Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Spending Review 2019

Tusla: Assessment of Performance Measurement

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to conduct a high level analysis of the performance metrics and data which Tusla collects in order to assess at a high level whether the performance information currently collected is relevant and appropriate in terms of conducting an evaluation of the services provided by Tusla. Tusla is the dedicated State Agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children through the delivery of services such as Child Protection and Welfare, Alternative Care and Family Support Services.

Expenditure

Tusla's budgetary allocation for 2019 is €785 million, with pay and pensions accounting for 40% of total expenditure. Since 2014, expenditure has been increasing by approximately 5% annually.

Staffing

Tusla employs approximately 3,955 WTEs[1], with an additional 642 external agency staff. There has been an increasing dependence on external agency staff since 2017 due to challenges with the recruitment and retention, primarily in relation to the Social Care and Social Work roles. Of these external agency staff, approximately two thirds are in social work and social care roles, with one third are in administrative roles.

Availability of Data

The objective of this paper is to establish if the data collected by Tusla would allow for an evaluation of the services provided in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, in the future. The key findings are:

Efficiency

- At present, there is insufficient data collected on the number of staff and the level of expenditure at the service programme level for years 2014 to 2018 to allow for an evaluation of the efficiency of the service provided by Tusla. This is due to the legacy data system used which Tusla is in the process of upgrading as well as issues surrounding Work Force Planning which Tusla have made efforts to address in recent years. Tusla has indicated that the new data system will improve the input data capture, concerns remain in relation to its capacity to capture detailed information in terms of resource allocation to external service providers used by Tusla.

Effectiveness

- Data is captured on the processes involved in delivering services, including data on referrals to Tusla, cases that have been allocated to a Social Worker, etc. However, there are significant data gaps including information on outputs such as interactions between the social worker and child, and other aspects of the case management. It is important that the new system expands on the current data capture to include all outputs.

1. Introduction

This Spending Review of Tusla is the first such review of the Agency by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) since Tusla's inception in 2014. Tusla is the dedicated State Agency under the aegis of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) responsible for improving the wellbeing and outcomes for children. Tusla represents approximately 52% of expenditure within the CYA Vote with a budgetary allocation of €785 million in 2019. Tusla employs 3,955 whole time equivalents (WTEs)[2].

The purpose of this paper is to conduct a high level analysis of the performance metrics and data which Tusla collects in order to assess at a high level whether the performance information currently collected is relevant and appropriate in terms of conducting an evaluation of the efficiency and the effectiveness of the services provided by Tusla. Reviewing the performance information collected by Tusla is an important first step that will facilitate future reviews of Tusla and the services which the agency offers. The availability of comprehensive data is critical to performing an evaluation, therefore this review will allow us to understand whether the data being collected is sufficient and identify any potential data gaps. Data availability will be assessed from the point of view of programme and service evaluation. It is useful to note the other initiatives which Tusla has indicated it is currently developing including an integrated service performance and improvement system that Tusla have stated will enable Agency to measure and report service performance and improvement, the development of an outcomes framework and a Child Protection and Welfare strategy which is at the implementation stage.

In order to evaluate the performance metrics used by Tusla the Programme Logic Model (PLM) approach will be used as a structure for this analysis. The PLM maps out the logical linkages of a programme and provides a systematic and visual way to present and share understanding of the cause- effect relationships between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. The PLM will be used in this paper to allow us to systematically consider firstly the level of resourcing and activities in Tusla and consider the resulting outputs.

While it would be beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate the outcomes and impacts associated with Tusla this paper will consider whether the data collected by Tusla are relevant and appropriate in terms of the assessment of performance of Tusla from the point of view of efficiency and effectiveness. The complexity of the services provided by Tusla presents challenges to the PLM approach, however as an evaluation framework it is a useful way in which to structure this analysis to identify what data is available or where data gaps exist.

[1] Census reported WTE, March 2019
[2] Census reported WTE, March 2019

Figure 1. Programme Logic Model

This paper is being prepared as part of the Spending Review 2019[3]. The purpose of the Spending Review is to improve how public expenditure is allocated across all areas of Government. This paper seeks to contribute to the objectives of the Spending Review by contributing to the large stock of relevant analysis and evaluation across all Departments and facilitating future evaluations in this area.

Section 2 of this paper sets out the rationale and policy context in which Tusla operates and provides an overview of its strategic objectives as well as an overview of some of the services which Tusla provides which will be of relevance to this review. Section 3 looks at expenditure and staffing in Tusla, the final section will look at the data collected for the various services provided by Tusla and discuss whether the data currently captured is relevant in terms of carrying out an evaluation of these services.

2. Context and Rationale

This section sets out the policy context in which Tusla operates, and provides an overview of the governance structures and the various accountability and performance functions in place. It also includes details of Tusla's strategic objectives as well as some detail of the services which Tusla provides which are of relevance to this analysis.

The establishment of Tusla, on 1 January 2014, as an agency under the aegis of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), was a key element in the Programme for Government (2011). The objective was to strengthen children's services, along with associated constitutional and legislative reform. Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, was established under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 to align key services into a single, comprehensive, integrated and accountable service delivery system. Tusla assumed responsibility for matters in relation to child and family services previously administered by the HSE, the former Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board. Amongst Tusla's statutory functions are to support and promote the development, welfare and protection of children, and the effective functioning of families[4].

National Policy Framework

Tusla's functions are consistent with 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020'. This Strategy sets out the Government's agenda and priorities for

[3] Spending Review 2019

[4] Tusla has other statutory functions arising from the Child Care Act, 1991, the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, the Children First Act, 2015, the Adoption (Amendment) Act, 2017, the Adoption Information and Tracing Bill, 2016, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

children and young people. It highlights the importance of transforming policies and services through stronger coordination, collaboration and implementation across Government, to achieve the best outcomes for children, young people and families.

Strategic Objectives

Tusla's services are delivered in the context of Tusla's strategic objectives, as outlined in the Agency's Corporate Strategy 2018-2020, which builds on the Department of Children and Youth Affairs' Performance Framework 2018–2020 and the Department's Statement of Strategy, which in turn outlines both the principles and priorities on which Tusla is required to focus. The strategic objectives are aligned to identified priorities, ensuring that all aspects of the Performance Framework are captured. The strategic objectives for 2018 -2020 are set out in table 1. Within each of these strategic objectives various actions have been assigned with corresponding KPIs which are reported on in the annual Business Plans.

Table 1 Tusla's Strategic Objectives

1. Integrated Supports and Services
To implement integrated Agency- wide approaches to all Tulsa supports and services, with clear responsive pathways to achieve better outcomes.
2. Regulatory Functions
To regulate services consistently and proportionately using Quality and Regulatory Frameworks to ensure compliance and drive improvement and services for children.
3. Quality, Evidence-Informed and Measurable Services
To ensure Tusla provided and commissioned services are safe, well-led, evidence-informed, outcomes focused and measurable.
4. Relationships, Collaboration and Communication
To develop collaborative relationships, participative practices and effective communications with all key stakeholders to provide a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of services.
5. Policy and Legislation
To support and inform government policy and legislation through the development and coordination of Tusla policies, strategies, programmes and frameworks.
6. Corporate Services
To ensure Corporate Services (estates, finance, governance, HR, ICT, legal) are effective in supporting the delivery of Tusla services.
7. People, Culture and Learning
To empower our people by continuing to grow and develop a values-based culture and learning organization.

Services

The transfer of child protection and welfare services including children in care from the HSE is the single biggest component of Tusla's services. Tusla's focus also includes education and community components. In particular, the National Educational Welfare Service transferred from the Department of Education and Skills to DCYA in 2011 and subsequently to Tusla in 2014; similarly with the Family Support Agency, originally in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. In addition, Tusla was given statutory responsibility

for the provision of services and supports to victims of domestic and sexual violence whether in the context of family or otherwise. As such, Tusla's services include the following;

- Child Protection and Welfare services, including family support services
- Family Resource Centres and associated national programmes
- Children Services Regulation
- Educational Welfare responsibilities including School Completion Programme and Home School Community Liaison
- Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence services
- Alternative Care and Adoption

Governance

Tusla is governed by a Board which oversees the development of corporate strategy, risk policy, annual budgets and business plans. The Chair of the Board reports to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on measures taken to achieve determined priorities and performance targets. The Chief Executive is responsible to the Board for the performance of Tusla's functions.

Accountability and Performance Functions

The accountability and performance functions set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 are summarised in figure 2 below and published on the Agency's website. These documents set out the strategic objectives and corresponding KPIs, they also set out financial allocations for the Agency and performance data relating to the Agency's functions. The data captured is at a high level and relates to the crosscutting overall organisation objectives as set out in Tusla's Corporate Plan. The actions associated with these strategic objectives are set out in the annual business plan which also includes the associated KPIs. Tusla also published data on its website which relates to the services it provides on a monthly and quarterly basis. In addition to the documents outlined Tusla is required[5] to prepare an annual report on the adequacy of child care and family support services available and submit this to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs as well as other stakeholders. The determination of the adequacy presented in the report is based on performance and activity data which is routinely collated and published by Tusla as well as findings from inspection and investigation reports published by HIQA, the National Review Panel, the Ombudsman for Children and Ombudsman along with other internal and external reports and reviews.

[5] Required by Section 8 of the Child Care Act 1991 (as amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013)

Figure 2. Overview of Tusla's Accountability and Performance Functions

3. Expenditure and Staffing

The purpose of this section is to analyse the level of expenditure and staffing within Tusla. The section firstly provides a trend analysis of the level of expenditure within Tusla as well as the composition of expenditure. Following on from this, this section looks at the number of staff in Tusla by the category of staff, the service area in which they work and the number of agency staff used by Tusla.

3.1 Expenditure

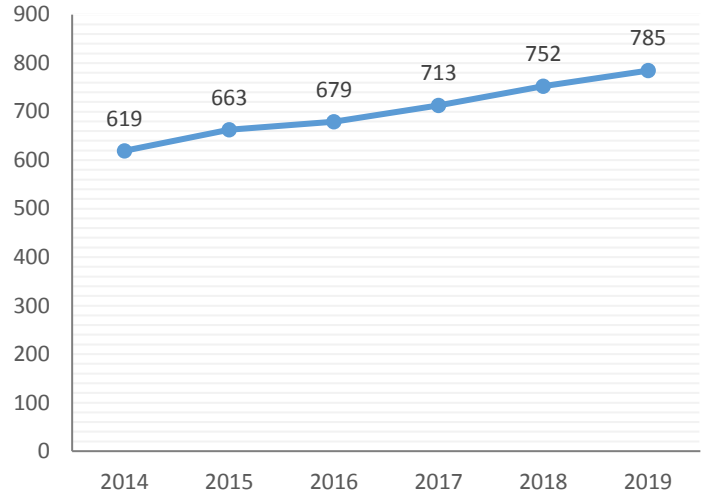
Tusla's budgetary allocation for 2019 is €785 million. The Agency's expenditure has increased by approximately 5% each year since 2014, increasing by a total of approximately 27% between 2014 and 2019. Tusla expenditure accounts for approximately 52% of the Children and Youth Affairs Vote. The share of the CYA Vote that Tusla accounts for has fallen over time from over 60% in 2014, this is primarily due to the increasing level of expenditure on childcare provision.

In 2018 pay and pensions was the largest area of Tusla's expenditure, representing almost 40% (€293 million) of the Agency's expenditure, as can be seen in figure 4 below. The next largest section of expenditure was grants to external bodies which accounts for 20% (€150 million) of Tusla's total expenditure. Foster Care and Other Allowances represent 15% of expenditure (€121 million) followed by Private Residential and Foster Care which represents 13% of expenditure (€100 million)[6]. The composition of Tusla expenditure has remained relatively constant over time.

[6] Source of figures: Revised Estimates of Public Expenditure

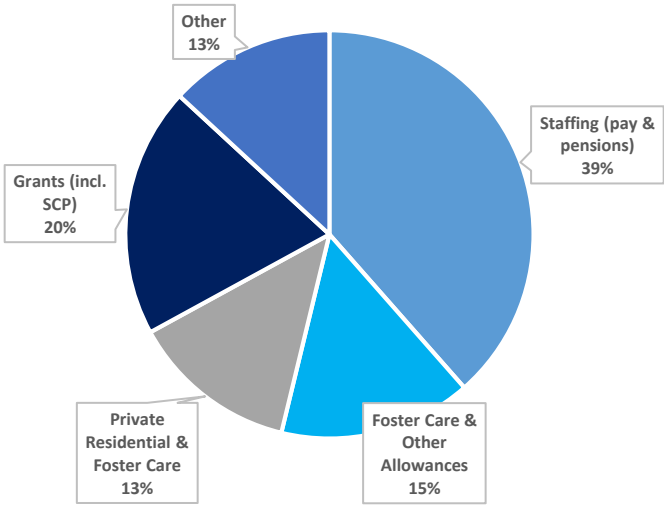
Expenditure in Tusla increased each year since its inception. Staffing is the largest area of expenditure within Tusla

Figure 3 Total Expenditure (€ millions), 2014- 2019



Source: DPER. 2018 is provisional outturn. 2019 is allocation

Figure 4 Distribution of Total Expenditure (2018)



Source: Revised Estimates for Public Expenditure

Expenditure by Service

For the purpose of this analysis it was agreed between DPER and DCYA to analyse the services offered by Tusla based on the following groupings;

- Child Protection and Welfare (including the Child Protection and Welfare, Emergency out of Hours Services and Services for Separated Children Seeking Asylum).
- Alternative Care (including Children in Care, Foster Care, Private Residential Care, After Care Services, and Regulatory Functions relating to Children in Care)
- Family Support Services (including Family Support Services, Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Services (incl. Meitheal and Family Resource Centres), and Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services)
- Educational Welfare Services (including Education Welfare Services, the School Completion and Home School Liaison, and Alternative Education, Assessment and Registration)
- Early Years Inspectorate[7]

Data for the level of expenditure for each of the services included above is not available in a manner that is comparable over time. While the data can be generated, and is displayed in appendix 1, there are a number of issues with these data. Tusla has indicated that accurate data will be available from 2019 onwards. Based on the data provided by Tusla, Alternative Care, which includes children in care, foster care, residential care

[7] Early Years Inspectorate falls under Children Service Regulation, for the purpose of this paper it has been considered separately. Alternative Education, Assessment, and Registration Services, and the regulation of Alternative Care also falls under the Children Service Regulation.

services and aftercare services, is the largest area of expenditure (including both pay and non- pay expenditure) representing an estimated €352 million in 2018. Expenditure has increased across each of the services over time.

3.2 Staffing

Tusla employs approximately 3,955 WTEs[8]. Social workers represent 37% of Tusla staff, Social Care workers represent the next largest category with 30% of staff. The number of Social Workers has increased slightly while the number of Social Care workers in Tusla has remained relatively constant over time, as can be seen in table 2 below. Agency Staff are also utilized by Tusla, further detail of which is provided later in this section. The number of staff in management roles and administration roles have increased since 2014, which reflects the needs of a newly established State Agency as administrative and corporate structures did not transfer from the HSE. Admin grades increased by 60% (257 WTEs), while there are an additional 100 WTEs in Management roles.

Social Workers and Social Care Staff represent the largest category of staff in Tusla

Table 2 Tusla Staffing breakdown by Category 2014 to 2018 (end of year figures)[9]

Category	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Social Work	1,396	1,402	1,458	1,466	1,453
Social Care	1,162	1,125	1,119	1,127	1,150
Psychology & Counselling	21	22	23	21	29
Other Support Staff incl. Catering	65	63	63	59	53
Other Health Professionals	9	10	10	17	111
Nursing	46	50	51	46	6
Management VIII+	79	92	108	137	179
Family Support	177	172	163	155	132
Educational Welfare Officer	72	68	86	89	98
Admin Grade III-VII	427	457	517	578	684
Total	**3,453**	**3,460**	**3,597**	**3,696**	**3,893**

Source: Tusla Management Reports

Recruitment and retention of staff, in particular social workers and social care workers, has been a challenge for Tusla. The Agency has had difficulties in achieving targeted staffing levels[10]. Tusla has indicated issues with the recruitment of social workers relates to a lack of qualified social workers. Issues with recruitment and retention of staff is reflected in table 3 below which highlights the number of staff exits from each category

[8] Census reported WTE, March 2019

[9] Note: Changes in number of nursing staff relate to the regrade from Nursing to Early Years Inspectors which are captured as Other Health Professionals.

[10] Tusla Corporate Plan 2018- 2020

between 2016 and 2018. The number of staff exits is particularly high amongst Social Workers, however there was an overall net increase over the period. Staff exits includes leavers and retirees.

The number of staff exits from the agency is high amongst Social Workers and Social Care staff

Table 3 Number of Staff Exits (incl. retirees and other leavers) and Total Change in Staff (2016-2018) by Category

Category	Staff Exits	Net Change in No. of Staff[11]
Social Work	496	+51
Social Care	215	+25
Psychologists & Counsellors	14	+7
Other Support Staff incl. Catering	20	-10
Other Health Professionals	3	+101
Nursing	6	-44
Management VIII+	28	+87
Family Support	49	-40
Education Welfare	5	+30
Admin Grades	127	+227
Total	**963**	**434**

Data Source: Tusla Business Plans

The use of external agency staff by Tusla increased significantly in 2017 and remained relatively constant over 2018, as can be seen in figure 5. Tusla's use of external agency staff increased from approximately 270 at the beginning of 2017 to 500 by the end of the year. At the beginning of 2017 agency use as a percentage of overall staff was approximately 8% increasing to 14% by year end. This proportion fell slightly over the course of 2018 reaching 13% at the end of 2018.

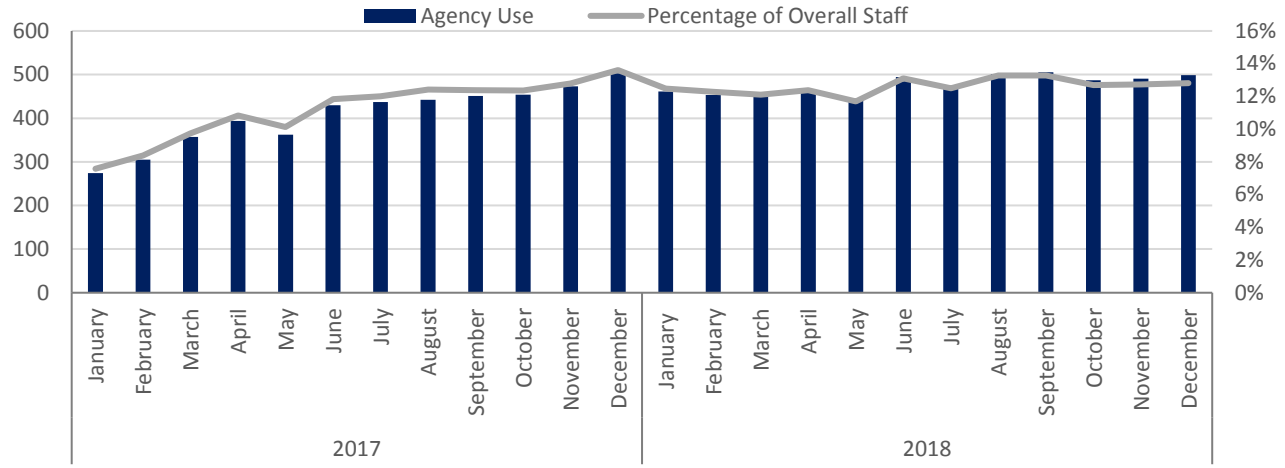
External agency staff in Tusla are predominantly in Social Work, Social Care and Administration roles, as can be seen in table 4 below, with approximately one third of agency staff engaged in each of these three categories. Table 4 also shows that approximately 24% of all admin staff are in agency roles.

[11]Net change is change in the WTE Census figures between end of 2015 and the end of 2018

The number of agency staff in Tusla nearly doubled in 2017, remaining constant in 2018

Figure 5 Agency Staff- No. and Percentage of Overall Staff (agency and employees combined), 2017 & 2018

The Majority of agency staff are in Social Work, Social Care and Admin Grades



Source Tusla Business Plans

Table 4 Agency Staff by Category (March 2019)

Grade Category	No. of Agency Staff	% of Agency Staff	% of Staff in Category[12]
Social Work	210	33%	12%
Social Care	210	33%	15%
Admin Grades	194	30%	24%
Family Support	13	2%	8%
Other Support Staff incl. Catering	5	1%	8%
Other Health Professionals	4	1%	3%
Psychologists & Counsellors	3	0%	10%
Management VIII+	3	0%	2%
Nursing	0	0%	0%
Education Welfare	0	0%	0%
Total	**642**		

Source: Tusla Management Reports

Residential Services is the largest area in terms of the number staff with 776 WTEs working in this area, as can be seen in table 5 below. This represents approximately 20% of total WTEs. The next largest areas are Child Protection and Children in Care, each representing close to 20% of total WTEs.

Residential Services, Children in Care and Child Protection & Welfare Services have the highest number of WTEs

Table 5 Number of WTEs in Each Service

Service	WTE March 2019
Residential Services	776
Child Protection	759
Children in Care	699
Partnership, Prevention & Family Support	360
Specialist	287
Corporate*	1,074

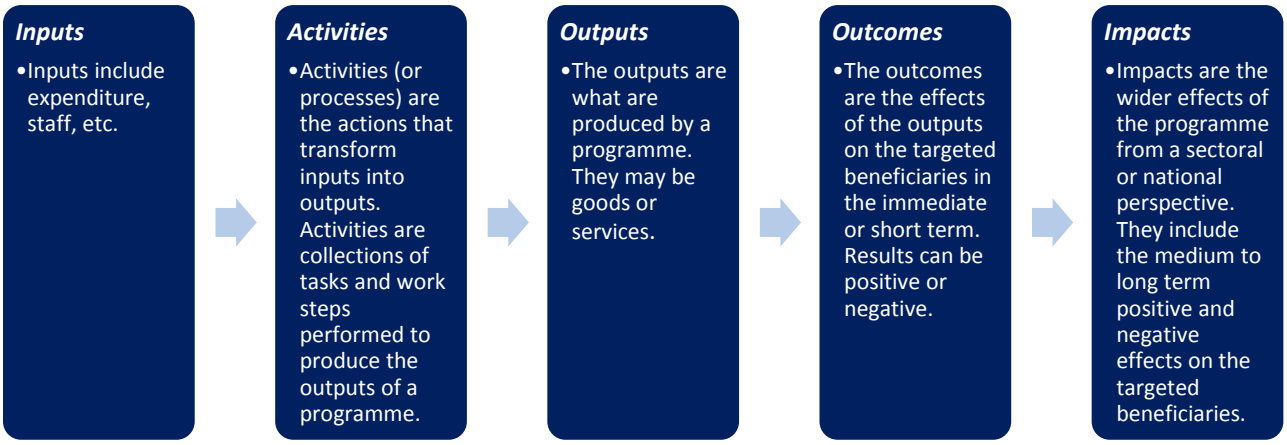
Source: Tusla Note Corporate includes Area Manager, Regional Director and Corporate. Further detail of the staff in each of these categories can be found in Appendix 2

[12] Percentage of Combined Staffing numbers, i.e. agency and employees

4. Availability of Data

This section looks at what data is available on the services that Tusla provides and considers whether this data is sufficient to evaluate these services. For each of the service areas a basic PLM has been included to provide an overview of what is involved in delivering the service, followed by an overview of the data that is available for each of the services[13] and a discussion of the type of evaluation questions that could potentially be answered. As discussed earlier in this paper the information produced by Tusla will be analysed through the lens of the PLM in order to identify any potential gaps that would impact on any future evaluations of the efficiency and effectiveness of the services Tusla provides. As noted at the beginning of the paper there are significant challenges associated with analysing the services provided by Tusla using the PLM given the complexity of these services. A high level PLM will be developed for each of the services included in this analysis as a means of structuring the assessment of data availability as opposed to evaluating the performance Tusla provides. Further details of the various elements of the PLM are found in the figure below.

Figure 6 Overview of the Programme Logic Model



The evaluation criteria linked to the PLM, which are outlined in table 6, are essentially the questions that an evaluation seeks to answer. By looking at the data collected by Tusla this paper aims to identify which of these questions would be possible to answer with the information currently available and areas where further information would be required to satisfy the below evaluation criteria.

Table 6 Evaluation Criteria Associated with the PLM

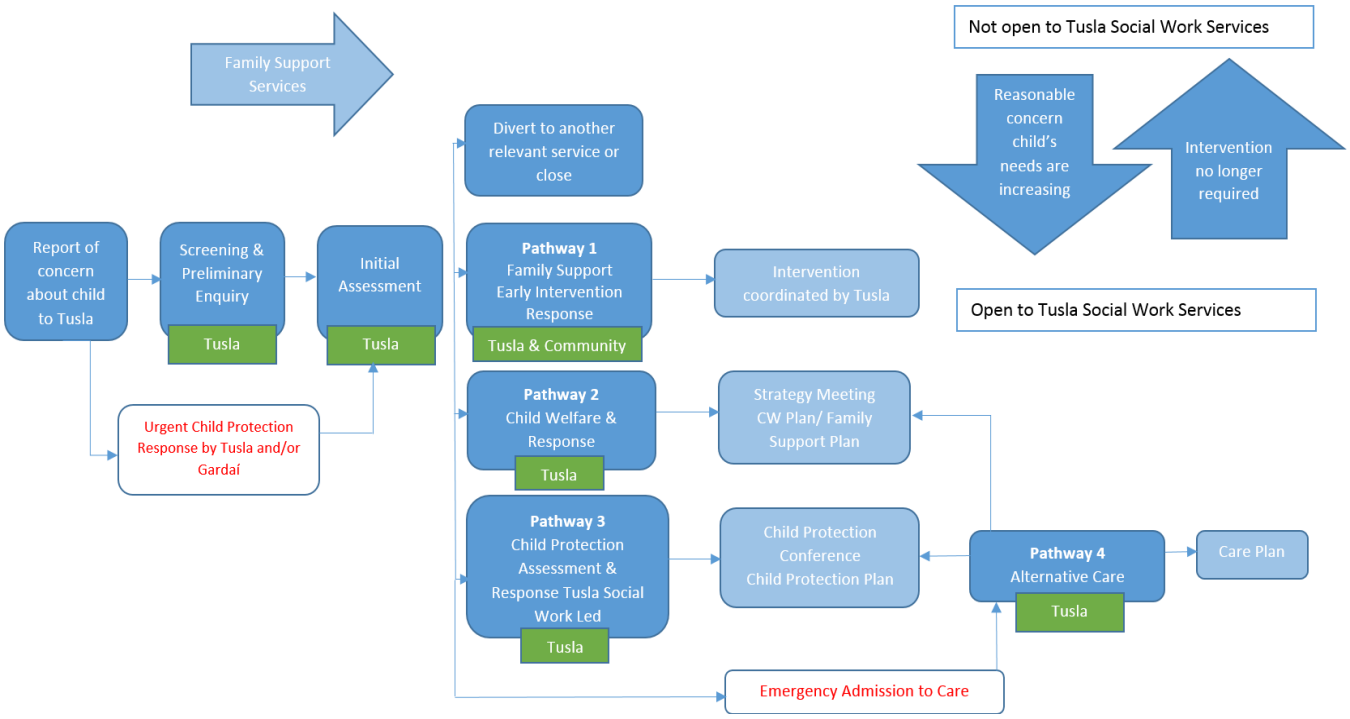
Criteria	Link to PLM
Rationale	Objectives
Efficiency	Inputs, Activities, Outputs
Effectiveness	Objectives, Outputs, Results, Outcomes
Impact	Objectives, Outputs, Results, Outcomes
Continued Relevance	Objectives, Outcomes

[13] Services grouped into categories for the purpose of this analysis agreed upon by DPER, DCYA, and Tusla

This section provides a high level assessment of the data that is available on each of the services provided by Tusla through the lens of the PLM. This assessment is based on the data that Tusla has indicated is available and the data that is published. A number of challenges and limitations are apparent in attempting to review the availability of data. The following are worth noting;

- Given the scale and complexity of the services that Tusla provides the review of available data has been conducted at a high level.
- The services offered by Tusla are highly interdependent. In many cases the services cannot be considered in isolation and must be considered in the context of how they interact. Therefore in many areas it can be challenging to conceptualise these services using the linear PLM approach. For example, when a case is referred to Child Protection and Welfare services there are a range of possibilities that may arise. The case could be closed, it may require further assessment, or it may be passed to the Alternative Care services. A high level overview of the interactions that take place between many of the services provided by Tusla can be seen in figure 7 below. This figure illustrates the complexity and non- linear nature of the services included in this review.
- The complexity and nature of Tusla's services means that there are some areas in which data collection is difficult, both given the nature of the data that is required, and the IT infrastructure that is required. Further information on the development of the IT infrastructure that Tusla is in the process of developing will be provided later.

Figure 7 Overview of Pathways Process



Source: Overview of figure in Appendix 2 of Tusla's 'Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns'

4.1 Overall Assessment of Inputs, Outcome, and Impacts

Prior to reviewing the data availability for each of the services it is worth noting the elements which are common across each of the service areas. Firstly in relation to inputs the following points are of note and can be applied to each of the services;

- Expenditure data is not available at the service level for the years 2014 to 2018 in a manner which is comparable over time. Tusla has indicated that expenditure data will be available for each of the services broken down between pay and non- pay and will be available at sub service level where applicable going forward. The inaccuracies associated with expenditure for the various services would introduce an element of inaccuracy in conducting an evaluation using such data. This is particularly noteworthy in service areas where pay expenditure represents a large proportion of total expenditure. Following Work Force Planning initiatives undertaken by the Agency, Tusla has indicated that such issues will be less prevalent going forward which will increase the accuracy of expenditure data.
- Similarly, data on the number of staff working in each service area is not available for previous years. Tusla indicated that data on the number of staff in each service area will be available from 2019 onwards.
- Furthermore in relation to outcomes and impacts, it is important to acknowledge the challenges associated with evaluating outcomes and impacts generally and particularly for the types of services which Tusla provides. As previously mentioned outcomes relates to the direct effect of the targeted beneficiaries, whether this be positive or negative and impacts are the wider effects of the programme from a sectoral or national perspective. For the most part there is little data collected or research available on the outcomes and impacts of each of the services. Tusla is in the process of developing an outcomes framework which aims to focus on devising a standardised conceptual approach to measuring the effectiveness of the agency. As part of the development of this framework qualitative and quantitative measures will be developed.

4.2 Child Protection and Welfare Services

The overall category of Child Protection and Welfare Services includes three service areas. Details of each of these services including the expenditure (pay and non- pay combined) for 2018 and the staff working in each of these service areas (WTEs of March 2019) has been included in table 7 below.

Table 7 Overview of the Child Protection and Welfare Services

Child Protection and Welfare	Expenditure 2018 (€'000)	Staff (WTE)
The purpose of the Child Protection and Welfare Service is to meet the Agency's statutory responsibilities in accordance with the Child Care Act 1991 and Children Act 2001. The Agency is required to identify and promote the welfare of children at risk or in need of protection, and to provide child protection services, including applications to remove children into care, and family support services.	63,440	764.71
Emergency Out of Hours Services		
The function of the National Out of Hours Service is to ensure the safety and welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection outside of normal office hours. The service also provides emergency care placements for children as required.	2,080	22.21
Services for Separated Children Seeking Asylum		
Separated Children's Services provide care, family reunification and aftercare support to separated children seeking asylum with an equity of care principle to all unaccompanied minors who are in receipt of services.	7,341	10.99

Given the scale of this area this review will focus on the data collected on Child Protection and Welfare Services within this category. Table 8 below sets out the various elements in terms of the PLM for the Child Protection and Welfare services. The objective of the service is to promote the welfare of children at risk or need of protection, inputs required to deliver this service include expenditure and staff which are comprised of Social Workers, Social Care staff, Psychologists & Counsellors, Other Support Staff, Other Health Professionals, and Family Support Staff. Activities in this area include screening of referrals to Tusla, processing of these referrals and followed by allocation to a social worker and development and review of a child protection plan. The outputs arising from the delivery of these services would include Social Work sessions being delivered, and implementation of child protection plans. The impacts and outcomes associated with this service would include improved child safety and welfare.

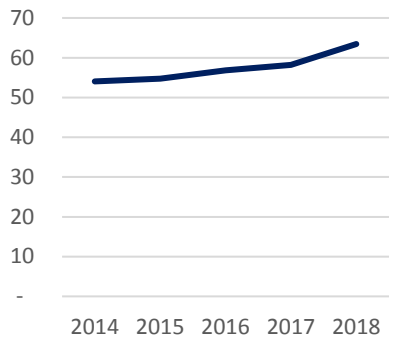
Table 8 High Level Overview of Programme Logic Model for Child Protection and Welfare Services

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes & Impacts
• Expenditure (Pay and Non Pay) • Staff	• Screening of referrals • Preliminary enquiry • Processing of Referrals • Allocation to Social Worker • Safety planning • Visiting children and families • Assessment	• Social Worker works with referred child • Implementation of child protection plan • Early Intervention/Family Support Response • Closure	Improved child safety and welfare

Box 1 displays an example of some of the data that is available for the Child Protection and Welfare service. It includes the estimated level of expenditure on Child Protection and Welfare Services, the number of referrals received.

Box 1 Overview of Data Available for Child Protection and Welfare Services

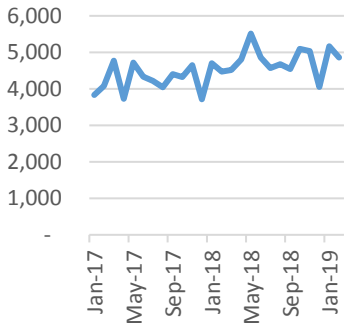
Expenditure (€, Millions)



Number of Staff by Category

Social Work	642.18
Social Care	98.31
Psychologists & Counsellors	1.00
Other Support Staff	0.75
Other Health Professionals	2.42
Family Support	20.05
Total	**764.71**

Number of Referrals



Based on a review of the data that Tusla has indicated is available there is a substantial amount of data collected on the activities involved in Child Protection and Welfare Services. For example, data is available on the overall numbers being referred to the service as well as data on the nature of the cases, and data that would facilitate understanding the type of children referred to the service (e.g. age, gender, etc.). While there is substantial data on the activities associated with this service there appears to be less data collected on the outputs of this service. For example, while there is detailed information on the number of referrals received, the reason for this referral, whether the case has been assessed, and the outcome of this assessment and whether the case has been assigned to a social worker there is little information on what happens after this. For example, it would be useful if further information was collected on the number of appointments with a Social Worker, or any other information that may be relevant in relation to the provision of this service. Tusla is developing metrics relating to caseload management which may provide further relevant data on the outputs on its services in this area.

4.3 Alternative Care

The services included under Alternative Care are outlined in table 9. The Child and Family Agency has a statutory responsibility to provide Alternative Care Services under the provisions of the Child Care Act 1991, the Children Act 2001 and the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2007. Children who require admission to care are accommodated through placement in foster care, placement with relatives, or residential care. Table 9 also outlines the level of expenditure (pay and non- pay combined) and the staff involved in each of the areas. Residential care services are the largest in terms of expenditure, while over 90% of the total number of children

in care are in foster care. The number of children in foster care as opposed to other forms of alternative care reflects Tusla's policy in relation to alternative care.

Table 9 Overview of the Alternative Care Services

Residential Care	Expenditure 2018 (€,000)	Staff (WTE)
Children's Residential Services aim to provide a physically, emotionally and psychologically safe space in which children and young people can heal, develop and move forward in their lives.	150,540	1,191.94
Foster Care (incl. Private Foster Care)		
Foster Care Services have a responsibility to provide for the protection and care of children who do not receive adequate care and protection at home. The service ensures children and young people's needs are met in their foster homes through the allocation of social care workers, care planning and review processes, and by providing training and support to foster carers.	136,840	227.66
Aftercare Services[14] (incl. Private Residential Aftercare)		
Aftercare Services are provided by Tusla to eligible young people in preparation for leaving care, and to support and assist the young person in making a successful transition to independent adult life in the community.	28,732	77.41
Adoption Services (incl. Information and Tracing Services)		
Adoption Services aim to provide children with eligible and suitable families through adoption and provides information, counselling and support for members of birth families who have been separated through adoption and historical care arrangements. Adoption Services also facilitate contacts through information and tracing where all parties consent.	7,875	101.95
Regulatory Functions		
The Alternative Care function is responsible for the regulation of alternative care settings for children who cannot live with their families. The goal is to deliver purposeful intelligence-led regulation with a view to service improvement in contracted services. In addition, the aim is to assist Tusla in its responsibilities to oversee and quality assure all commissioned services.		10.90

Table 10 provides a high level overview of the PLM for Children in Care, including foster care and residential care. Inputs associated with children in care include expenditure, staff and foster carers. Activities include the admission to care, development and review of care plans for children in care, allocation to a social worker, provision of respite care and discharge from care. The activities involved in the provision of foster care also includes the assessment of foster care applications, approval of foster carers, and allocation of a link worker to support the foster carer. The outputs associated with alternative care services is the provision of care, while the outcomes and impacts relate to improved safety and welfare for the child.

[14] Prevention & Early Intervention Series, Focussed Policy Assessment: Aftercare (October 2018)

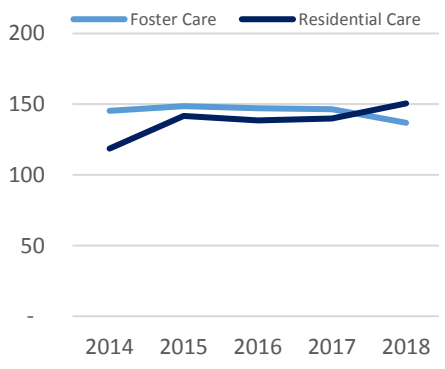
Table 10 High Level Overview of the Programme Logic Model for Children in Care

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes & Impacts
• Expenditure • Staff • Foster Carers	• Child admitted to care • Development of care plan • Allocation to Social Worker • Provision of respite care • Statutory Reviews • Discharges from care *Foster Care* • Assessment of foster care applications • Approval of foster carers • Allocation of link worker to Foster Carer	• Child provided with suitable care *Foster Care* • Link worker and Foster Carer work together	Improved child welfare and protection

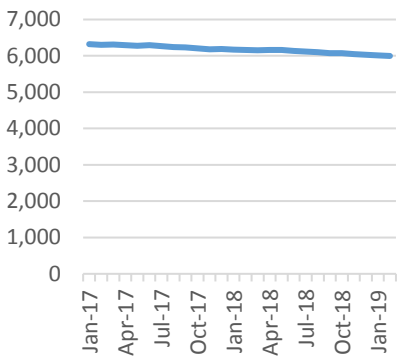
Box 2 below provides an example of some of the data available in the area of Alternative Care. It includes the estimated level of expenditure on both foster care and residential care, the number of children in care and the percentage which each type of care represents.

Box 2 Example of Available Data for Alternative Care

i) Expenditure on Foster Care and Residential Care, 2014-2018 (€m)



ii) No. of Children in Care (Jan 2017 – Feb 2019)



iii) Type of Care (Feb 2019)

Residential Care (Special and General)	6%
Foster Care General	66%
Relative Foster Care	26%
Other Care Placements	1%

Based on indications from Tusla there is a substantial amount of data collected on the activities within this service area. Data is available on the number of foster carers, as well as the approval and review process for foster carers (the number of applicants awaiting assessment, etc.). There is also data on the number of children in care with a care plan, and the number of statutory reviews of care plans. There is data on the number of admissions to care and other details of those who have been admitted to care, however there appears to be little data available on the process of admission to care, i.e. whether there was a waiting period, or the reason for entering residential care as opposed to foster care for example.

In the area of Children in Care indications from Tusla suggest useful data is collected on the outputs of this service. Data is collected on the number of children in care (by the type of care), the number of foster carers with link workers. There also appears to be data collected on the profile of children that are in care, for example the age, gender, reason for being in care and the legal status of the child. Data is collected on the number of children in care by the length of time in which they have been in care and the number of children that have been discharged from care (including age, gender, type of care and location of discharge).

4.4 Family Support Services

Family Support is a style of work and a wide range of activities that strengthen positive informal social networks through community based programmes and services. The main focus of these services is on early intervention aiming to promote and protect the health, well-being and rights of all children, young people and their families. At the same time particular attention is given to those who are vulnerable or at risk. Further details of these services can be seen in table 11, which includes expenditure (pay and non- pay) and staff for each of the areas included.

Table 11 High Level Overview of Family Support Services

Family Support Services and Prevention, Part Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Services (PPFS) (incl. Meitheal and Family Resource Centres)	Expenditure 2018 (€,000)	Staff (WTE)
The purpose of the PPFS Programme is to support children, young people, parents and families in accessing preventative and support services while enabling their participation in decisions which affect their lives. Meitheal is a national Practice Model designed to help children where they may need the support of more than one service. Meitheal is a case co-ordination process for families with additional needs who require multi-agency intervention but who do not meet the threshold for referral to the Social Work Department under Children First.	48,861	341.53
Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services		
The role of DSGVB Services is to lead a coordinated approach to developing, supporting and facilitating organisations, agencies (both statutory and non-statutory) and communities in addressing the prevention of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and in providing care and protection for individuals, children and families.	24,306	10.86

Developing a PLM for Family Support Services and Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services is challenging as many of these services are commissioned by Tusla and are operated by third parties, thus considering these services at a more granular level would be of use.

A high level overview of the PLM for the Family Support Services can be seen in table 12 below. Similarly to the other services discussed thus far the inputs associated with this service include expenditure and staff. Activities include the commissioning of the services, referral of children and their families to family support services as well as the provision of such services, the operation of child and family support networks. Outputs associated with this service include the number of Chid and Family Support Networks in operation and the number of children that have received the support service. The outcomes and impacts resulting from this

provision of this service includes protecting the health, well- being and rights of children, young people and their families, as well as strengthening of positive informal social networks.

Table 12 High Level Overview of the Programme Logic Model for Family Support Services

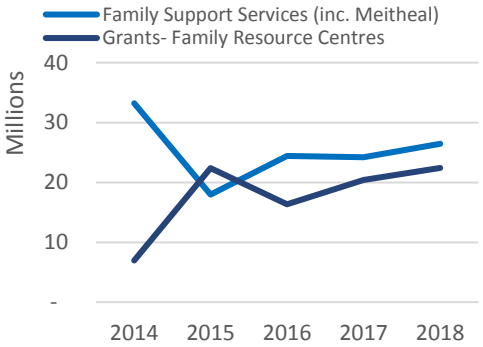
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes & Impacts
• Expenditure • Staff	• Services Commissioned (internal/external to Tusla) • Referring children and families to available services	• Child and Family Support Networks in operation • Children receive support service	Health, well- being and rights of children, young people and their families protected. Strengthening of positive informal social networks

Tusla indicated that data on activities which is collected within the area of Family Support Services includes the number of referrals to family support services and the source of this referral. Data is also collected on the number of services commissioned. Tusla has indicated that further data is collated for services provided by Tusla and externally commissioned services. Outputs data collected includes the number of children in receipt of the services as well as the number of Child and Family Support Networks that are in operation.

Box 3 below displays an example of the type of data that is available for the Family Support Services including the estimated level of expenditure on Family Support Service and the grants administered to the Family Resource Centres.

Box 3 Example of Data Available for Family Support Services

i) Expenditure on Family Supports, 2014- 2018 (€, m)



ii) Number of Staff by Category (March, 2019)

Social Work	49.69
Social Care	129.57
Other Support Staff incl. Catering	5.95
Other Health Professionals	39.74
Nursing	1.00
Management VIII+	8.79
Family Support	86.42
Admin Grades	20.37
Total	**341.53**

4.5 Educational Welfare Services & Alternative Education

Educational Welfare is a national service that holds the statutory responsibility for ensuring that all children attend school or are otherwise in receipt of a certain minimum standard of education. It comprises the statutory Education Welfare Services and the non-statutory Home School Community Liaison Scheme and School Completion Programme Services (SCP) which are predominantly based in schools with Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools (DEIS) status. A more detailed description of the various elements of the

Educational Welfare Services and Alternative Education can be seen in table 13 below along with the estimated level of expenditure (pay and non- pay combined) for 2018 and the number of staff working in each of these areas.

Table 13 Overview of Education and Welfare Services

Education Welfare Services	**Expenditure 2018 (€'000)**	**Staff (WTE)**
Education Welfare Officers work with young people and their families who are experiencing difficulty with school attendance. The main priority of their work is around the welfare of children and young people and on ensuring that concerns and problems around attendance are addressed before attendance becomes a crisis issue.	8,180	96.53
School Completion Programme and Home School Community Liaison		
Home School Community Liaison Scheme and School Completion Programme (SCP) Services are predominantly based in schools with Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools (DEIS) status.	24,644*	
Alternative Education, Assessment and Registration Service		
The Alternative Education, Assessment and Registration Service is responsible for the regulation of provision for education in places other than recognised schools. Its function is to make assessment of the suitability of applications against ministerial guidance in order to determine if a child can be placed on the statutory register of children educated outside of a recognised school.	N/A	7.96

*Note: figure only include School Completion Programme

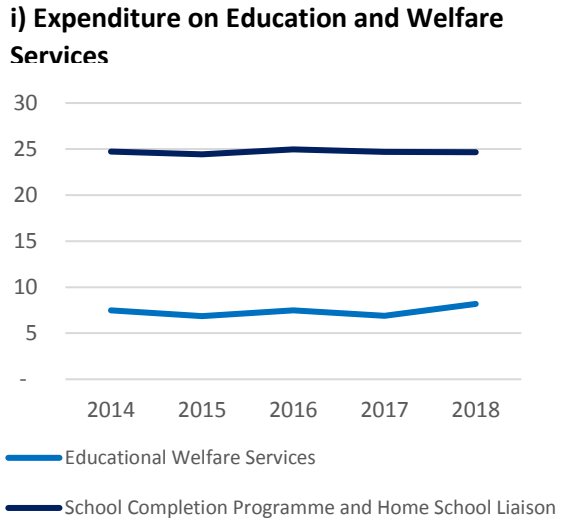
An overview of the PLM for Education and Welfare services is provided in table 14. As with the other services considered the inputs associated with the Education and Welfare Services are expenditure and staffing. Activities include schools submitting attendance records to Tusla, which they are legally obliged to do, the allocation of an EWO, issuing school attendance notices, school absence reports, liaising with home schools. In addition there are a number of other activities involved in the School Completion Programme. Outputs of the Education and Welfare services include the EWO working with a child. Outputs in relation to the school completion programme may include the number of children attending the various programmes. Finally, impacts and outcomes include improved school attendance, improved education outcomes for children and ensuring equal opportunities for children.

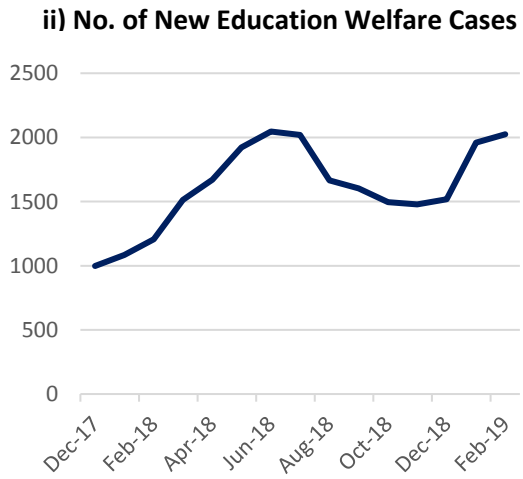
Box 4 provides an overview of some of the data that is available in this area. It includes the estimated expenditure for years 2014 and 2018 on Education and Welfare Services as well as the School Completion Programme and the number of new education welfare cases.

Table 14 High Level Overview of the Programme Logic Model for Education Welfare Services

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes & Impacts
• Expenditure • Staffing	*Education Welfare Service* • Schools submit attendance report • Allocation to EWO • Issue of school attendance notices • School absence reports *Home School Liaison* • Working with parents *School Completion Programme* • Breakfast Clubs, Homework Clubs, afterschool supports, mentoring programmes, and therapeutic interventions.	*Educational Welfare Service* • EWO works with children *School Completion Programme* • Number of children attending breakfast clubs, homework clubs, etc.	School attendance improves Improved education outcomes for children Equal opportunities for children

Box 4 Example of Data Available for Education Welfare Services





Tusla has indicated that there is comprehensive data available on the activities that take place within the Educational Welfare Service. For example data is collected on the number of referrals to EWOs, data on the number of new cases arising in the reporting period, the number of open cases and number of children on the waiting list. While Tusla have indicated that there is comprehensive data collected on Education and Welfare Services there appears to be less data collected on the activities associated with the School Completion Programme or the Home School Community Liaison. Based on the data that Tusla indicated is collected on these services there appears to be little data collected on areas that would be required to conduct an evaluation of the efficiency (given the absence of data on the inputs).

Data is collected on the outputs associated with Educational Welfare Services. For example, there is data available on the children that Education and Welfare Officers worked with, the number of cases closed and the number of prosecutions pursued. For the School Completion programme data is collected on the number of children, however more detailed data on the type of service that the child benefited from would be useful (i.e. whether they took part in a breakfast club/homework club/therapeutic services, how many hours or sessions did they attend in the school year).

4.6 Early Years Inspectorate[15]

The final service area to be considered is the Early Years Inspectorate. Further information on the role of the Early Years Inspectorate as well as expenditure (pay and non- pay combined) for 2018 and the number of staff working in the service area as of March 2019 is included in table 15.

Table 15 Overview of Early Years Inspectorate

Early Years Inspectorate	Expenditure 2018 (€'000)	Staff (WTE)
The role of the Early Years Inspectorate is to promote the quality, safety and appropriate care of children by robust regulation of the sector. It is the independent statutory regulator of early years services and is responsible for registering and inspecting preschools, playgroups, crèches, day-care and similar services.	6,784	96.32

An overview of the PLM for the Early Years Inspectorate can be seen in table 16 below. As with the other services included in this review the inputs involved in the Early Years Inspectorate include staff and expenditure. The activities involved in delivering this service include conducting inspections of early years services, processing applications for new early years services, and processing the notification of incidents within Early Years services. The expected outputs associated with this service includes inspected services, the closure or removal of Early Years services where appropriate, and prosecutions of Early Years services where this is deemed necessary.

Table 16 High Level Overview of the Programme Logic Model for Early Years Inspectorate

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes & Impacts
• Expenditure • Staffing	• Conducting inspections of Early Years services • Processing applications for Early Years Services • Notification of Incidents within Early Years Services	• Early Years Services Inspected (incl. result of inspection) • Closure or removal of Early Years Service • Prosecutions of early years services taken by Tusla	High quality early years services Improved outcomes for children

[15] Early Years Inspectorate falls under Children Service Regulation, for the purpose of this paper it has been considered separately. Alternative Education, Assessment, and Registration Services, and the regulation of Alternative Care also falls under the Children Service Regulation.

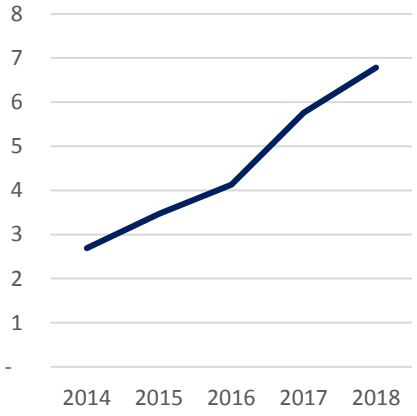
Based on the data provided by Tusla there appears to be useful data available on the activities that are involved in carrying out the Early Years Inspectorate. For example, data is collected on the number of applications received for new services and the number of early years services on the National Register. This data allows us to ascertain the level of demand for the services and the processes involved in delivering this service.

There is detailed information collected on the outputs of the Early Years Inspectorate. For example, Tusla has indicated there is data on the number of inspections carried out, the results of these inspections, as well as the number of hours spent on inspections.

Box 5 below provides an overview of the some of the data that is available for the Early Years Inspectorate including the estimated expenditure on the service, the number of staff in the service as of March 2019 by category of staff and the number of inspections carried out.

Box 5 Example of Available Data for the Early Years Inspectorate

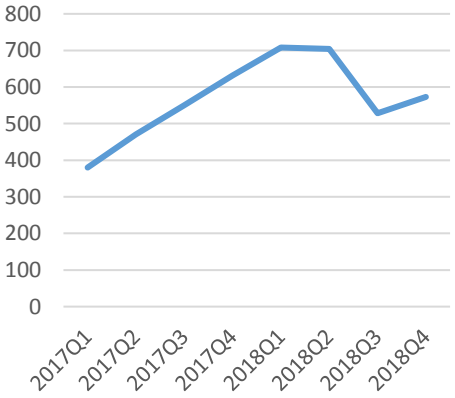
i) Expenditure, 2014- 2018 (€, m)



ii) Number of Staff by Category

Social Work	7.88
Social Care	0.54
Other Health Professionals	49.76
Management VIII+	3.00
Admin Grades	35.14
Total	**96.32**

iii) No. of Inspections (2017- 2018)



4.7 Evaluation Questions

In order to illustrate the implications of the type of data that is captured the following section provides an overview of some of the types of potential evaluation questions that may be of relevance and to what extent might it be possible to answer these questions based on the data which Tusla has indicated is available.

As detailed at the beginning of this section data on the inputs for each of these services is not available for the years 2014 and 2018 in a manner that is comparable over time. It is therefore challenging to link the level of inputs and the outputs from each of these services and thus challenging to evaluate the efficiency of the delivery of these services and how this efficiency has changed over time. This is particularly noteworthy in the area of children in care where there are a number of potential service delivery mechanisms (foster care, private residential care, etc.). While there are a number of other factors relating to the type of care in which a child is placed it would be useful from a resource management point of view to understand how cost efficiency has changed over time.

Given the data that is available in the area of Children in Care it would be possible to look at elements of the effectiveness of these services, for example it would be possible to look at the profile of children in care, the duration of time in which they are in care, why they are discharged from care, etc. Data is also collected on the type of care and therefore could be used to compare relevant elements of the delivery of this service. A review of services which uses these data is conducted annually under the Section 8 Review of Adequacy Report. Furthermore using data on Aftercare Services it may be possible to look at the outcomes of people who were in care.

In areas such as the Family Support Services and other areas where external bodies are involved in delivering services it is unclear to what extent the commissioned services are monitored from the point of view of the distribution of these service (i.e. is there a concentration of services in certain areas). There are procedures in place to monitor the governance, financial procedures, and management of funded bodies. Centrally collated data on elements such as the catchment area of these services would be required to establish the distribution of these services. Furthermore given that these services are provided by a range of bodies as well as by Tusla it would be difficult to establish the effectiveness of this service as a whole, rather an evaluation conducted at a more granular level may be the most appropriate way to establish whether these services are effective.

5. Conclusions and Key Findings

- **Expenditure**

Tusla's budgetary allocation for 2019 is €785 million. The Agency's expenditure has increased by approximately 5% each year since 2014. Pay and Pensions represents the largest area of Tusla's expenditure.

- **Staffing**

Tusla employs approximately 3,955 staff[16]. The use of external agency staff by Tusla increased significantly in 2017 and remained relatively constant over 2018 as the Agency faces difficulties with the recruitment and retention of staff. The majority of these agency staff are in Social Care and Social Work roles, while approximately a third are in Administration roles.

- **Availability of Data**

It is important to note that this assessment of the performance data collected by Tusla relates to the data collected for each service and is considered from the point of view of the suitability for conducting an evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the services provided by Tusla.

As a relatively newly established agency which saw the amalgamation of services from various bodies Tusla has faced issues with capturing data on service provision, particularly regarding the number of staff that are involved in delivering these services. However, it is important to acknowledge the detailed Performance Framework that is in place in Tulsa including a range of KPIs which relate to the delivery of its strategic objectives, and an Adequacy of Services Report which details many of the activities involved in delivering each of the services. As part of this framework Tusla also regularly publishes data on certain elements of its services. Tusla is also continuing to develop systems and frameworks to better capture the services that the Agency delivers.

The following points illustrate the implications of the data that is captured for the purpose of an evaluation;

- **Efficiency**

  - There is insufficient data collected on the level of expenditure and the number of staff at the service programme level for years 2014 to 2018 to allow for an evaluation of the efficiency of the services provided by Tusla. Without this data it would be challenging to evaluate whether the delivery of these services have become more or less efficient over time.
  - Tusla has taken steps to address how the level of expenditure and staff are captured and it is therefore anticipated that more accurate data will be available from 2019 onwards.

[16] Census reported WTE, March 2019

- **Effectiveness**

  - In order to conduct a review of the effectiveness of services comprehensive data would be required on the activities and outputs of each service provided by Tusla.
  - The new IT system currently being developed by Tusla as well as the legacy system is effective at capturing data on the processes involved in delivering these services. For example there is data collected on referrals to Tusla, cases that have been allocated to a Social Worker, the number of children active on the system, etc. However data gaps exist in many areas in terms of the outputs of these services. For example there appears to be little data collected on how many meetings between the social worker and child took place, whether the child was referred to another service, etc.
  - Tusla is developing a new IT system and is implementing a case management system which they have stated will facilitate capturing more comprehensive data on outputs. The case management system currently covers child protection and welfare services and children in care, it is envisaged that this system will expand over time to capture data on foster care and aftercare. However, in areas where services are provided by external bodies a lack of data may continue to be an issue.

- **Next Steps**

As discussed previously in this paper, there is a Performance Framework in place for Tusla which relates to the functioning of the Agency and which sees data captured at a high level. Tusla has indicated it is in the process of developing an integrated service performance and improvement system. Going forward it is important to place an emphasis on ensuring that there is suitable data on the inputs associated with each service thus allowing the link between the level of inputs and outputs to be understood so that the efficiency of these services can be established. In addition to this, it is important that the performance framework and the current system for capturing data continue to expand to include the relevant outputs.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 Tusla Expenditure by Service

	2014 €, 000	2015 €, 000	2016 €, 000	2017 €, 000	2018 €, 000
Children in Care (incl. residential services)	298,666	329,874	329,347	335,268	352,810
Child Protection and Welfare Services	54,041	54,694	56,864	58,175	63,440
Grants- Other (Section 56)	93,355	59,416	58,502	58,603	58,766
Family Support Services (incl. Meitheal)	33,214	17,962	24,413	24,179	26,450
School Completion Programme & Home School Liaison	24,740	24,429	24,966	24,702	24,644
Domestic, Sexual & Gender Based Violence	963	20,212	20,599	22,364	24,306
Grants- Family Resource Centres	6,951	22,406	16,341	20,416	22,412
Educational Welfare Services	7,468	6,859	7,467	6,885	8,180
Adoption Services & Information & Tracing	3,903	5,100	6,328	6,772	7,875
Service for Separated Children Seeking Asylum	7,229	2,732	6,958	7,175	7,341
Early Years Inspectorate	2,690	3,472	4,127	5,762	6,784
Emergency Out of Hours Service	1,370	1,550	1,854	1,903	2,080

Source: Tusla

Appendix 2 Total Staff by Service and Sub- Service

Total Reported WTE at 31st March 2019		
Service	**Sub Service**	**Mar 19**
Area Manager	Area Manager's Office	121.46
	Business Support	366.10
	CYPSC	19.78
	Total	**507.34**
Child Protection	Case Conference Lead	32.52
	Child Protection & Welfare	491.61
	Duty Intake & Initial Assessment	234.82
	Total	**758.95**
Children in Care	Aftercare	77.32
	Children in Care	393.70
	Foster Care	227.66
	Total	**698.68**
Corporate	Educational Welfare Services	11.57
	Executive	57.94
	Family Support Services	2.92
	Legal	9.25
	Professional Support	187.97
	Quality Assurance	51.87
	Early Years	96.32
	Workforce Development	51.85
	Total	**469.69**
Partnership, Prevention & Family Support	Community Social Care	11.18
	CYPSC	2.00
	Family Support	138.88
	Partnership	207.70
	Total	**359.76**
Regional Director	Business Support	6.00
	Regional Director' Office	91.19
	Total	**97.19**
Residential Services	Business Support	7.92
	Private Residential Care	20.35
	Special Care	158.91
	Statutory Residential	588.51
	Total	**775.69**
Specialist	ACTS	31.24
	Adoption Services	101.95
	Crisis Intervention	22.21
	Domestic Violence Services	20.73
	Educational Welfare Services	96.53
	Sexual Violence Services	3.00
	Unaccompanied Minors/Asylum Seekers	10.99
	Total	**286.65**
Grand Total		**3,953.95**

Source Tusla

7. Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance Process

To ensure accuracy and methodological rigour, the author engaged in the following quality assurance process.

- ✓ Internal/Departmental
  - ✓ Line management
  - ✓ Spending Review Sub-group and Steering group
- ✓ External
  - ✓ Other Government Department

An Roinn Caiteachais
Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe
Department of Public
Expenditure and Reform

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