Report on Consultation
with
Children and Young people, parents and professionals
to inform development of the
Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2024-26

July 2023

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1.0 Introduction

Consulting with and engaging key stakeholders in the decision-making process of developing a new Children and Young people's Plan for 2024-26 is a key priority for Sligo Leitrim CYPSC.

There exists a strong recognition among members of the CYPSC Change Management Sub-group that consulting with children and young people, parents and professionals across the two counties will deliver a CYPP with relevant priorities and activities that ensure quality supports and services that are relevant to children and young people and their families.

A robust consultation process took place in April and May 2023 that employed a range of methods to meet the varied needs of stakeholder groups.

This report describes the methods used and the findings that emerged and were incorporated into the planning process.

2.0 Methodology

Overall, 91 children and young people aged 3-24 years, 30 parents and 71 professionals were engaged in a consultation in April and May 2023, to inform development of the new Sligo Leitrim Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 20-26.

A range of methods and approaches, as described below, were used to meet the varied needs of these stakeholders. The methodology and approach were informed by the Lundy model of participation¹ set out in local and national policy documents and the Sligo Leitrim CYPSC Participation Lab resources.

The independent research consultant worked closely with the CYPSC Coordinator and CYPSC member organisations to organise the recruitment of participants and the collection of consultation data. All data collection was facilitated by the independent research consultant, either in person, online using MS Teams or over the phone. A member of the staff team from the host organisation was also present for all data collection activities with children and young people.

Creative workshops and a survey with Children and Young People 3-24 years

¹ Tusla Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019 – 2023, Sligo Leitrim Participation Lab Resources <https://sligoleitrimparticipationlab.ie/> National Strategy for the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making 2015-2020, National Framework for Children and Young People's Decision-making

Creative workshops

Sample of participants

The sample was 54 children and young people aged 3-17 years. This included 25 children and young people (46%) from County Leitrim and 29 (54%) from County Sligo. A convenience sampling approach was used to recruit a diverse sample of children and young people through CYPSC member agencies. This included children and young people living in IPAS accommodation, members of Comhairle na nOg, children and young people attending Youth Cafes within Family Resource Centres across both counties, members of the SMILY LGBTQIA+ Youth Group, as well as children attending Early Years Learning and Care and School Aged Childcare services.

Overall, the creative workshops aimed to

- facilitate the meaningful engagement of children and young people in the design and development stage of the Children and Young People's Plan 2024-26, in discussing their experience of COVID and its impact and in identifying issues, activities and actions/solutions that are important to them.
- identify services used and activities undertaken (as well as gaps in provision), by children and young people of different ages and stages of development and with a range of varied life experience and needs who are living in counties Sligo and Leitrim.
- explore their experience of specific services and activities provided within the previous Children and Young People's Plan 2020-22 and to formulate success criteria of what works for children and young people in Sligo Leitrim.

Workshop activities were designed to be appropriate to children's age and stage of development. This included:

- Creative art-based activities: a Needs and Wishes Tree, and circle time for children aged 3-12 years.



- Open Space and World Café methods for young people aged 13-17 years.



Consent

Written Parental Informed Consent was sought prior to children and young people's recruitment to the consultation. Parents received an Information Letter and Consent Form that advised them of what the consultation activity would involve, who would be present, why it was taking place and how their children's data would be collected, stored and used. This information was then explained to the children and young people at the start of the consultation session. They were also invited to complete a child and young person friendly Consent Form knowing that they could choose not to take part, even when their parents/guardians had provided permission. They were also advised they could change their mind at any stage during the workshop and no longer take part, as well as the practical ways they could do this.

Confidentiality and GDPR

Parents and their children were advised that the data would be collected anonymously and that their names would not be attached to their data nor reported to protect their anonymity. They were also made aware that any data including photos would be stored confidentially on a password protected computer and would be destroyed at the end of the project.

Consultation process

Children and young people were advised who the data would be shared with (Lundy model: audience) and how it would be used (Lundy model: influence). It was agreed the independent research consultant would write to the children and young people at the end of the planning process to update them on what issues have been prioritized in the new plan and the rationale behind that prioritization process. The older children and young people aged 8-17 years completed an anonymised survey providing feedback on their experience of the consultation workshop. This was completed either on paper or on their phone using a QR code provided.

Figure 1 Enjoyment of the Workshop

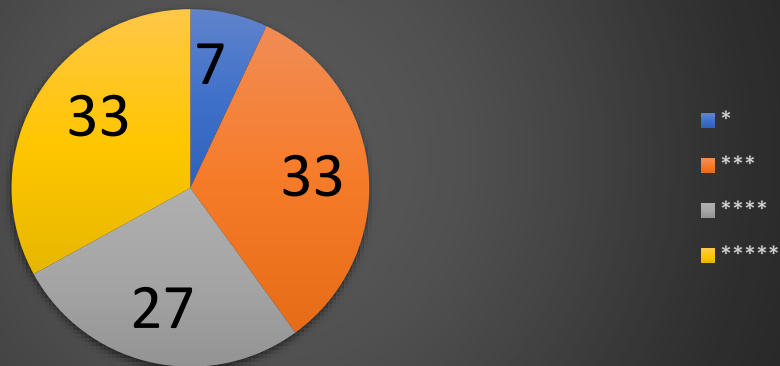


Figure 2: Children and Young People's Feedback what they liked best about the workshop

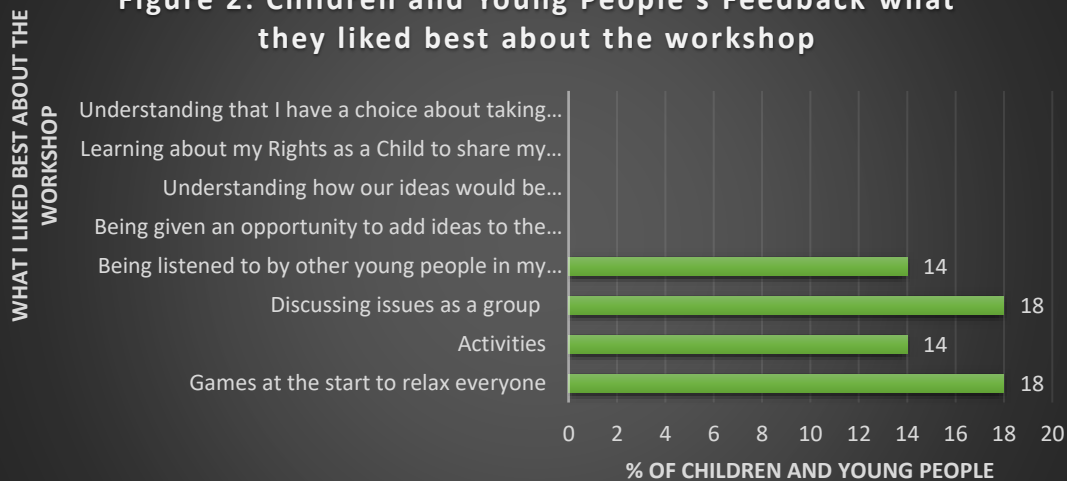
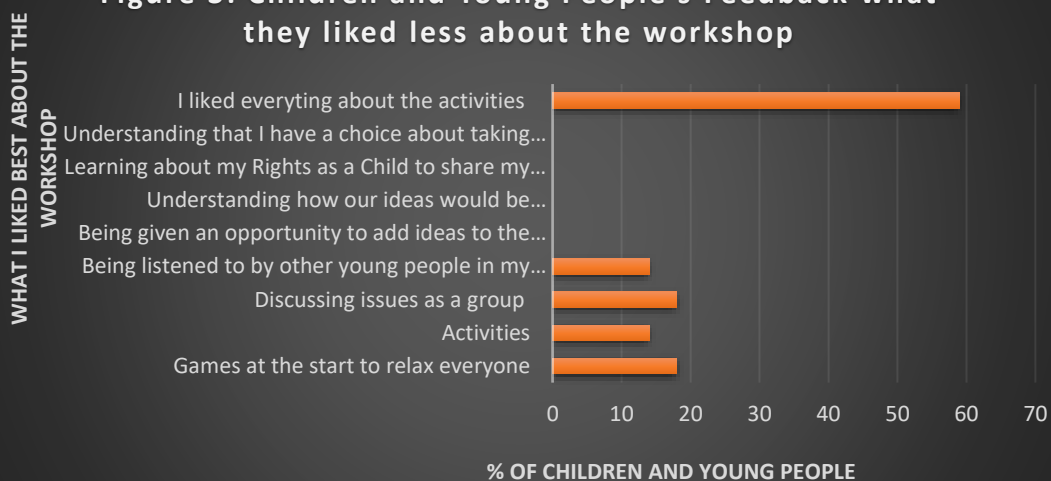


Figure 3: Children and Young People's Feedback what they liked less about the workshop



Online survey with young adults 18-24 years

Sample of participants

The sample was 37 young adults aged 18-24 years. This included 65% (24) from Sligo and 35% (13) who reported they were living in Leitrim. A convenience sampling approach was used to recruit a diverse sample through CYPSC member agencies engaged in Education, Youth Work and Social Care. A link to the QR code was circulated to staff members across organisations to share with young people attending MSLETB youth projects, Youthreach and Education Training Centres, as well as Post Leaving Certificate courses, the ATU Students Union, Foroige Youth Diversion projects, Youth Work Ireland North Connaught projects, the National Learning Network and Tusla Children's After Care teams. An email/telephone conversation requesting support to disseminate the QR code to the online survey via social media channels and to clubs was also shared with Sligo GAA, Sligo LGFA, Leitrim GAA and Leitrim LGFA.

Overall, the survey was designed to identify the issues that are important to young adults and their views on the support and services needed for young adults in Sligo and Leitrim.

Consent

The survey was anonymous and accessed voluntarily online by young adults via a QR code on their phones. The preamble to the survey explained what the survey involved, why it was taking place and how their data would be collected, stored and used.

Parental consent was sought for young adults attending the National Learning Network. Their parents and guardians received an Information Letter and Consent Form that advised them of what the consultation activity would involve, who would be present, why it was taking place and how their children's data would be collected, stored and used. This was also included in a Young Adult version of the Consent Form which was completed prior to the survey. Paper copies were completed by these young adults, facilitated by their NLN tutor.

Confidentiality and GDPR

The survey was anonymous and did not collect any personal data. Young adults and where relevant their parents were advised all data would be destroyed at the end of the project.

2.2 Focus groups and telephone interviews with Parents

Sample of participants

The sample of 30 parents included 18 parents from County Leitrim (60%) and 12 (40%) from County Sligo. A convenience sampling approach was used to recruit a diverse sample of parents through CYPSC member agencies. Participants who took part included parents living in IPAS accommodation in both counties, mothers from the Traveller Community, and parents who had in the past or were currently availing of parenting support from a range of agencies including Lifestart, Family Resource Centres, Foroige and Sligo Springboard. Recruitment information explaining the purpose of the consultation and what was involved was disseminated widely through Family Resource Centres, the Sligo Leitrim Parent Hub and the HSE Child and Disability Network Team newsletter.

Overall, five focus groups were facilitated, three in person and two online. Nine telephone interviews also took place.

These interviews and focus groups aimed to

- engage parents in the design and development stage of the Children and Young People's Plan 2024-26, in particular in identifying issues that are important to them, as well as activities/actions/solutions.
- identify awareness of, as well as services used and activities undertaken, by parents of children and young people of different ages and stages of development and with a range of varied life experience and needs who are living in counties Sligo and Leitrim, and to explore their views on what is helpful, needed/not needed and gaps in provision.
- explore their experience of specific activities provided within the previous Children and Young People's Plan 2020-22 and to understand what works for parents in Sligo Leitrim.
- discuss their experience of COVID and its impact.

Consent

Written informed consent was sought prior to parents' participation in the consultation. Parents received an Information Letter and Consent Form that advised them of what the consultation activity would involve, who would be present, why it was taking place and how the data would be collected, stored and used. This information was also explained at the start of the focus group/interview. They were also advised they could change their mind at any stage during the focus group/interview and no longer take part, as well as the practical ways they could do this.

Confidentiality and GDPR

Parents were advised that the data would be collected anonymously and that their names would not be attached to their data nor reported to protect their anonymity. They were also made aware that their data would be stored confidentially on a password protected computer and would be destroyed at the end of the project.

2.3 Focus groups and interviews with Professionals

Sample of participants

Five professionals took part in two online focus groups and one telephone interview. The sample represented both County Leitrim (2 participants) and County Sligo (3 participants). A purposive sampling approach was used to target and recruit specific professionals with experience of, and insight into new issues/gaps emerging from the consultation process. These included the engagement of the education sector and education professionals in the work of CYPSC, supporting Ukrainian families who have moved to Sligo and Leitrim and the needs of children and young people in care.

Consent

Written informed consent was sought prior to professionals' participation in the focus groups/interview. Participants received an Information Letter and Consent Form that advised them of what the consultation activity would involve, why it was taking place and how the data would be collected, stored and used. This information was also explained at the start of the focus group/ interview. They were also advised they could change their mind at any stage during the focus group/interview and no longer take part, as well as the practical ways they could do this.

Confidentiality and GDPR

Professionals were advised that the data would be collected anonymously and that neither their names nor professional role titles would not be attached to their data nor reported to protect their anonymity. They were also made aware that their data would be stored confidentially on a password protected computer and would be destroyed at the end of the project.

2.4 Online workshops and an online survey with CYPSC Members

Online Workshops with CYPSC Members

Sample of participants

The sample of 85 members of CYPSC and its five Sub-groups and one Working Group included professionals from a range of agencies and organisations. Some are members of more than one Sub-group/Working Group and participated in more than one workshop.

Overall, seven online workshops were facilitated between 17 April and 8 May.

These workshops were facilitated using MS Teams and included discussion and small group-based activities undertaken in breakout rooms. Early findings from the online survey were shared to prompt and promote discussion. These workshops aimed to engage participants in reviewing implementation of the previous CYPP 2020-22, and this included exploring their perspectives, learning and insight in relation to

- what had worked well, and less well, learning, what has changed/impact?
- the impact of COVID on CYPP implementation.
- achievements and examples of innovative good interagency practice.

Consent

Participants' consent to record the workshop was sought at the outset to facilitate transcription of the data and robust analysis. They were advised they could choose to leave the call if they did not provide consent to the recording.

Confidentiality and GDPR

Participants were advised that neither their names nor their professional role titles would be reported to protect their anonymity. They were also made aware that their data would be stored confidentially on a password protected computer and would be destroyed at the end of the project.

Online Survey of CYPSC Members

Sample of participants

All members of CYPSC and its Sub-groups and Working Group were invited to complete an anonymous online survey. They received an introductory explanatory email with the link to the survey and two further reminder emails to prompt completion. Sixty-six completed responses were received between 17 April and 12 May, and this represents a completion rate of 81.5%.

The survey had 18 questions and was designed to collect information on the following:

- member's organisation and membership of CYPSC and its Sub-groups,
- member's engagement with of CYPSC and its Sub-groups,
- thoughts and perceptions on interagency working through CYPSC and its Sub-groups,
- insights and learning for the development of the Children and Young People's Plan 2024-26.

Consent

The survey was anonymous and accessed voluntarily online by clicking on a link shared via email. The preamble to the survey explained what the survey involved, why it was taking place and how their data would be collected, stored and used.

Confidentiality and GDPR

The survey was anonymous and did not collect any personal data. Participants were advised all data would be destroyed at the end of the project.

2.5 Review of research, policy and strategy documents

A review of the following research outputs commissioned and completed within CYPP 2020-22 was undertaken to capture learning and identify associated priority actions for inclusion in the CYPP 2024-26.

- Young People and Knife Crime – a systematic literature review.
- Mapping of Resilience programmes and supports, 2021.
- Mapping of Anti-Bullying supports & services, 2021.
- Mapping of Domestic Violence supports and services, 2021.
- Evidence-based Domestic Violence Programmes for Children and Young People: A Desk-based Review of the Research and an Exploration of the National Landscape.

The following is a selection of the strategy and policy documents also reviewed as part of a PESTLE analysis of the environment within which the CYPP 2024-26 will be implemented. This helped identify the opportunities and threats in the wider environment that CYPSC and its Sub-groups/ Working Group need to be aware of and manage in selecting activities and targets for the new CYPP. Reviewing local strategy documents also identified synergies and opportunities for collaboration with other county-level or CYPSC area planning.

- Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025
- Zero Tolerance: The National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence 2022-2026
- Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying Ireland's Whole Education Approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools December 2022
- Tulsa Parenting Support Strategy 2022-2027
- NATIONAL TRAVELLER HEALTH ACTION PLAN (2022-2027) Working together to improve the health experiences and outcomes for Travellers.
- Connecting for Life (CFL): Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020
- CFL Implementation plan 2022 – 2024.

- Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2021
- County Sligo Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2030
- Sligo LEADER Partnership Local Development Strategy 2023 – 2027
- Our Rural Future Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

3.0 Findings

A thematic and content analysis of the consultation data identified key themes raised by children and young people, parents and professionals. These are presented below using the structure of the five national outcomes set out in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

3.1 Issues important to Children and Young People living in Sligo Leitrim

National Outcome: Active and Healthy, Physical and Mental Wellbeing

- The need for a house, garden, car, bike and scooter was raised consistently among the workshops with children aged between 3 and 12 years. Food was also mentioned alongside friends and football, though less frequently.
- Mental health support emerged consistently in the workshops with teenagers and was named as 3 of top 5 priorities by 18–24-year-olds who completed the anonymous survey. These were anxiety (68%), not enough mental health services for young people (55%) and waiting for an appointment for mental health service (50%). Teenage young people across groups raised the gap in provision of early help and expressed a clear need for a young person centred support with self-referral that was “lower than CAMHS, higher than GP”. They also expressed a need for education to teach young people to recognise mental health, good and poor and to manage increased anxiety related to school and social experiences post COVID.
- Teenagers expressed a clear gap and a need for age appropriate and relevant information and education on healthy and unhealthy relationships. Many had not received this to date in school, and in the event when this was delivered in school, the sensitive topics (e.g., what is an unhealthy relationship), were not covered in any detail or were just ‘touched on’.

National Outcome: Achieving full potential in Learning and Development

- Children aged 3-7 years and children living in Direct Provision accommodation centres identified the need for opportunities for support physical development and outdoor play such as a playground and garden and having bikes and scooters and football.
- Older primary school children aged 8-12 years living in Direct Provision accommodation also identified the need for a bus to school and having access to school equipment such

as pencils and drawing stuff. One child expressed the need for a non-itchy school uniform to accommodate children with sensory processing issues.

- Teenagers aged 13-17 years noted how young people's engagement with and expectations of education have reduced since COVID, particularly among the cohort that transitioned from primary to post primary school during the pandemic.
- Teenagers identified a rise in anxiety related to school since COVID and expressed a need for support in managing anxiety in going to school and around heightened teacher and parent expectations to catch up and do well academically. Young people reported experiencing poor relationships with teachers and a lack of empathy in these relationships.
- The survey of young people aged 18-24 years identified a need for more English tuition for refugees.

National Outcome: Safe and Protected from Harm

- Teenagers 13-17 years consistently identified a gap in their education in relation to healthy and unhealthy relationships, particularly the most sensitive content e.g., how to recognize an unhealthy relationship and what to do. A large cohort of older teenagers have not had any formal education in this area and have missed out on the Healthy vs Unhealthy Relationships programme rolled out to first years in Sligo Leitrim CYPSC area during the previous plan.
- Challenges related to managing friendships online emerged as important to teenagers, particularly in relation to making comments and posting photos without consent.

National Outcome: Economic Security and Opportunity

- Children aged 8-12 years living in Direct Provision accommodation identified the need for a job. Some of these children conveyed their enjoyment of school and high expectations regarding their education e.g., one spoke of his brother wanting to be a doctor and work in a hospital.
- Older teenagers aged 15-17 years reported that since COVID, young people appear less engaged with school and their education, particularly those who transitioned from primary during the pandemic. This group of young people spoke of being scared of life after school and that the sole focus in school on points and college has left them feeling ill-prepared for life after school. They expressed a need for employability and careers workshops.
- Moving on from school into other education, training and employment was identified as a Top 5 issue by 53% of Young Adults aged 18-24 years. More than half also reported that COVID has made a difference to the support and services needed and 3 in 5 reported

being aware of support available to move on from school into other education, training and employment.

National Outcome: Connected, Respected and Contributing to their World

- Younger children 3-7 years identified family and friends as being important to them. Teenagers noted that many young people their age were challenged to manage family issues and parental expectations around achievement in school and doing jobs at home.
- Teenagers, aged 13-17 years, particularly those not living in Sligo town, expressed a need for free social groups/activities. They felt that most activities are based in Sligo and not very accessible to young people living elsewhere. A specific gap was identified in West Sligo. All teenagers noted the decline in opportunities for socialising with peers since COVID. Young people aged 18-24 years from both counties also identified a need for more recreational activities for young people.
- Access to transport was identified by children aged 8-12 years living in Leitrim e.g., a car, bus to school. This was also raised by 55% of young people aged 18-24 years from across the two counties where it emerged in their Top 5 issues.

3.2 Parents' awareness and experience of accessing services in Sligo Leitrim

National Outcome: Active and Healthy, Physical and Mental Wellbeing

- Significant gaps continue to exist with access to statutory CAMHS services, and Disability services for children and young people who do not have severe disabilities or physical disabilities e.g., ASD. This is resulting in lost opportunities for early intervention, significant stress for families (parents' ability to work/earn, risk to safety, trauma for siblings) and negative mental health, education and social outcomes for children and young people. A need has been identified to build professional awareness and skills and provide access to early intervention and universally provided mental health support.
- Families seeking asylum have expressed a need for access to bikes and scooters for young children. It was noted that the lack of privacy in mixed accommodation, poor access to family cooking facilities, lack of protected outdoor play space, and the inability to host visitors impacts opportunities for children's healthy development and family life.
- Parents of children with mild/moderate disabilities incl. ASD expressed a need for funded access to after school/summer camps/ social activities/opportunities to promote their social and physical health and development.

National Outcome: Achieving full potential in Learning and Development

- Parents lacked awareness of the Parent Hub and the Sligo Leitrim Directory of Services. Overall, parents expressed a need for more targeted context specific information on

supports available for parents in a range of contexts e.g., mental health, ASD, anxiety, family separation. Parents expressed a need for parenting programmes and support to be normalised for all families.

- Families seeking asylum have expressed a need for access to physical space to study for older children undertaking state examinations, and access to childcare for parents with babies who wish to continue their formal education. Parents expressed a need for English language tuition at a level more advanced than conversational English.
- Parents of children with mild/moderate disabilities incl. ASD expressed a need to link with other parents to source and share information and provide support.

National Outcome: Safe and Protected from Harm

- Families seeking asylum raised concerns about safeguarding risks in mixed accommodation where families with young children were sharing accommodation with young single men who were engaging in smoking and drinking in common areas.

National Outcome: Economic Security and Opportunity

- Families from the Traveller Community continue to face barriers to access training and employment for 16–24-year-old males. Their children have a poor secondary school experience characterized by low teacher expectations. They expressed a need to build social inclusion in and through schools and to build family-school relationships and employer connections for 16–24-year-olds at risk of leaving school early.

National Outcome: Connected, Respected and Contributing to their World

- Parents from the Traveller Community noted the discrimination faced by their children in post primary school and in seeking apprenticeship/employment opportunities locally in Leitrim. A number noted that their children need to move away to Dublin or the UK to gain experience and a reference that will later enable them to secure a basic grade job locally.
- Parents of children with mild/moderate disabilities, including ASD expressed a need for opportunities to be created (e.g., summer camps, after school) to enable their children socialise with peers who do not have severe disabilities.
- Parents of young people in rural villages across Sligo and in Leitrim expressed a strong need for universal provision of social activities and youth clubs for teenagers, particularly those not interested in sport.

3.3 Professional's priorities/ current issues for CYPSC for CYPP 2024-26

National Outcome: Active and Healthy, Physical and Mental Wellbeing

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** The need to access support is escalating among children, young people and their families. There is a rise in the number of children and young people presenting with more complex mental health issues and this includes anxiety, self-harm and eating disorders. Yet diminished capacity within mental health services is limiting access for families. Schools are increasingly challenged to support children with anxiety. Professionals have identified a need for increased play therapy support for younger children in primary schools.

Professionals across a range of youth services have expressed a need for training and support to build staff capacity to debrief and better manage and cope as children and young people present with more complex mental health issues including anxiety and self-harm.

In line with an increased awareness of the importance of early intervention and prevention approaches, professionals have identified a need to focus on Infant Mental Health to promote bonding, attachment and healthy emotional and social development among babies and toddlers.

- **Substance misuse:** The rise in vaping among children and young people continues to be an issue. Professionals have noted the ongoing prevalence and negative impact on children, young people and families of Alcohol and Drug addiction including Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. The rising use of cocaine is impacting family finances and families are reaching out to family support services for help with this issue.
- **Sexual Health and Wellbeing** Professionals are acutely aware that many young people struggle with recognising an unhealthy relationship and making healthy and safe choices. Professionals have identified an ongoing need for appropriate information and education for children and young people that addresses this gap and challenges messaging received through pornography.
- **Disability Services** Professionals identified very significant gaps in the provision of services and access to support for families. Children and young people face lengthy waiting lists for assessment without any interim support. Assessment is often unsatisfactory. There is a noted increase in requests for assessment and support for children and young people from New Communities.
- **Families:** Professionals have identified that COVID has had a significant impact on baby development and parents including mothers who experienced trauma giving birth during the pandemic. Promoting the role of fathers in parenting and child development has been identified as an area requiring development. Housing, including for young people leaving care, and homelessness continue to be significant issues faced by families. Professionals also noted the impact of the rising cost of living and food poverty. Access to GP services for Refugee families in Sligo Town has been identified as an issue.

National Outcome: Achieving full potential in Learning and Development

Identified needs from professional practice and service delivery in the following areas:

- Professionals across a range of services identified the need to support parents, guardians, and carers to support children and young people with anxiety, mental health, school avoidance and refusal at primary and post-primary school as well as transitioning to a new school.
- This support should focus on all areas of parenting including where education is not viewed as a priority by parents, where their own experience of school has been poor, and on building positive relationships between schools and parents. The involvement of the School Completion Programme and the Home Youth Liaison Service was identified as important to this work. Reviewing progress of the Sligo Leitrim Parenting Support Strategic Plan 2022-2026 and revising the Sligo Leitrim Directory of Services were also identified as key tasks.
- Professionals emphasized a need for the right support to help children and young people remain in school, manage anxiety and mitigate the longer-term impacts of COVID. This should include focusing on building resilience, confidence, and skills including employability skills of children and young people.
- Identified training needs for professionals included managing anxiety and supporting children and young people post COVID; developing partnerships between school, parents and children and young people, as well as building awareness of and the skills to manage the impact of Adverse Childhood experiences (ACES) and childhood trauma.
- Professionals identified that English language proficiency and skills pose a barrier for Refugee and asylum-seeking parents when accessing information and support.

National Outcome: Safe and Protected from Harm

Identified needs from professional practice and service delivery in the following areas:

- An effective interagency response to knife crime and concealed weapons is needed that considers the types of weapons, role of agencies and incorporates the work of the Gardai, Home Youth Liaison Service and Youth Action Project Sligo Leitrim.
- Professionals across a range of agencies have identified that children and young people report fear of assault from gangs who are now gathering in town centres. Anti-social behaviour and intimidation by young people is also creating fear among the older populations. Professionals highlight the need for messaging and the important role of schools and parents in messaging alongside agencies.

- Professionals report that children and young people continue to experience bullying outside school, including online, and that this is having a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Increased access to drugs is challenging for young people who require education and support on healthy choices.

National Outcome: Economic Security and Opportunity

Professionals across a range of agencies noted the need to

- Keep a focus on encouraging children and young people to attend and remain in school.
- Support the transition of 18 – 24-year-olds with Autism Spectrum Disorder into education, training and apprenticeships.
- Develop programmes that foster skills, set goals and motivate children and young people, asking ‘where do you intend to go’ in life.
- Provide training in the right format (short term, bitesize) to meet needs and address barriers to getting experience and recommendation for job/apprenticeship for socially excluded groups. This includes young people leaving care, young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder and young people from the Traveller Community. There is also a need to promote employability and connect young people with employers.

National Outcome: Connected, Respected and Contributing to their World

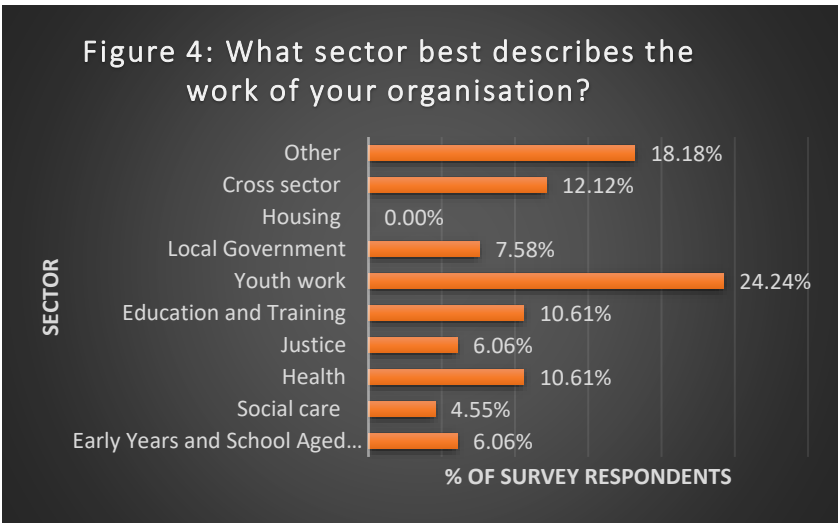
- Professionals across a range of agencies identified the need to address the ongoing issue of transport affordability and accessibility in rural counties. Access to transport is a very significant issue for children and young people living in County Leitrim.
- The ongoing participation of children and young people in local decision-making was also identified as important by professionals. This included promoting the Sligo Leitrim CYPSC Participation Toolkit and developing Comhairle na bPaisti.
- Professionals also identified the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion in view of the changing demographic locally and nationally.

3.4 CYPSC Members experience of interagency working through CYPSC and its Sub-groups and insights for CYPP 2024-26: results from online survey of CYPSC members

Organisations and membership of CYPSC and its Sub-groups

Survey responses representative of CYPSC member organisations across range of sectors and organisation types

As Figure 4 below shows, the members of CYPSC and its Sub-groups that responded to the survey were drawn from organisations across a range of sectors that includes youth work, education and training, health, justice, social care as well as Early Years and School Aged Childcare.



More of the respondents, 57.58%, represent a community and voluntary organisation while 34.85% represent a statutory organisation. Of these organisations, 53% are local to Sligo and Leitrim while 30.3% are national and 16.67% regional.

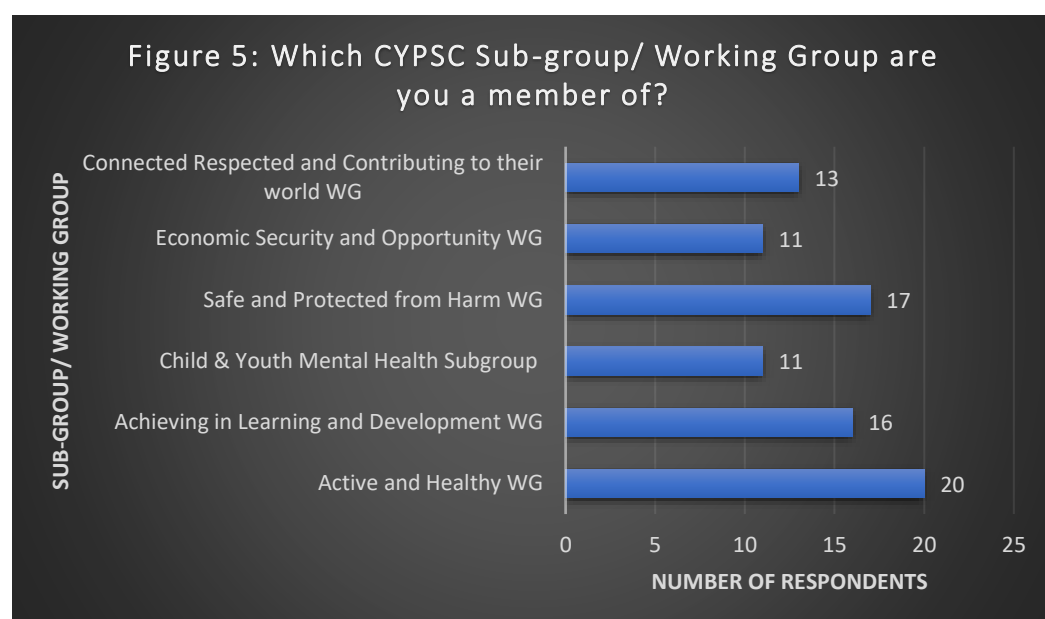
Majority of organisations and members are well established/experienced with CYPSC: do newer ones, who joined during COVID, require additional support to optimise engagement?

More than 2 in 3 (69.67%, 46) report that their organisation has been represented on the Sligo Leitrim CYPSC and its Sub-groups for at least four years. Yet 13.63%, 9 organisations joined within the last 3 years, some during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a similar vein, almost half of survey respondents, 48.48% (32), reported that they began attending CYPSC and its Sub-group meetings during that period. Moreover, one in five (19.69%,

13) have been a member for less than 1 year. In addition, 28.79% (19) reported being new to their organisation within the last 3 years, and 13.64% (9) have joined within the last year.

Analysis of the survey data confirms that respondents were drawn from across CYPSC and its five Sub-groups and the Child and Youth Mental Health Working Group. Nine respondents reported that they were a member of CYPSC but not of a Sub-group or Working group while more than three quarters, 77.27% reported that they were a member of a Sub-group or Working Group. The spread of respondents across the Sub-groups and Working Group is detailed in Figure 5 below.

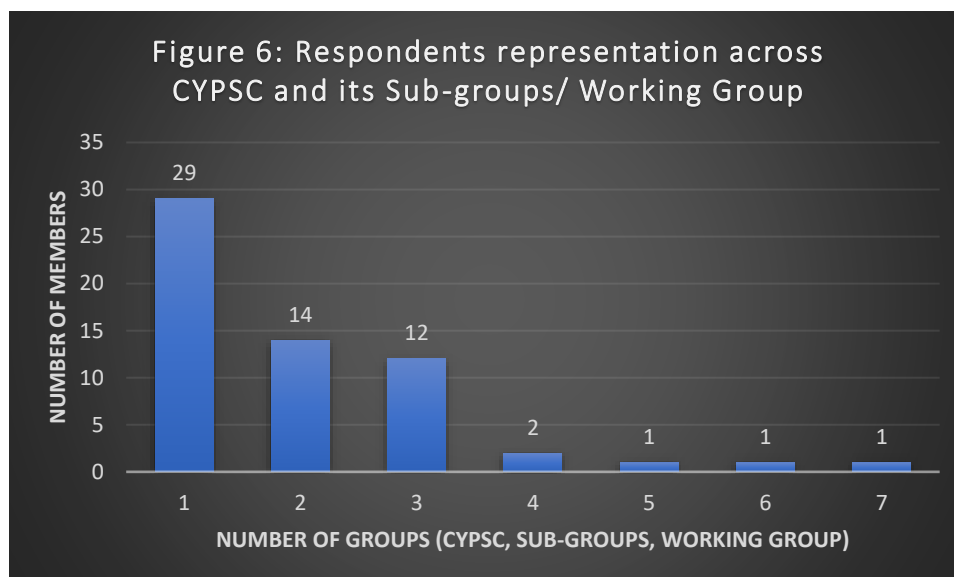


Spread of representation and work across members and organisations

It is important to note that 60² respondents confirmed they were a member of at least 1 group; either CYPSC, a Sub-group or a Working Group and overall, the total comprised 119 groups.

While most respondents were members of just one group, Figure 6 below highlights that many other respondents were members of two, three or more groups.

² Six responses to this question were removed during data cleaning. These were not included in the data analysed and reported for this question.



While the Chair of each of the five Sub-groups are also members of CYPSC, the data suggests some other respondents may be significantly involved across a several groups and with this, the associated meetings, and tasks.

Further analysis of the data from respondents who confirmed their membership of three or more groups shows that these respondents are more likely to have identified their sector as either youth work (41.17%), cross sector (23.52%) or Early Years and School Aged Childcare (17.64%), and most represent community and voluntary organisations (82.35%). More than half of these respondents (52.94%) represent organisations that are local to Sligo and Leitrim while the remainder represent national (23.53%) or regional (23.53%) organisations.

Engagement with CYPSC and Its Sub-groups

Improved rating of CYPSC approach to meetings, events and communication, appetite exists for further communication outside of meetings.

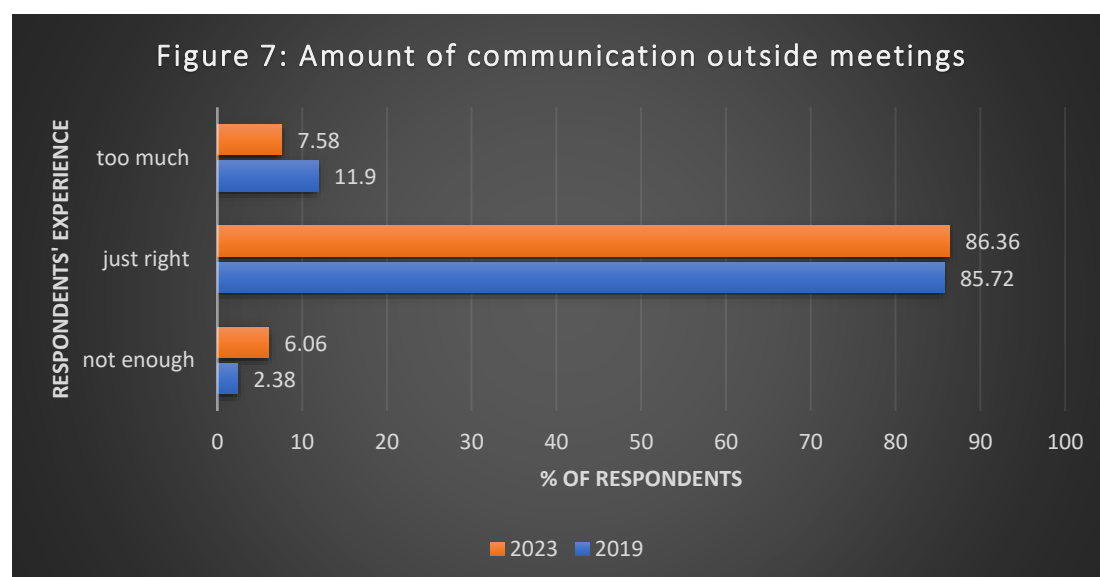
The data presented in Table 1 and Figure 7 below confirms that the vast majority, more than 86% of survey respondents described the frequency and duration of meetings, the frequency of events and the amount of communication outside of meetings as ‘just right’.

As the same question and response format was also used in the 2019 survey, direct comparison of the data across timepoints indicates that more respondents selected this ‘just right’ rating in 2023 than in 2019, suggesting improvement. This is also suggested by the fact that fewer respondents described the frequency and duration of meetings and the amount of communication outside of meetings as either ‘too much’ or ‘not enough’ in 2023 when compared to 2019.

Table 1: Respondents rating of CYPSC approach to meetings, events and communication³

Respondents rating of CYPSC meetings, events and communication	Too much (% change from 2019 survey)	Just right (% change from 2019 survey)	Not enough (% change from 2019 survey)
Frequency of meetings	7.57% (-6.71%)	92.42% (+11.03%)	0% (-2.33%)
Duration of meetings	13.64% (-19.69%)	86.36% (+19.69%)	0 % (0 change)
Frequency of events	7.58% (+2.45%)	92.42% (+10.37%)	0% (-12.82%)
Amount of communication outside of meetings	7.58% (-4.32%)	86.36% (+0.64%)	6.06% (+3.68%)

The data also identifies the frequency of events and the amount of communication outside of meetings as areas where further improvement can be made. Fuller detail on the level and nature of change in reported ratings is presented in Table 1 above. Figure 7 below also highlights that some respondents have an appetite for and request more communication outside of meetings.

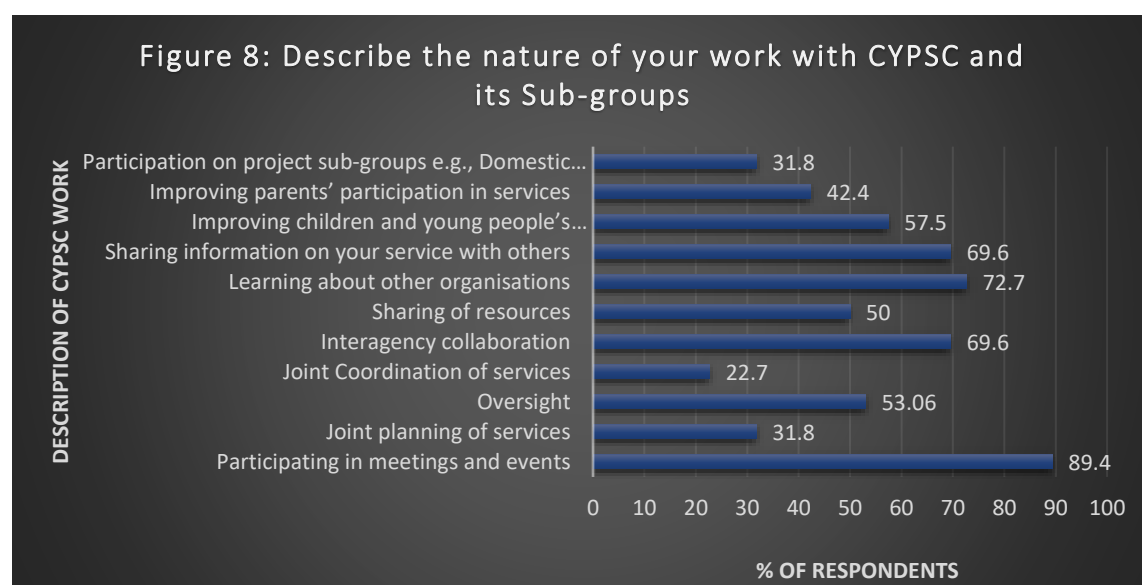


More engagement with attending meetings, events and sharing information, less engagement with joint planning, sharing resources.

³ In interpreting the % change from 2019 survey reported in Table 1 – Green text suggests positive change/improvement. Red text suggests negative change/room for improvement.

The majority of respondents included the following activities when describing the nature of their work with CYPSC and its Sub-groups: participating in meetings and events (89.4%), learning about other organisations (72.7%), sharing information on your service with others and interagency collaboration (69.6%). In a similar trend, these activities were also identified by the majority of CYPSC and Sub-group members who completed a survey in 2019 to inform the development of the Children and Young People’s Plan 2020-22⁴.

It is important to note that fewer respondents identified sharing of resources (50%), improving parents’ participation in services (42.4%), joint planning (31.8%) and joint co-ordination of services (22.7%) as activities they felt were core to the nature of their work with CYPSC and its Sub-groups. While this trend is evident in the 2019 survey results, the actual percentages reported in 2023 are lower than the pre-Covid survey. This may reflect the impact of COVID and the fact a number of organisations and members have joined CYPSC during COVID or more recently.



Furthermore, the survey also delved into how respondents engage in a practical/concrete way in interagency working through membership of CYPSC and its Sub-groups. As illustrated in Figure 9 below, the majority, 93.94% of respondents reported that they circulated CYPSC resources for use in their organisation either always or sometimes, over the last year. Similarly, 89.39%

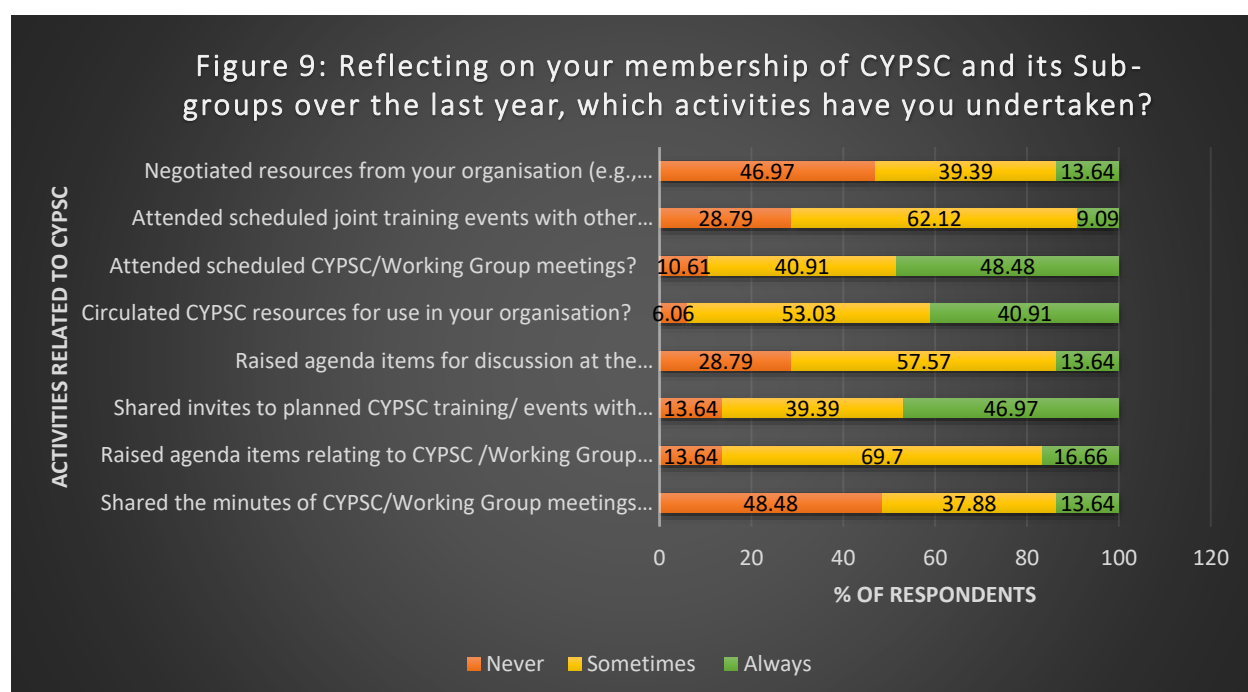
⁴ In 2019, respondents were requested to rate their work in each area on a scale ranging from 'a great deal' through 'a lot', 'a moderate amount', 'a little' to 'not at all' whereas in 2023 a decision was made to use a simpler response format of tick all activities that are relevant to your work with CYPSC and its Sub-groups. While direct comparison of data across the 2 timepoints is not feasible, a high-level comparison is useful in pointing to an overall trend. This is further explored in additional questions included in the 2023 survey.

reported that they attended scheduled CYPSC/Sub-group meetings and 86.36% reported that they shared invites to planned CYPSC training/ events with colleagues in their organisation.

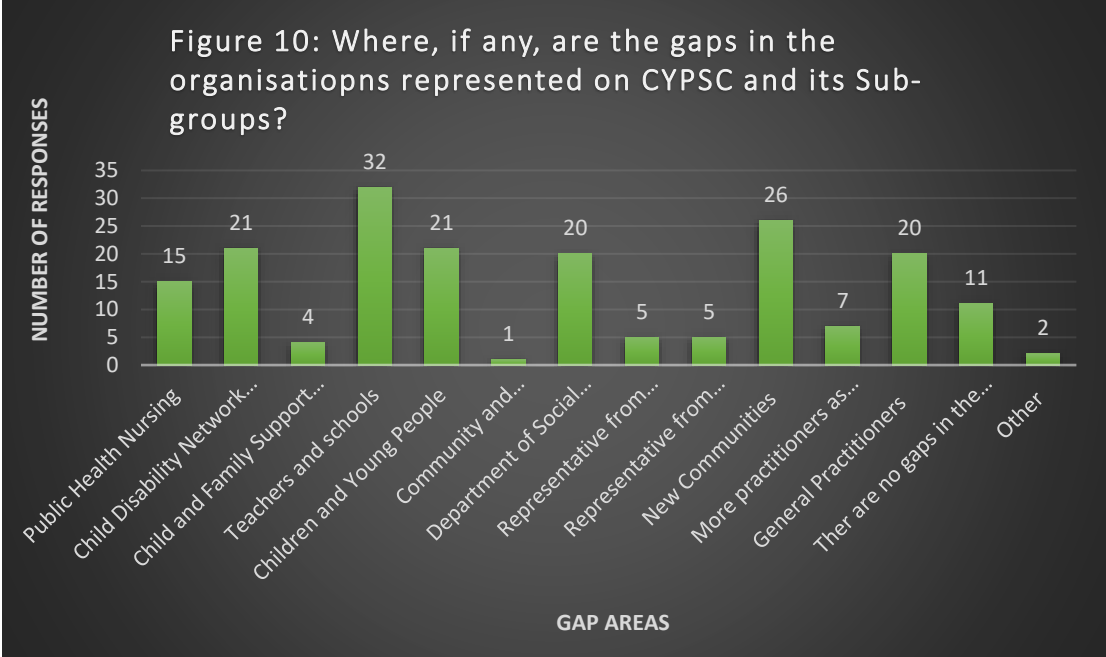
Promote members' adoption of practical activities that promote and enable interagency working.

However, it is important to note that almost half, 48.48%, of the respondents reported that they had never shared the minutes of CYPSC/Sub-group meetings with their manager or team/department. Just 13.64% reported that they had always shared these minutes in their organisation in the last year. The data confirms a similar trend with a minority of respondents reporting that they had always raised agenda items for discussion at the CYPSC/Sub-group meetings or items relating to CYPSC /Sub-group activities for discussion at meetings in their organisation. These activities are important mechanisms that facilitate and promote interagency working.

A deeper delve into the data highlights that the respondents who reported 'never' having undertaken these activities in the last year represented organisations from a number of different sectors (range 8-10) and included statutory as well as community and voluntary organisations, that reported being local to Sligo and Leitrim or regional and national organisations.



The majority of respondents identified gaps in the organisations represented on CYPSC and its Sub-groups. While Figure 6⁵ below provides full detail, the top 4 gaps identified by respondents are ‘teachers and schools’ (33), ‘new communities’ (27), ‘children and young people’ and ‘child disability network teams’ (21).



A deeper delve into the data highlights that each of these 4 gaps have been identified by respondents across a range of 7-10 different sectors and by respondents across CYPSC and all 5 of its Sub-groups and the Child and Youth Mental Health Working Group. The ‘teachers and schools’ gap was most frequently identified by respondents who identify their sector as ‘Youth Work’.

Thoughts and perceptions of interagency working through Sligo Leitrim CYPSC and its Sub-groups

Figure 11 below presents respondent data from the Interagency Collaboration Activities Scale (Greenbaum and Dedrick⁶, 2011), a standardised scale that has been developed and used internationally to measure interagency working. In this 2023 survey, the 10 questions most relevant to CYPSC’s operating context have been selected and used as a baseline measure that can be re-used to measure change/ progress when developing future Children and Young People’s Plans.

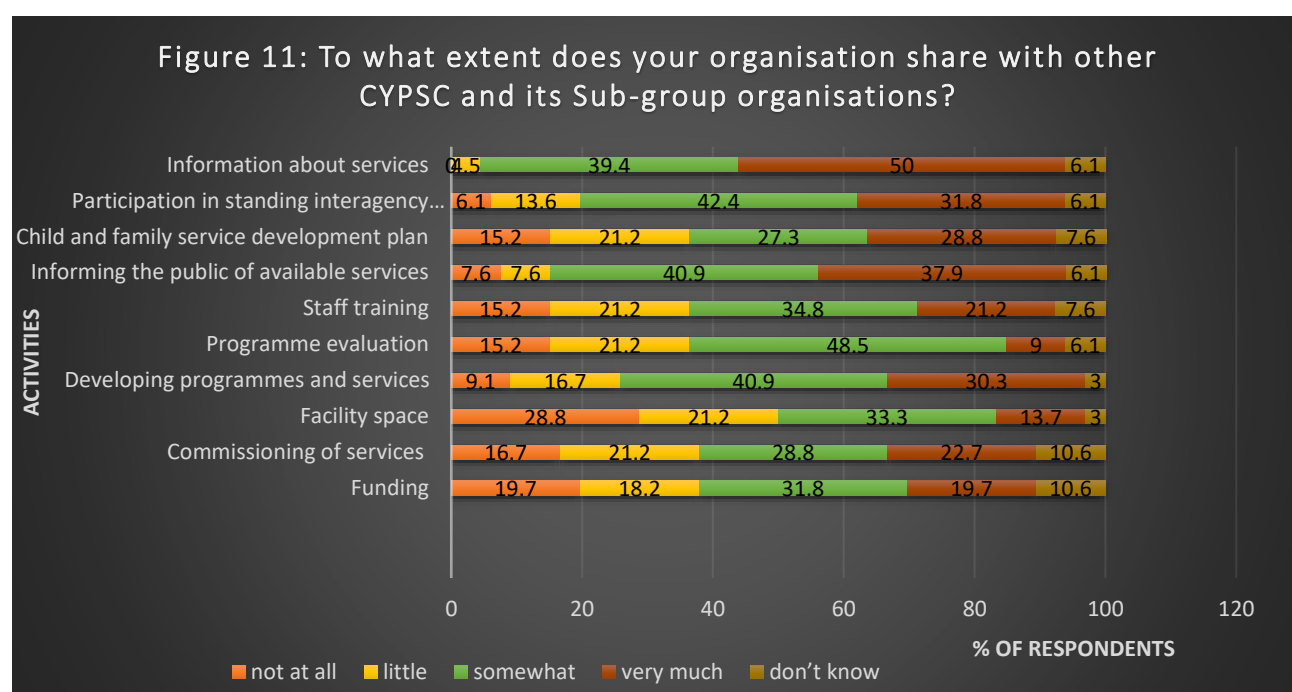
⁵ Responses under Other: HSE senior management, Community Healthcare Network Managers for Sligo and Leitrim (new posts), CAMHS and therapy, addiction and domestic violence organisations.

⁶ Interagency Collaboration Activities Scale (IACAS) Dedrick, R.F. and Greenbaum, P.E. (2011) Multilevel Confirmatory Factor Analysis of a Scale Measuring Interagency Collaboration of Children’s Mental Health Agencies, J Emot Behav Disord. 9(1): 27–40.doi: [10.1177/1063426610365879](https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426610365879)

Analysis of the data highlights that overall, there is evidence of established good practice in interagency working in Sligo Leitrim CYPSC and its Sub-groups. The data also identifies areas for further learning and improvement as CYPSC progresses on its journey of interagency working.

The data shows that many respondents perceive organisations who are members of CYPSC and its Sub-groups are ‘very much’ engaged in working together to share the following:

- Information about services (50%),
- Informing the public of available services (37.9%),
- Participation in standing interagency Committees (31.8%),
- Developing programmes and services (30.3%)
- Child and family service development plan (28.8%)



Many other respondents rated the sharing as ‘somewhat’ in these and other areas including ‘Programme evaluation’ (48.5%), ‘Staff training’ (34.4), ‘Facility space’ (33.3%) and ‘Funding’ (31.8%).

Respondents identified a range of benefits to them and their organisation arising from their membership of CYPSC and its Sub-groups. As detailed in Figure 12, the top 3, identified most frequently by survey respondents were:

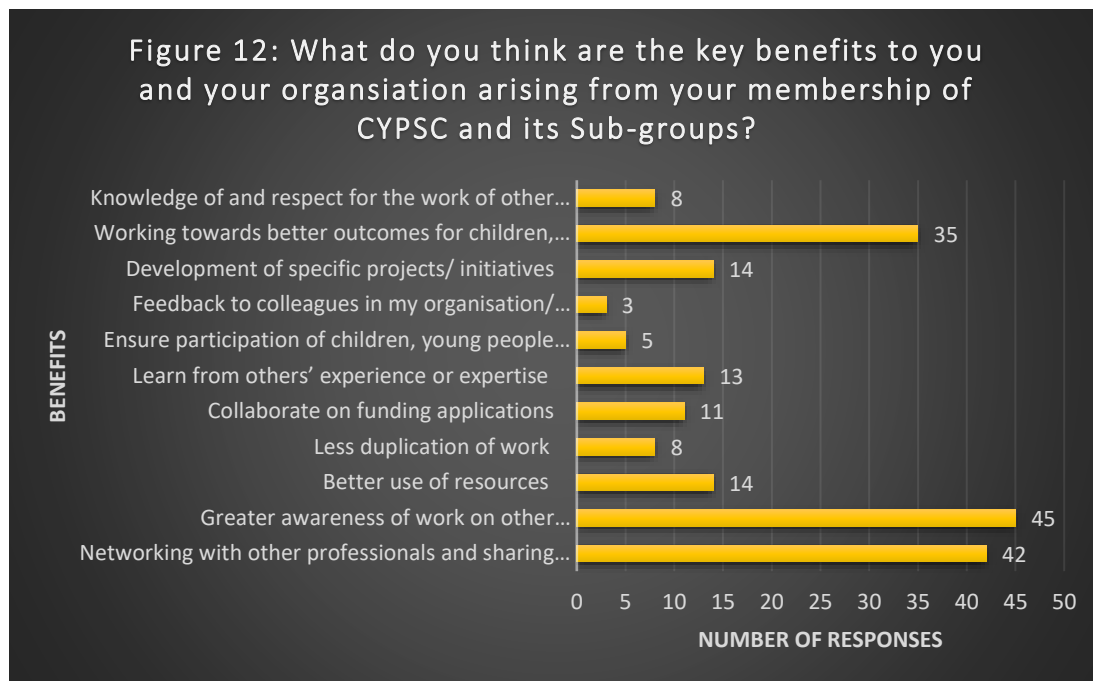
- Greater awareness of work on other organisations and sectors, as well as local issues and gaps in provision.
- Networking with other professionals and sharing information on services.

- Working towards better outcomes for children, young people and families.

Benefits identified least by respondents included:

- Feedback to colleagues in my organisation/ network on CYPSC work.
- Ensure participation of children, young people and parents.
- Knowledge of and respect for the work of other organisations.

While a similar question was included in the 2019 survey, an open response format was used and qualitative data was gathered. This 2023 survey used a tick box format and presented all the key benefits raised in the 2019 data. While direct comparison is not possible, the key benefits to membership of CYPSC and its Sub-groups perceived by respondents remain similar across the time periods.



The key challenges associated with membership of CYPSC, and its Sub-groups reported in the 2019 survey data as qualitative data were also presented in this 2023 survey, using a tick box format. Figure 13 below quantifies the key challenges perceived by respondents. The top 3 identified most frequently by survey respondents were:

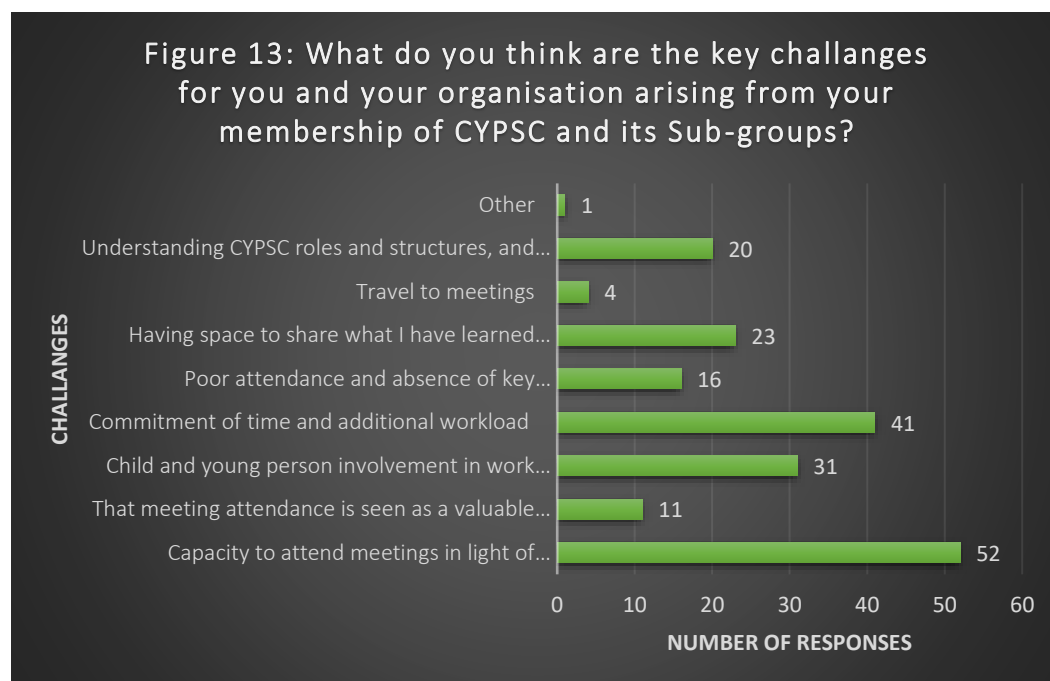
- Capacity to attend meetings in light of workload commitments and staff shortages.
- Commitment of time and additional workload.
- Child and young person involvement in work and decision-making.

Challenges identified least frequently by respondents include:

- Travel to meetings.

- That meeting attendance is seen as a valuable part of my role.
- Poor attendance and absence of key organisations.

High level comparison of the data across the two timepoints confirms that the key challenges have not changed significantly since 2019, with the exception of travel to meetings. This will have been impacted by the fact a hybrid meeting model was adopted by CYPSC following COVID.



As Figure 13 above shows, the following challenge ‘Having space to share what I have learned from attendance’ also relates to capacity and while not listed in the top 3 was selected by one third, 22 respondents and warrants consideration.

Similarly, ‘Understanding CYPSC roles and structures, and CYPSC interface with other organisations and networks e.g., CFSN’ was selected by 20 respondents as one of the key challenges they perceived. Further analysis of this data confirms that the respondents who selected this challenge were drawn from CYPSC and all 5 of its Sub-groups and the Child and Youth Mental Health Working Group. They belonged to organisations drawn from different sectors (9) and included statutory and community and voluntary organisations. It is interesting that 3 in 4 of these respondents represented organisations that are local to Sligo and Leitrim.

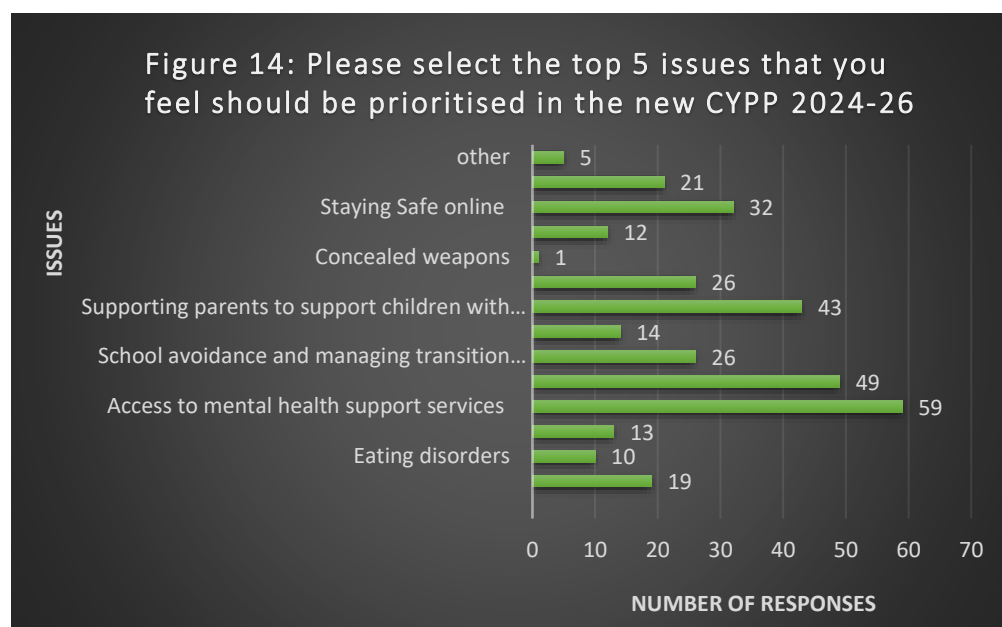
Insights and learning for developing the Children and Young People’s Plan 2024-26

Supporting children and young people’s mental health was identified more frequently by respondents as an issue to be prioritised in the new Children and Young People’s Plan. The

following were identified as the top 3 issues based on how frequently they were selected by respondents:

- Access to mental health support services.
- Anxiety experienced by children and young people.
- Supporting parents to support children with anxiety and mental health, school avoidance.

All 3 of these issues were selected by at least two thirds of respondents, and 'Access to mental health support services' was selected by 89.93% of respondents. Fuller detail is presented in Figure 14 below.



'Staying Safe online' was selected by 32, almost half of respondents (48.48%). 'School avoidance and managing transition from education' and 'After school anti-social behaviour and intimidation by young people' were each selected by 26 respondents and are within the Top 5 issues to be prioritised. Outside of this, 'Support for New Communities' and 'Access to disability services' were also identified as important issues by respondents.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 How the consultation findings were used to inform the CYPP 2024-26

The findings from this consultation process have been incorporated into a local assessment of need with an audit of service provision and a socio-demographic profile of Sligo Leitrim CYPSC area.

Following a PESTLE of the opportunities and challenges within the wider environment and a SWOT analysis of CYPSC strengths and weaknesses to manage the opportunities and threats, members of CYPSC and its Sub-groups/Working Group voted on their priorities for CYPP 2024-26. Activities have been designed along with objectives, targets and indicators of success, and these have been included in the draft CYPP 2024-26.