



## **REPORT**

**Safeguarding of Children & Young People Consultation Event for Services**

**March 2017**

# Safeguarding Children & Young People: our collective responsibility

Sligo Leitrim Children & Young People's Services Committee

*Summary Notes from the Workshop for statutory and non-statutory agencies & initiatives, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2017*

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## **1. Introduction and description**

The purpose of the workshop was to identify priority areas for Child and Youth safety for Sligo and Leitrim and to scope out together how these priorities can be addressed. It was initiated by the Safeguarding Children & Young People CYPSC Working Group. Claire Gavigan, chairperson of the group opened the meeting, welcomed participants and explained national and local context for the meeting. She noted the dedicated work of Maeve (Co-ordinator) and her committee members in organising the workshop. The working group provided information (on posters) to clarify the services and supports already in place for safeguarding children and young people. Participants added their comments to these posters.

Over 80 people attended the workshop, representing more than 30 statutory, voluntary and community agencies (see appendix 1)

Short opening remarks were made by three agencies with a particular focus on Children's and Young People's Safety:

- Chief Superintendent Michael Clancy, Sligo Leitrim Gardai
- Miriam Connaughton, Social Work Team Leader, Tusla Child and Family Agency
- Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Leitrim Co Council

The independent facilitator explained the process for the meeting and people divided into a number of break-out groups focussed on 3 areas:

- Safety in our Communities
- Safety in early years, schools and education environments
- Safety at home

The breakout groups were facilitated by volunteer facilitators, guidance was provided and therefore a consistent approach was taken across the groups.

The breakout groups noted services/supports already in place/working well (appendix 3), priority needs and gaps and solutions.

Each breakout group fed back the priorities from their group to the main workshop for discussion. The facilitator checked in to ensure that there was broad agreement on these priorities. This report is taken from the notes from the breakout groups and the independent facilitator's interpretation of the discussion and agreements at the plenary session of the workshop.

Clare Gavigan closed the workshop explaining that the CYPSC was hosting some focus groups with specific target groups and that the material from the workshop (& focus groups) would form the basis of the CYPSC (Safeguarding Children & Young People Working Group) priorities and plans over the next 3 years.

## **2. Summary of the workshop**

Although a wide range of issues were identified throughout the groups (see appendix 3 for listing of issues by topic) there was also a level of commonality in relation to the priority issues. These were reiterated at the open discussion session at the end of the workshop.

### **Priority 1: Lack of Mental Health Services in Sligo/Leitrim**

This issue mainly relates to CAMHS, however other services e.g. psychology and counselling were also raised. The lack of mental health services was highlighted in the majority of the breakout groups. The issues raised included the following, however a full list is in appendix 3.

- Lack of a CAMHS service along with counselling, play therapy, family therapy and Mental Health services generally in the area
- Referrals are being made but no service available
- CAMHS is no longer in a position to take new referrals and has issued a letter to services instructing them to refer young people to A&E Departments
- Other services said they were trying to deal with children and young people in crisis due to the lack of a MH service
- Services said that along with no access to CAMHS, they can't get advice from CAMHS on how to manage children who would in other circumstances be in the CAMHS service

Many of the issues raised at the workshop could not be answered formally as HSE Mental Health were not present. Therefore it would be useful for the CYPSC to clarify the queries and issues which included:

- Is the waiting list formally closed?
- Is the policy to refer children to A&E?
- How many children are now in the CAMHS service?
- How many and what staff are in place?
- What are the current thresholds (if they are outside the national protocols (SOP) why is this the case)?
- When will a Consultant Psychiatrist be available and what alternative arrangements are in place for children and young people?

CYPSC was also asked to clarify the position with the 2015 proposal for a Youth Mental Health Initiative and when funding would be available. Many participants supported this proposal but the status of the proposal was not formally available to the workshop. Participants also wanted the CYPSC to relay the views of the workshop to those responsible at regional and national level. Participants suggested that a national, not local response was required. They further recommended a HIQA review of the Mental Health Service in Sligo/Leitrim.

## **Priority 2: Lack of services, limited resources to expand and access to services**

The discussion on mental health services led to a broader discussion on the lack of services more generally and access to services (particularly in rural areas). Lack of social workers, staff dedicated to autism, youth services, Gardai on the ground, parent/toddler groups, pre-school places, aftercare services and consistent coping skills programmes taught in schools were given as examples. Many felt that (a) services needed to go out to people who needed them, (this is particularly the case for rural areas) and (b) transport and other issues are impacting on access to services. Some workshops participants identified successful services that should be rolled out more generally e.g. AIMS Programme, Mindful of Health. Some key points follow and a full listing from the workshop is in appendix 3

- The Aim's Model (Access Inclusion Model) operating in pre-schools needs to be extended to afterschool services; it provides support for children with additional care needs.
- *Mindful of Health* is a youth doctor service based in the Foroige Crib, Sligo where young people can access a GP and Counselling Support within a youth setting
- Provide supports for children and young people with additional needs, particularly in afterschool
- Need for additional pre-school places (2nd years/ECCE) and a support infrastructure for same
- Need more low-cost activities for teens

## **Priority 3: Knowledge about services, sharing information and interagency working**

Participants acknowledged the value of the *Sligo Leitrim Directory of Services* (<http://www.sligoleitrimdirectory.ie>). The views expressed however indicate that there is still insufficient knowledge relating to services. (a) Services are not aware of the services provided by other agencies. (b) There are information and signposting gaps. (c) Target groups need information in forms that suit them. Improvements to the website were suggested, including interactive site, different languages. People were encouraged to use the site. (See appendix 3 for full listing)

Many participants also prioritised **thresholds for services** indicating that the threshold for Social Work, Mental Health Services, and Education Welfare Officers for example did not make sense to staff in other agencies. It was not always clear why some children and young people did not meet the threshold. It was generally too high and the impact was that children and young people were not getting services on time or when needed. There are insufficient services for young people not reaching the threshold and insufficient early intervention services i.e. waiting for crisis instead of providing an early intervention.

The workshop also identified **cyberbullying** as a key issue for young people. The workshop identified **training needs** for parents and workers and this included dealing with Cyberbullying. The need for more **community Gardai** and a sexual response unit were identified. A full list of issues can be found in Appendix 3

The workshop participants were very positive about the role of the CYPSC in hosting the workshop, bringing agencies together to discuss issues and ensuring follow-up from on the priorities identified during the morning. Equally the CYPSC asked agencies to engage with the CYPSC working groups to ensure collaborative working on safeguarding children and young people in Sligo and Leitrim.

Note: detailed verbatim notes from each of the break-out groups were provided to the CYPSC.

### **APPENDIX 1: Agencies Represented at the Safeguarding Children and Young People Workshop**

- Tusla: Social Work Department, Workforce and Development
- HSE: Disability Services, PHN, Early Intervention Service, Children's Health officer, Youth Addiction Worker
- Sligo Leitrim Gardai
- Sligo Co Council
- Leitrim Co Council
- Social Housing Agencies: Cluid, Simon, Focus
- Sligo County Childcare Committee
- Leitrim County Childcare Committee
- Early years Services: Sligo and Leitrim
- Sligo IT
- The GAA, Sligo Co Board
- Probation Service
- Sligo Family Resource Centre
- MABS Sligo
- YAPS, Garda Diversion Project
- Comhairle Sligo
- Leitrim Sports Partnership
- Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim ETB
- Foroige
- North Connaught Youth and Community Services
- The Avalon Centre
- Home Youth Liaison Service
- Northside Community Partnership, Sligo
- Sligo IT students, Early Years and Social Care
- Lifestart
- St Michael's Family Life Centre, Sligo
- Springboard Resource House Project
- North West Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force
- Sligo Social Service Council
- Domestic Violence Advocacy Service

