An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige

Department of
Children and Youth Affairs

Annual Report 2015

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FOREWORD BY THE MINISTER

I am pleased to welcome the publication of the fourth Annual Report of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The Report outlines the progress made in 2015 across all areas of the Department's responsibilities.

2015 was an important year for Irish children. The result of the Children's Referendum held in 2012 was confirmed by the Supreme Court. Corporal punishment was effectively abolished by the removal of the defence of "reasonable chastisement".

The Government announced substantial investment in early years' supports, and also gave Tusla additional resources to tackle the critical issue of children without an allocated social worker. A National Youth Strategy was published, as well as a strategy on participation of young people in decisions affecting their lives. Legislation to stop sending children to adult prisons was passed.

Much remains to be done, most notably in the areas of further child care supports, information and tracing legislation for adopted persons, child poverty and child homelessness.

I look forward to working with the Department and all stakeholders during 2016. I thank the Secretary General and all the staff of the Department for their excellent work during 2015.

Finally, I am pleased to thank my predecessor Dr. James Reilly, for his tenure from July 2014 to May 2016.

Dr. Katherine Zappone TD
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

July 2016

INTRODUCTION BY SECRETARY GENERAL

The Annual Report for 2015 covers the fourth full year of our work in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and is submitted under section 4 of the Public Service Management Act 1997.

During 2015 we worked intensively to advance the priorities contained in our second Statement of Strategy 2015-2017. The major elements of progress included:

- Allocation of €85 million in extra resources to expand the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme significantly and to provide for a new model that will help children with disabilities to participate in ECCE. The resources under Budget 2016 will also expand the Community Childcare Scheme to private providers, fund improved quality in the sector and set new rules for higher capitation payments. This follows detailed work by two Inter-Departmental Groups which mapped out suggested approaches for the years ahead.
- Publication of the first ever national strategy in Europe on the participation of children and young people in decision-making.
- Publication of the National Youth Strategy 2015-2020.
- Publication and pre-legislative scrutiny of proposals for an Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill which will regulate the provision of information relating to both past and future adoptions, including access to an adopted person's original birth certificate.
- Enactment of the Children First Act 2015 which will put key child protection measures on a statutory footing, the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 dealing with aftercare plans for those leaving care, and the Children (Amendment) Act 2015 which will end the practice of detaining children in adult facilities.

I thank colleagues in other Government Departments, agencies and the wider children's sector for their cooperation and support. The ongoing promotion of positive working relationships with our stakeholders has helped us understand the many pressures faced by children, young people and families. Addressing these challenges, and creating an environment that allows children, young people and families to meet their full potential is our highest priority.

Participation of children remains high on our agenda, and one particular highlight of this was the participation of children in the selection process for the new Ombudsman for Children, appointed in February 2015.

As a small Government Department with an ambitious programme of reform we are heavily dependent on the commitment and goodwill of the staff of the Department who every day, in many different and varied ways, work to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. I want to record my appreciation for their work during 2015 and, in doing so, undertake that improved organisational effectiveness and support for their efforts will continue to be of the highest priority.

Fergal Lynch
Secretary General

July 2016.

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Part 1 - Introduction

1. Mission Statement

The overall purpose of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is to lead the effort to improve the outcomes for children and young people in Ireland.

In June 2011 the Government established, for the first time, a dedicated Department to drive delivery of key commitments in relation to children and young people. The responsibilities of the Department encompass a wide range of policy and service activity, both direct and indirect, for children and young people in Ireland. It has a complex mandate, comprised of a number of separate, but interrelated strands:

- the direct provision of a range of universal and targeted services;
- ensuring high-quality arrangements are in place for focused interventions dealing with child welfare and protection, family support, adoption, school attendance and reducing youth crime;
- the harmonisation of policy and provision across Government, and with a wide range of stakeholders, to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

2. 2015 in Review

On foot of the Programme for Government the Department was given responsibility for delivering a number of commitments including: holding a referendum to amend the Constitution to ensure that children's rights are strengthened, along the lines recommended by the All-Party Oireachtas Committee; fundamentally reforming the delivery of child protection services by removing child welfare and protection from the Health Service Executive and creating a dedicated child and family agency, reforming the model of service delivery and improving accountability to the Dáil; maintaining the free pre-school year and improving its quality as resources allow; enacting legislation to consolidate and reform the law on adoption; investing in a targeted early childhood education programme for disadvantaged children, building on existing targeted pre-school supports for families most in need of assistance such as the youngballymun project; and ending the practice of sending children to St. Patrick's Institution.

Key actions taken in 2015 include:

In January the Minister for Children & Youth Affairs convened the Inter-Departmental Group on Future Investment in Early Years and School-Age Care and Education, which delivered a report in July 2015 that will help to guide policy for the next several years.

In February the Minister announced the appointment of three Commissioners to lead the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related matters. The Minister confirmed the appointment of Judge Yvonne Murphy as Commission Chairperson, with international legal expert on child protection and adoption Dr. William Duncan, and historian Professor Mary E. Daly, appointed as Commissioners.

Also in February a new Ombudsman for Children was appointed by the President. The recruitment process for the post was overseen by the Public Appointments Service and included the participation of a number of children. Following on from his appointment, the new Ombudsman appeared before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children.

In April the Minister welcomed the unanimous decision of the Supreme Court to uphold the result of the 31st Amendment to the Constitution, which encodes children's rights in the Irish Constitution. The referendum on children's rights was an important part of the Government's commitment to fundamentally reforming and reorienting the way we make policy and provide services for children.

June saw the launch of ***The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making, 2015-2020***, and affirmed the Department's commitment to giving a voice to our children and acknowledging the very important contributions they have to make.

In October the National Youth Strategy 2015-2020 was launched, with a focus on helping young people reach their full potential and supporting their transition to adulthood.

In November a major new programme aimed at providing supports to children with disabilities in free pre-school was launched by the Minister, along with the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister of State from the Department of Health (whose responsibilities include the area of disability). An Inter-Departmental Group drew on national and international evidence and experience to develop a model of support which aims to enable children with disabilities fully participate in free pre-school in mainstream settings alongside their peers. In the region of 7,500 children are expected to benefit from the new model in a full year. It was developed on foot of extensive consultation, across Government Departments and Agencies, as well as, most importantly, the parents of children with disabilities.

In December the Minister signed the commencement order on the removal of the defence of 'Reasonable Chastisement' under section 28 of the Children First Act 2015. The move meant that from 11thDecember 2015 a person who administers corporal punishment to a child will no longer be able to rely of the defence of reasonable chastisement in the courts, further demonstrating the Government's commitment to the elimination of corporal punishment and to protecting children from violence.

Key legislation enacted included the Children (Amendment) Act 2015, the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 and the Children First Act 2015. The Children First legislation will operate side-by-side with the existing non-statutory obligations provided for in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011*. The Guidance is currently being revised and updated to take account of the new legislative obligations so as to provide in one place a comprehensive reference resource for individuals and organisations. The legislation includes a provision to place the Children First Implementation Inter-Departmental Group on a statutory basis and to expand its membership to include all Government Departments.

Significant progress was achieved on a number of legislative priorities including the Adoption (Amendment) Bill and the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill.

There continues to be a significant workload associated with the full responsibilities of a Government Department in areas such as media and communications, Government business, supporting and meeting the needs of other Government departments and ensuring our needs are also supported, and financial and other accountability to the Oireachtas and its Committee structures.

In relation to parliamentary requirements the Department supported the Minister in answering the following volume of parliamentary questions:

	2014	**2015**
Oral	246	439
Written	1,177	1,123
Total	1,423	1,562

The next part of the Annual Report summarises the progress achieved during 2015 in respect of each of the priority activities set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2015-2017. These activities are incorporated into the annual business plans of relevant units.

Part 2 – Strategic Objectives (2015-2017): Progress Achieved 2015

Strategic Objective 1:
Develop, strengthen and align policies, legislation and resources in order to achieve better outcomes for children and young people and provide support for parents and families

Priority Activity 1.1
Align and harmonise policy and service delivery to secure improved outcomes for children and young people.

Whole-of-Government working is a key element of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.* the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014-2020). The Department has responsibility for coordinating the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures,* but individual commitments remain the responsibility of relevant Departments.

A Whole-of-Government Implementation Plan for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* was published in 2015. This sets out concrete actions under each of the 163 commitments, as well as interim outcomes for 2017. As well as this, the cross-departmental Sponsors Group (chaired by the Department) developed a series of cross-sectoral priorities to tackle intractable issues which were progressed on a whole-of-Government basis in 2015:

- Department of Health: development of the national physical activity plan,
- Department of Education and Skills: inclusion of children with additional needs in early years education,
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs: prevention and earlier intervention,
- Department of Social Protection: child poverty,
- Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government: development of LCDCs and interagency working.

The Advisory Council for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* developed a work plan in September 2015, containing priority areas for progression including: human rights and equality, universality (education), child homelessness, early years care and education, prevention and early intervention, mental health and wellbeing, child poverty and community and voluntary sector involvement in CYPSCs. These are being progressed with officials from relevant Departments.

The Department's Implementation Team prepared the first annual report on *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures,* which was published in June 2015.

Improvements were made during 2015 to the administration of the childcare schemes to benefit 4,500 preschool and childcare providers. This was achieved by the development of the Programmes Implementation Platform (PIP), an IT system. PIP provides a single point of entry for all communications and data exchanges relating to the childcare programmes, including payment processes. PIP is a joint project between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Pobal.

Phase I of PIP has been completed. It allows for child registrations for childcare schemes to be submitted through a web interface. Phase II of PIP, which streamlines the processing of payments to services, was substantially completed during 2015.

The Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018 commits to achieving better outcomes for children

who get into trouble with the law, to reduce crime leading to safer communities and to use detention only as a last resort. A number of areas were progressed during 2015 which were aimed at ending the practice of detaining children in adult prison facilities. These were the enactment of the Children (Amendment) Act 2015, the completion of the capital development to provide a new children detention facility at Oberstown, Co. Dublin and the transfer of responsibility for 17 year old boys remanded in custody to that site.

2015 saw the completion of an online children's participation database of publications on the theory and practice of children and young people's participation in decision-making. It also saw the completion of a scoping exercise to explore the needs of stakeholders and inform the establishment of the DCYA Children and Young People's Participation Hub.

An audit was commissioned of education and training on children's rights and children and young people's participation in decision-making in all third-level, further education and continuing professional development programmes in Ireland.

Priority Activity 1.2
Prepare and publish constituent strategies/policies arising from the integrated policy framework Better Outcomes Brighter Futures.

The *National Youth Strategy 2015-2020* was published in October 2015. It was developed in close consultation with statutory youth interests and the voluntary youth organisations and services that work with young people. The strategy sets out Government's aims for young people, aged 10 to 24 years, so that they are active and healthy, achieving their full potential in learning and development, safe and protected from harm, have economic security and opportunity and are connected and contributing to their world. It aims to "enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood". The Strategy identifies some fifty priority actions to be delivered by stakeholders including Government departments, state agencies and by the NGO sector over 2015 to 2017. These priority actions draw on existing commitments under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

Progress in implementing the National Youth Strategy will be coordinated with the reporting arrangements for *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures*.

The *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making, 2015-2020* was launched in June 2015. The goal of the strategy is to ensure that children and young people have a voice in their individual and collective everyday lives, across the five national outcome areas of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (BOBF). It is the first constituent strategy of BOBF and contains actions agreed with Government Departments and State Agencies. The key action for the Department is the establishment of the Children and Young People's Participation Hub, which will act as a national centre of excellence on participation, providing resources, training and support for participation initiatives. Progress in 2015 towards establishing the Hub includes:

- Completion of an online children's participation database of publications to support the implementation of the objectives of the Strategy;
- Commissioning an audit of education and training on children's rights and children's and young people's participation in decision-making in all third-level, further education and continuing professional development programmes in Ireland.

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs established an Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) in January 2015 to identify and assess options for improving the affordability, quality and supply of early years and school-age care and education services in Ireland. The IDG was asked to develop costed options for consideration by Government, as an objective input to future decisions on possible investment in the sector. The IDG's focus was on setting out a strategic platform for future investment over time, should the Government decide to allocate further resources.

The IDG submitted its final report (*Report of the Interdepartmental Working Group: Future Investment in Childcare in Ireland)* to Government in July 2015 and its recommendations were central to the estimates process in 2015, and will continue to guide the development of policy in the coming years.

Priority Activity 1.3
Develop and implement legislative programme in respect of child protection, adoption and youth justice.

The Children First Act 2015 was enacted on 19 November 2015. It forms part of a suite of child protection legislation which also includes the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 and the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012. The Act:

- makes better provision for the care and protection of children, including raising awareness of child abuse and neglect;
- provides for reporting and management of child protection concerns;
- improves child protection arrangements in organisations providing services to children;
- provides statutory arrangements to promote cross-sectoral implementation and compliance with Children First;
- provides for a register of non-compliance for a provider of a relevant service who fails to provide Tusla, the Child and Family Agency with a copy of a child safeguarding statement; and
- provides for abolition of the defence of reasonable chastisement in relation to corporal punishment.

The Heads of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill were approved by Government in July 2015, and then submitted to the Joint Oireachtas Committee for pre-legislative scrutiny. The Committee made a number of recommendations in November 2015, after which revised policy proposals were developed and approved by Government. A Bill to give effect to these provisions is being drafted.

The Department collaborated with the Department of Justice and Equality regarding provisions for joint adoption by civil partners and cohabiting couples in the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015.

Policy proposals for step parent adoption were developed and approved.

The Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 was enacted on 10 December 2015. The main purpose of this legislation is to strengthen the legislative provisions for aftercare by amending the Child Care Act 1991 to impose a statutory duty on Tusla to prepare an aftercare plan for

an eligible child or eligible young person.

Work on the drafting of new childcare regulations relating to pre-school services continued in 2015.

The Children (Amendment) Act 2015 was enacted in July 2015 which

- repeals all provisions that allowed the detention of children in adult prison facilities;
- amalgamates the three Children Detention Schools in Oberstown;
- clarifies the legal detention status of children who reach the age of 18 years while serving a sentence in the children detention schools; and
- provides for a new system of discipline and remission of sentences in the children detention schools.

A number of technical sections of the Act were commenced in December 2015 and the remainder of the Act is to be commenced during 2016.

Priority Activity 1.4
Strengthen the policy framework to support a reduction in youth crime under the Youth Justice Action Plan 2014 - 2018.

Work on the implementation of the Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018 continued in 2015 with the establishment of a cross-agency implementation team including all relevant criminal justice agencies. Work continued in the Irish Youth Justice Service on the expansion of the Garda Youth Diversion Programme (GYDP), with expansion of services in 14 existing GYDP projects and an additional 10 such projects.

Priority Activity 1.5
Align funding provision with identified policy objectives.

Expenditure of €1,029 million in 2015 supported the provision of a range of key services to children and young people. €663 million was made available to Tusla to support key priorities in the reform of services and to assist the agency in the delivery of its mandate from Government. A further €261 million was provided to support Childcare including the continuation of the free Pre-School Year in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. Other areas of significance included the provision of €51 million to assist the provision of youth services throughout the country and €11 million in capital funding to facilitate the completion of the National Children Detention Facility at Oberstown, Lusk, Co. Dublin.

Tusla commenced work on the development of its Resource Allocation Model (RAM) including staff and finance as part of an overall suite of strategies to address service requirements. The RAM being developed by Tusla is based on the 2011 HP Pobal Deprivation Index for Small Areas.

Funding for the Family Resource Centre Programme and Domestic Sexual and Gender-based violence services were maintained at 2014 levels.

Funding for youth services was maintained at 2014 levels. Flexibility was again afforded in the distribution of funding allocations to allow youth services to respond to local needs.

The reform of the youth funding programmes in line with the recommendations in the *Value for Money and Policy Review of the Youth Funding programmes 2014* commenced in 2015 in the context of the roll-out of the National Youth Strategy 2015-2020. The aim is to ensure improved outcomes for young people and to better align State funding for youth services (some €51 million in 2016) with the aims of the Strategy. A detailed consultation with the youth sector and providers of youth services about the review's findings and recommendations was undertaken in the context of the National Youth Strategy. New youth funding initiatives in 2015 - including a €600,000 Youth Employability Initiative funded under the Dormant Account Funding Scheme and a €500,000 capital funding scheme to support small-scale capital work in local youth services - included new criteria in anticipation of the funding reforms envisaged in the 2014 review.

Under the Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018, funding of €600,000 was assigned in October 2015 for the development of a new "bail supervision scheme", on a pilot basis. It is intended that the Scheme will provide more therapeutic supports in the community for children who are subject to bail conditions. The goal of this measure will be to achieve a reduction in the number of children remanded in custody due to breach of bail conditions.

Priority Activity 1.6
Strengthen workforce development through engagement with Agencies, regulatory bodies and third level institutions.

The Department has ongoing regular contact with professional bodies and NGOs regarding issues relevant to child protection and children in care. In order to strengthen staff knowledge and understanding of front-line services a number of short site visits were also arranged during 2015.

The Department was represented at conferences relating to child protection including the Child Protection Conference run by the British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (BASPCAN) and the 9th European Forum on the Rights of the Child, where a presentation was made by the Department to an international audience. Other conferences and events attended include those hosted by the Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA), Empowering People in Care (EPIC), Barnardos as well as other national and international events.

The Department's social work and child care specialist engaged in the provision of social work professional advice and support within the Department and at interdepartmental level as required. The Department also liaised with CORU (Ireland's multi-profession health regulator), other qualifying bodies and Tusla on social work and social care standards as necessary.

Better Start, the National Early Years Quality Development Service was launched by the Minister in May 2015. This initiative seeks to promote and enhance quality of early childhood care and education. *Better Start* is managed by the Department and hosted by Pobal. It aims to ensure coherence in the delivery of State-funded quality support services currently provided by the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) and Voluntary

Childcare Organisations (VCOs) and others. *Better Start* works in close cooperation with the National Early Years Inspectorate at Tusla and with the Early Years Inspectorate at the Department of Education and Skills to ensure consistency of approach and a shared understanding of early years' quality.

Better Start includes a direct *Early Years Specialist Support Service*, based on a mentoring model, providing on-site mentoring to early childhood education and care providers and supporting them to undertake quality improvement actions in their own services.

Strategic Objective 2:
Monitor and evaluate performance through strong governance and accountability systems in respect of the responsibilities of the Department and its agencies

Priority Activity 2.1
Oversee performance of Tusla, its compliance with relevant governance and accountability provisions, and its delivery of an agreed programme of service reform.

The Department oversees compliance by Tusla with statutory and other governance provisions as set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 and the 2009 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

Tusla provided monthly and quarterly performance reports to the Department on the delivery of its 2015 Business Plan and these reports have been the subject of detailed discussion and review.

As part of the ongoing 'change agenda', Tusla is progressing a range of projects under the reform programme:

Commissioning
Tusla continued to develop plans for the introduction of its Commissioning Strategy. It engaged closely with stakeholders in this regard and is providing all the necessary guidance and advice. Six pilot sites have been identified.

Emergency Out of Hours Service
The Emergency Out of Hours Social Work Service, established in November 2015, allows An Garda Síochána to contact a national emergency social work out-of-hours phone service for general advice or consultation. It is staffed by social workers operating from the out-of-hours service in Dublin, supported by on-call social workers in different parts of the country.

Child Protection Notification System (CPNS)
In 2015, Tusla introduced a nationally managed Child Protection Notification System (CPNS), a nationalised record of every child about whom there is a child protection concern.

National Child Care Information System (NCCIS)
When in place, the NCCIS will operate as the central ICT system to support social work departments in recording all data utilised in respect of a child known to Tusla. In 2015, Tusla received Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Peer Review Group (PRG) approval to progress with the further roll out of the project.

Domestic Sexual and Gender-based Violence Services (DSGBV)
Good progress was made in developing a strategic and integrated approach to the organisation and delivery of services to victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. A national framework has been developed, with national oversight of what is now a consolidated overall budget for these services.

Organisational review - Phase one of Tusla's organisational review was well advanced in the latter half of 2015 with a number of new posts approved by the Department to enhance Tusla's current organisational structure.

The establishment of Tusla led to the review of targeted performance indicators across a range of measures, including child welfare services and children in care. Performance indicators were agreed by the Department across the full range of services. Information on the agreed performance indicator suite is provided by Tusla on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis to the Department and also published on www.tusla.ie

High-level overviews and detailed analysis of the standard and quality of Tusla child care and protection services is prepared by the Department through review of performance reporting, regulatory and other reports and reviews. The Department met regularly with Tusla's Quality Assurance Directorate to monitor progress across quality developments, reliability of data and implementation of improvements as identified by Tusla and Regulatory Bodies. In relation to unallocated child welfare and protection referrals, Tusla conducted a national audit of all cases awaiting social work intervention and developed a business case to address the findings. A three-year investment programme was agreed between the Department and Tusla, including plans to recruit additional social workers.

Priority Activity 2.2
Ensure that best practice governance and accountability arrangements are in place in respect of the Department, its agencies and other service delivery providers.

Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening the Department's risk management system with a focus on the identification of risks and appropriate internal controls within the Department in respect of the programmes administered by it. In addition, the Department continued to strengthen reporting arrangements with its agencies with a focus on performance and governance.

The Department's Audit Committee is part of the control environment, and is responsible for providing independent advice to the Accounting Officer regarding the suitability and robustness of the Department's internal control systems and procedures. The Committee met on eight occasions over the course of the year, and the Chair of the Committee met with the Secretary General on a number of occasions throughout 2015. It submitted four reports under its agreed work plan.

The Department continued to engage with Tusla in relation to compliance with governance matters with reference to its respective statutory obligations as set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 and the 2009 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This engagement was monitored through a checklist process which was reported to the Department's Audit Committee.

In February 2015 a new Ombudsman for Children, Dr. Niall Muldoon, was appointed by the President. The recruitment process for the post was overseen by the Public Appointments Service and included the participation of a number of children. Following on from his appointment, the new Ombudsman appeared before a meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children.

The Department engaged with the Adoption Authority of Ireland through regular meetings and formalised reporting on governance matters with regard to its statutory obligations under the Adoption Act 2010 and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The Department continued to engage with key service providers that administer youth funding on its behalf, including the Education and Training Boards, Pobal and City of Dublin Youth Services Board. A revised Memorandum of Understanding is being developed for implementation in 2016 with Education and Training Boards Ireland, to take account of recent legislative and public expenditure developments and the changing role of the Education and Training Boards.

The Department continued to support Gaisce in carrying out its functions and in implementing its organisational reform plans.

In the children detention schools area, a robust monitoring system continued to be applied by the Health Information and Quality Authority through its annual inspection process. An updated HIQA report for the Oberstown Campus was issued in October 2015. Professor Ursula Kilkelly was appointed as interim chairperson of Oberstown Board of Management in Autumn 2015. The Children (Amendment) Act 2015, which was enacted in July 2015 provided for the amalgamation of the three children detention schools and a new board of management will be appointed following the amalgamation.

Priority Activity 2.3
Continue development of programme evaluation and integration of evaluation into reporting and performance reporting – including the development of outcome indicators across all service delivery programmes

The Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme (2013-2017) is a joint initiative of the Department and Atlantic Philanthropies, which evaluates innovative prevention and early intervention approaches in areas of disadvantage, to improve outcomes for children, in particular children and families living in poverty. The ABC Programme was time-bound from its inception in 2013, with a co-funding arrangement between Government and Atlantic Philanthropies for a joint investment of €29.7 million up to 2017. The focus of the work under the ABC Programme covers in the main Child Health and Development, Children's Learning, Parenting and Integrated Service Delivery. All sites were operational by March 2015 and the evaluation process commenced in July 2015.

HIQA's programme of inspections of Tusla child welfare and protection services, children's residential centres, Tusla fostering services and special care units continued. All child welfare and protection services have now been inspected, with 14 reports published. There were also 23 reports published on children's residential centres and two reports on Tusla Fostering Services. Tusla inspection reports on private and voluntary children residential centres for

2013, 2014 and 2015 were received and reviewed. At the request of the Department, Tusla has commenced publishing its inspection reports since September 2015. The Department reviews and analyses all reports. Information from reports is used to influence national policy developments and individual service improvement.

Tulsa publishes an annual review of its statutory responsibilities entitled the *Review of Adequacy*, and this alongside reports from the Ombudsman for Children and the National Review Panel are analysed to identify trends, to inform policy and budget allocation, to allow for international comparison and to identify service areas for improvement.

In 2015, as a follow-up to the Value for Money and Policy Review (VFMPR) of targeted youth programmes (published December 2014), the Department engaged with youth organisations and other stakeholders to the Youth VFMPR in 13 events across the country to communicate and discuss the report's findings. The recommendations were largely well-received and this formed a firm basis for implementation.

In keeping with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) requirements for Departments to engage in a programme of evaluations over the period 2015-2017, the Department undertook a consultation exercise identifying policy priorities for evaluation. A 3-year programme of evaluation was agreed with DPER. The first evaluation relating to 'indirect costs' in Departmental programme expenditure was commenced in 2015.

Strategic Objective 3:
Improve systems for supporting families, safeguarding and protecting children, providing the most appropriate alternative care and assisting those young people whose behaviour poses a risk to themselves or others.

Priority Activity 3.1
Drive systems change to improve quality and consistency of supports to parents, safeguarding of children generally, and the quality of care and protection of children.

Throughout 2015 Tusla provided monthly and quarterly performance reports to the Department on the delivery of services. The monthly and quarterly reports were developed by Tusla in collaboration with the Department over the year.

Key performance data on child welfare and protection referrals to Tusla and children in care are in place to ensure oversight of services and to inform policy of implementation of regulation and standards. The data also allows for the identification of trends in referrals to and responses of agencies in the area of child welfare. This information includes data on children receiving a child protection social work service, those in care, their placement type and stability, geographic distribution of referrals and cases, and indications of their participation in education.

The children listed on the Child Protection Notification System (CPNS) are or have been the subject of a child protection plan agreed at a child protection conference. The Department and Tusla, in partnership, undertook a census of the demographic profile of children listed on the CPNS. The results of this will be available in 2016 and will provide key demographic information about children who are listed as in need of a child protection plan.

A HIQA report, critical of the use of Single Separation in a Special Care Unit, led to the Department and key players reviewing the policy guiding Single Separation.

In line with Departmental priorities, Tusla implemented an Emergency Out of Hours Service (EOHS) in partnership with An Garda Síochána in November 2015. Additionally, access to the national Child Protection Notification System for members of An Gardaí Síochána, designated staff from out of hours GP's, children's hospitals, maternity hospitals and emergency departments in acute hospitals went live in October 2015.

The Department is taking a lead role in the cross-sectoral implementation of Children First. A Children First Implementation Inter-Departmental Group, involving all of the key Government departments, together with Tusla, the HSE and An Garda Síochána, promotes the importance of Children First compliance across Government and ensures that a consistent approach to implementation is adopted. The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision to place this Group on a statutory basis.

The Child Care Law Reporting Project published its final report on 30th November 2015.

Negotiations were concluded regarding a new qualitative research element which will be conducted by the Child Care Law Reporting Project. The research aims to identify those aspects of the child protection legal process that give rise to the likelihood of unnecessary complexity and delay, examining the perspective of the different participants in the proceedings.

The Irish Youth Justice Service and Tusla continued to implement a clinical service for children, known as ACTS (the Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service). This is a national service that provides clinical services to children placed in special care units, managed by Tusla, and the children detention schools. The service is flexible in that, as children move between placements, it continues to provide clinical services in the area of psychology, speech and language therapy and other therapeutic services as deemed appropriate. Agreement was reached in late-2015 on the delivery of psychiatry services on the Oberstown campus under the ACTS model.

In order to support an integrated approach to the care of children in detention, a revised model of care known as CEHOP was developed by the Oberstown children detention campus during 2015 - this stands for Care, Education, Health and wellbeing, Offending Behaviour and Preparation for returning to families and community. Relationships are key to this model of care and in order to ensure best practice the Centre for Effective Services was commissioned in 2015 to identify the lessons that could be learned from research as to how a model of relationship building with detained young people could be developed. This work will inform the ongoing development of standards in Oberstown into the future.

In April 2015, in line with a commitment in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, the Department published a 'High-Level Policy Statement on Supporting Parents and Families'. Work on the Policy Statement was assisted by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre of NUI Galway.

The Statement provides the policy context for Tusla's major programme to develop and mainstream Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PP&FS) over the period 2015-2018.

This programme, launched in April 2015, is a key component of the Agency's National Service Delivery Framework (NSDF). During 2015, Tusla commenced work on the enhancement and reconfiguration of resources necessary to progress the eight main work streams identified under the PP&FS programme, namely an area-based approach and the 'Meitheal' National Practice Model; participation; information; commissioning; public awareness; supporting parents; alternative care strategy and workforce learning & development.

With regard to Corporal Punishment, Section 28 of the Children First Act 2015 was introduced to remove the common law defence of reasonable chastisement for parents and those acting in loco parentis. The Department also prepared Regulations prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in all foster care and residential cares settings where that was not already the case. These Regulations were signed into effect in December 2015.

Priority Activity 3.2
Provide appropriate, safe and secure custody with improved outcomes in health, well-being and education for all children in detention

The capital development at Oberstown, costed at €56.4 million over four years, is a key aspect of achieving the Programme for Government commitment to end the practice of detaining children in adult prison facilities. By end-2015, this project was largely complete and included expanded residential detention facilities, a new central operations building and a new education and training unit.

Priority Activity 3.3
Improve structures to ensure day-to-day service quality and optimal outcomes.

Tusla commissioned an independent consultancy firm to carry out a review of its organisational structure. Phase one of Tulsa's organisational review was well advanced in 2015 with a number of new posts approved by the Department to enhance Tusla's current organisational structure.

The Department of Public Expenditure initiated work on a Framework for Commissioning Model in the context of human, social and community services provided by non-statutory organisations. This is done in collaboration with the Department of Health, Department of Environment and Local Government and Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It is expected that a general principles framework will be developed in 2016 that will contain the definition of commissioning and an illustrative model as well as principles of commissioning for human, social and community services. The Department also closely oversees the introduction of a commissioning framework within Tusla and seeks to ensure that the model adopted is aligned with the wider policy framework developed by DPER.

Priority Activity 3.4 **Support independent review processes in respect of child welfare, protection and youth justice.**
The Department undertook a high level analysis of issues arising from reports published by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), the Ombudsman for Children and the National Review Panel. An overview analysis report was compiled on all HIQA inspections published in 2014. The National Review Panel published reports in March and November 2015 on the deaths of individual children in care and children known to child welfare and protection services. The National Review Panel's 2014 Annual Report was also published, detailing 26 deaths and 3 serious incidents notified to it in 2014 relating to children and young people in care or aftercare who were known to social work services. These reports were reviewed and the findings inform policy making and the work of the Department. The Department was represented on the Working Group on protection processes for asylum seekers, which published its report in July 2015. Implementation of recommendations relevant to the Department and Tusla is proceeding. Three Commissioners were appointed to lead the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related matters. The Department provided administrative and other supports to the Commission as it embarked on its work.
Priority Activity 3.5 **Assess and implement independent review recommendations in line with Government policy and Government approval.**
The 8th Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas in December 2015.

<u>Strategic Objective 4</u>:
Support the Department and key stakeholders in accessing better evidence and facilitating the active participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their individual and collective lives

Priority Activity 4.1 **Ensure that research and data on children's lives is available, accessible, robust and timely to inform policy.**
The Growing Up in Ireland Phase 2 (2015-2019) contract was awarded and Phase 2 was launched. Key progress achieved in 2015 included the development and piloting of the instrumentation for the child cohort at age 17; the development of the instrumentation for the interwave postal survey of 7 year olds and the commencement of GUI fieldwork with 17 year olds. It also included the following *Growing Up in Ireland* conferences, launches or publication of research reports:

- Growing Up in Ireland Phase 2 Launch June 2015;
- GUI Annual conference December 2015;
- Growing Up in Ireland - 'Non-parental Childcare and Child Cognitive Outcomes at Age 5: Results from the Growing Up in Ireland Infant Cohort'.

Other research and data initiatives in 2015 included:

- Significant progression on the development of an outcome indicator set to support *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.
- Peer review and publication process for 10 funded research projects under the Research Development Initiative.
- Completion of the Social Impact Investing project, including the financial modelling and cost analysis component.
- The development of a set of county-level data fact sheets to support the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC).
- The publication of the fifth *State of the Nation's Children* Report.

Priority Activity 4.2
Oversee and develop national and local structures for participation by children and young people in decision-making.

The Department's Citizen Participation, Play, Recreation and Culture Unit provided support for the involvement of children and young people in decision-making through a range of initiatives including:

- A number of supports relating to Comhairle na nÓg;
- Consultations with young people for the EU Structured Dialogue process;
- Consultations with children and young people living in the direct provision system (with the Reception and Integration Agency and Department of Justice and Equality);
- Consultations with children and young people as part of the Ireland 2016 National Commemorative Programme (with the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaelteacht and Ireland 2016);
- Consultations with children and young people to inform the National Obesity Strategy (with the Department of Health);
- Consultations with children and young people on the Universal Periodic Review (with the Department of Justice and Equality);
- Consultation with young people to develop questions on sexual behaviour and health to inform the Growing Up in Ireland study (with the Department's Research Unit and the ERSI).

The 2014-2015 Comhairle na nÓg National Executive was supported in organising a national mental health gathering for second level students. This was the top recommendation from Dáil na nÓg 2013. The *Let's Go Mental* campaign was designed by the National Executive to promote positive mental health among young people. The campaign involved 31 separate *Let's Go Mental* events in every local authority area.

Dáil na nÓg was hosted in November 2015. The top recommendation from the event was the need for young people to have a stronger voice on teaching and learning in schools.

Strategic Objective 5:
Support children and young people so that they can fully engage in active learning, including through the provision of high-quality early childhood care and education, youth services and addressing issues of school attendance and participation.

Priority Activity 5.1
Enhance the provision of quality and accessible early childhood care and education places for children aged from birth to 6 years and school-age childcare.

The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme was expanded in 2015. As a result of the economic crisis, the programme was closed to expansion over recent years – no new services could enter the programme, and existing providers could not expand their services. This restriction was lifted in late 2015, providing for up to 2,000 additional (full-time equivalent) childcare places – or up to 5,000 children based on average uptake – before the end of 2015. This initiative allowed existing community services to provide more CCS places; it also allowed community services that had been unable to provide any CCS to register and enter contract.

In Budget 2016, a major package of strategic investment in affordable, quality and accessible Childcare was announced, including expansion of the CCS Programme to private providers.

The '*Report of the Inter-Departmental Group on Supporting Access to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme for Children with a Disability*' was published in November 2015 and the Department secured funding through the Estimates process for the implementation of the recommendations of this report from 2016. A new model will deliver tiered supports to enable the full inclusion and meaningful participation of children with disabilities in the ECCE Programme.

Priority Activity 5.2
Promote quality and effective youth work policy, provision and practice by improving information and knowledge base.

The Department continued to roll out and support quality standards initiatives in the provision of youth services by the voluntary youth sector. All youth work projects and national youth organisations in receipt of funding from the Department are now engaged in implementing the quality framework. Some services are now advancing quality improvements in their services, and local youth clubs and youth groups are beings supported to adopt the quality standards in their work. Three Quality Standards Officers from the City of Dublin Education and Training Board are now co-located in the Department, to support the implementation of the quality standards in youth services and to ensure better cohesion between national youth policy objectives and practice in local services. A range of resources and tools have been developed to support the voluntary youth services in implementing the standards.

Priority Activity 5.3 **Develop a continuum of targeted service interventions designed to maximise pupil attendance, participation and retention. Combat poor school attendance, disaffection and early school-leaving.**
Tusla has a general function to ensure that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education. The education welfare services of Tusla, comprising the statutory Education Welfare Officers, the School Completion Programme and the Home School Community Liaison Scheme are key supports for children at risk of educational disadvantage. In 2014/15 some 7,750 children were assisted by Educational Welfare Officers to address general school attendance and/or placement issues during the reporting period and serious/chronic school attendance issues. The School Completion Programme and the Home School Liaison Scheme are preventative programmes. The School Completion Programme provides targeted supports to approximately 37,000 children throughout the country. The aim is to enhance children's engagement in education and school life. The Home School Community Liaison, with over 400 Home School Community Liaison coordinators serving over 600 schools, aims to build those important links between families, schools and local communities to support children's learning.

<u>Strategic Objective 6</u>:
Collaborate with stakeholders, including across Government, in monitoring and promoting the physical, emotional and economic well-being of children and young people and reducing inequalities

Priority Activity 6.1 **Lead cross-Government implementation and governance of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures National Policy Framework 2014-2020.**
Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: prevention and early intervention is a key transformational goal for children's services. To pursue this goal, significant preparatory work was done in 2015 to develop an over-arching policy initiative that aims to take a strategic approach to prevention and early intervention. The initiative involves transferring learning from prevention and early intervention initiatives such as the Area-Based Childhood Programme and Prevention and Early Intervention Programme into mainstream services, and will commence in 2016.
Priority Activity 6.2 **Engage with all national and international stakeholders and partners and in North/South and international fora.**
The Citizen Participation, Play, Recreation and Culture Unit facilitated the contribution of young Irish people at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Youth Dialogue. At the meeting in Helsinki Finland, policy makers and youth representatives

discussed policy solutions for building stronger, fairer and more inclusive societies. Two young people, from Wicklow and Monaghan Comhairle na nÓg, took part in the Youth Dialogue.

The Department engaged with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on the list of issues in relation to Ireland's combined third and fourth periodic reports in preparation for Ireland's examination by the Committee in January 2016. Funding support was provided by the Department for Civil Society reports to the UNCRC, including a specific report by children and young people which facilitated by the Children's Rights Alliance.

The Department worked with the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) to support system improvement through policies and legislation, including servicing of plenary and sectoral meetings and progress in relation to identified workstreams. The cross-border Steering Group of officials was established to co-operate on a range of child protection matters. The Group meets regularly to progress the work programme.

The Department continued to support the work of the North South Ministerial (Education Sector) meetings and to engage with counterparts in Northern Ireland on a range of North South issues, including the Peace IV programme and the work of the North South Educational Training Standards Committee.

During 2015, the Oberstown children detention campus commissioned the Centre for Effective Services (CES) to provide a research programme on best practices for the care of young people in detention. The aim of the programme is that through routine relationship-building processes, detained young people will be helped to achieve outcomes that lead to improved pro-social self-governance when subsequently released.

Priority Activity 6.3
Further develop structures to govern local delivery of children's and young people's services.

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) are a key structure identified by Government to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. They provide a forum for joint planning and coordination of activity and for oversight of policy and provision, to ensure that children, young people and their families receive optimum services. Their role is to enhance interagency cooperation and to realise the national outcomes set out in the national policy Framework: *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. In 2015 there were 22 CYPSCs in place across 27 local authority areas, with 3 more to be established in 2016. The *Blueprint for the Development of CYPSC*, launched in June 2015, forms the basis for a CYPSCs work programme.

The Resourcing Framework between the Department and Tusla was finalised in November 2015.

The Department worked with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in 2015 to develop key connections with the Local Community Development Committees, particularly around the development of the Local Economic and Community Plan.

The support and development of Comhairlí na nÓg in 2015 continued through the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund, which is managed and reported on by Pobal on behalf of the Department. A total of 97 organisations presented policies, strategies or plans to Comhairle na nÓg as a consultative forum during 2015. The local county or city council was involved with 20 Comhairlí nationally, either directly or through various sections within the local authority structure such as planning, recreation and community and enterprise. Other local community structures using their local Comhairle as a consultative forum included Local and Community Development Committees (LCDCs), Leader Companies, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), Public Participation Networks (PPN), and local Children & Young People Services Committees (CYPSCs).

Priority Activity 6.4
Implement the Area Based Childhood Programme.

The Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme (2013-2017) is a joint initiative of the Department and Atlantic Philanthropies. It aims to test and evaluate innovative prevention and early intervention approaches, in areas of disadvantage, to improve outcomes for children, in particular children and families living in poverty. The ABC Programme was time-bound from its inception in 2013, with a co-funding arrangement between Government and Atlantic Philanthropies for a joint investment of €29.7 million up to 2017. The focus of the work under the ABC Programme covers in the main Child Health and Development, Children's Learning, Parenting, and Integrated Service Delivery. All sites were operational by March 2015 and the evaluation process commenced in July 2015.

The three strands of the evaluation are:

1. Outcomes evaluation to assess the achievement of child and parent outcomes across the ABC Programme
2. Implementation evaluation to assess the achievement of implementation outcomes and explore the processes and drivers of implementation
3. Cost analysis evaluation for each Area and suite of services and associated activities

In May 2015, an ABC Programme "Mainstreaming the Learning" Task Group was established. It is envisaged that the mainstreaming of the learning from the ABC Programme will become part of an over-arching policy initiative called the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) that aims to take a strategic approach to prevention and early intervention. The initiative involves transferring learning from prevention and early intervention programmes such as the ABC Programme and the PEIP into mainstream services.

Priority Activity 6.5
Active role in the development of all relevant EU policies.

The Department continued to meet its responsibility in supporting the work of the EU Council of Ministers for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council. Officials participated in the meetings of the EU Youth Work Party and in expert groups that support the Council. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs attended two meetings of Ministers with responsibilities for youth under the Latvia and Luxembourg presidencies of the EU. Over 600 young people in Ireland participated in the EU structured dialogue with young people in 2015 and five young people then went on the represent the views of young people at the two EU

Youth Conferences in March and September 2015.

The Department engaged with EU institutions, particularly on the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council (EYCS) and the Employment Committee. The European Council issued advice in the form of a Country Specific Recommendation (CSR) in 2014 recommending that Ireland make improvements in facilitating female labour market participation, through improved access to more affordable full-time childcare facilities. Feedback from the European Institutions on the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* policy framework was positive. The European Council also issued a 2015 CSR, recommending that Ireland take steps to increase the work-intensity of households and to address the poverty risk of children by tapering the withdrawal of benefits and supplementary payments upon return to employment and through better access to affordable full-time childcare. The latter part of this recommendation was met through the expansion of the CCS scheme in Budget 2016.

A procedures protocol in relation to inter-jurisdictional applications for social reports and consent to the placement of children in care, under Council Regulation (EC) No. 2201/2003 concerning jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in matrimonial matters and the matters of parental responsibility ("Brussels II bis"), was agreed between the Department, the Department of Justice & Equality and Tusla.

Strategic Objective 7:
Support and Embed the Civil Service Renewal Programme and be recognised as an organisation where, on an ongoing basis, high performance is achieved and personal development is a priority.

Priority Activity 7.1
Participate in the implementation of the Civil Service Renewal Programme.

The Department ensured that all staff were updated on progress being made on the Civil Service Renewal Plan, and that the priority actions of the Plan were supported.

Priority Activity 7.2
Provide corporate support to Departmental staff to ensure we achieve our potential and demonstrate the highest professional standards.

A comprehensive Training Needs Analysis was conducted during 2015. This involved a collaborative approach with staff, management and HR and led to the identification of a number of skills gaps and priority areas for development and investment. A significant increase in training investment and provision took place as a result, including improved resourcing of the Training Unit and increased provision of courses in the areas such as ICT (soft skills), Data Protection, Dignity at Work and Irish language skills. In particular, the Department provided specific leadership and management coaching courses for the grades of Principal Officer, Assistant Principal Officer, Higher Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Executive Officer and Staff Officer.

The Department continued to support staff studying for third level qualifications including in the areas of Legal Studies, Employment Law, Management, Business Studies, Legislation and Children's Rights.

Appendix I - Legislative Programme 2015

Legislation enacted by the Minister during 2015

(1) Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015

The Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 was signed into law by the President on 10 December 2015. The main purpose of this legislation is to strengthen the legislative provisions for aftercare by amending the Child Care Act 1991 to place a statutory duty on the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) to prepare an aftercare plan for an eligible child or eligible young person.

(2) Children First Act 2015

The Children First Act 2015 was signed into law by the President on 19 November 2015. The Act obliges certain professionals and others working with children to report child protection concerns to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and to assist the Agency, if requested to do so, in its assessment of a child protection risk.

The Act obliges a provider of services to children to undertake an assessment of the potential for risk of harm to a child while that child is availing of its services and to prepare an appropriate Child Safeguarding Statement in accordance with the Act.

The Act also provides statutory underpinning for the Children First Inter-Departmental Implementation Group which will promote cross-sectoral implementation and compliance with Children First legislation and report on an annual basis to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

The Children First Act 2015 also amends the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 to abolish the common law defence of reasonable chastisement.

Sections 1 to 5 and section 28 were commenced on 11 December 2015.

(3) Children (Amendment) Act 2015

The Children (Amendment) Act 2015 was signed into law by the President on 27 July 2015. This Act provides the legal framework to facilitate the amalgamation of the children detention schools to create a single campus and delivers on the Programme for Government to end the detention of children in adult facilities.

In addition, the Act provides for a system of remission in the children detention schools and clarifies the legal status of children who have been convicted of a summary offence and reach the age of 18 in a children detention school. The Act also made a number of technical amendments to the Children Act 2001 including amendments to reflect the revised age cohort accommodated in children detention schools.

Legislation progressed by the Department during 2015

(i) Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill

Work progressed on development of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill which aims to provide for structured and regulated access to adoption information and tracing services for adopted persons, birth parents and others affected by adoption.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee for Health and Children carried out pre-legislative scrutiny on the Heads of Bill and General Scheme and provided its report to the Minister in November 2015.

(ii) Adoption (Amendment) Bill

Drafting of the Adoption (Amendment) Bill continued in 2015. This Bill arises from the Thirty-First Amendment of the Constitution (Children) Act 2012 which was signed into law on 28 April 2015. The main purpose of this Bill is to amend the Adoption Act 2010 to provide for:

- the voluntary placement for adoption and adoption of a child of married parents, and
- the dispensing with parental consent to adoption in circumstances where the High Court is satisfied that the parents of a child have failed in their duty towards that child for a continuous period of 36 months or more and where it is considered likely that such failure will continue, and where adoption is considered to be in the best interest of the child.

This legislation also proposes to amend the Adoption Act 2010 to reflect the adoption provisions provided for in the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. The Bill will also provide for sole step-parent adoption.

Child Care Act 1991 – Review

Better Outcome, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Young People 2014-2020 contains the commitment by the Department to review and reform the 1991 Act as necessary. During the year, the Department commenced the necessary planning work to carry out the review.

Appendix II

Publications in 2015

- Eighth Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection.
- Non-parental Childcare and Child Cognitive Outcomes at Age 5: Results from the Growing Up in Ireland Infant Cohort.
- Joint Committee on Health and Children on its pre-legislative scrutiny of the General Scheme and the Heads of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill.
- IDG Report: Supporting Access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme for Children with a Disability.
- Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2015.
- National Youth Strategy 2015-2020.
- Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill.
- National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making (2015-2020).
- Growing Up in Ireland: the National Longitudinal Study of Children, Phase 2, 2015-2019.
- Better Start, the National Early Years Quality Development Service.
- High Level Policy Statement on Parenting and Family Support.
- Terms of Reference for the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters.
- Making our Voices Heard - Young people's views on having their voices heard: Report of the workshop discussions at the Comhairle na nÓg Showcase 2014.
- A Report on the Involvement of Children and Young People in the Recruitment of the Ombudsman for Children, October 2015.
- Future Investment in Early Years and School Age Care and Education : Report on Open Policy Debate Tuesday, 31st March 2015.
- Future Investment in Early Years and School Age Care and Education : Report on Public and Parent Online Consultation Processes April/May 2015.
- Report on the National Youth Strategy Young People's Consultation Event, March 2015.
- National Youth Strategy Consultation Report on responses to Online Surveys.
- A Report on the National Youth Strategy Stakeholder Consultation Events.

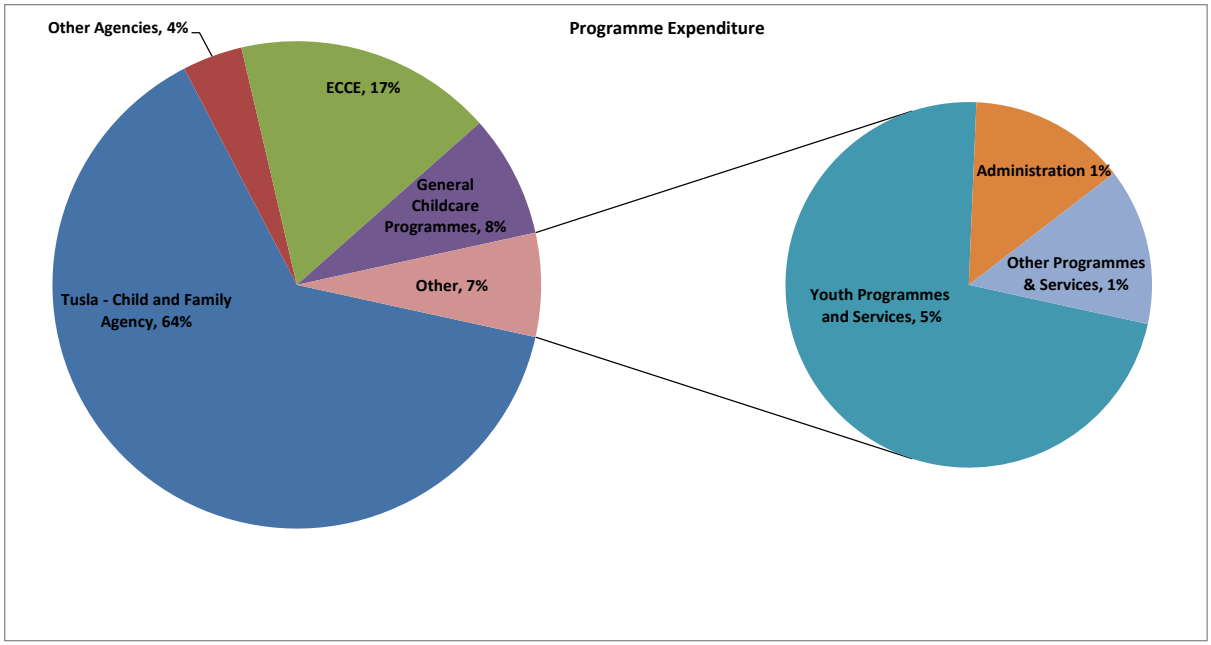
- Research Development Initiative - Research Briefing Note : An examination of children and young people's views on the impact of their participation in decision-making.
- Research Development Initiative - Research Briefing Note : Children and young people's everyday experiences of participation in decision-making at home, in school and in their communities.
- Research Development Initiative - Research Briefing Note : Children's Voices in Housing Estate Regeneration.
- Research Development Initiative - Research Briefing Note : Promoting the participation of seldom-heard young people: A review of the literature on best practice principles.
- A Practical Guide to Including Seldom-heard Children & Young People in Decision-making.
- Implementation Plan for the first phase (2014-2017) of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020.
- Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for children and young people, 2014-2020. Annual Report for the first year of implementation, April 2014-2015.
- Children First Sectoral Implementation Plan 2015.
- Better Report of Inter-Departmental Working Group: Future Investment in Childcare in Ireland.
- Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund Annual Report 2014.
- Blueprint for the Children and Young People's Services Committees.
- Policy and Literature Review of Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy, 2000-2010.
- DCYA Annual Report 2013.
- Tusla Corporate Plan 2015-2017.

Appendix III

At end December 2015 there were 161 members of staff [148.96 whole time equivalent] serving in the Department, representing 0.40% of total approximate civil service staffing.

Details of the Department`s expenditure outturn for 2015 across the main programme areas are as follows:

		Outturn
		€000
Programme Expenditure		
A	Children and Family Support Programme	694,611
B	Sectoral Programmes for Children and Young People	319,545
C	Policy and Legislation Programme	15,217
	Gross expenditure	**1,029,373**
	Deduct	
D	**Appropriations-in-aid**	**24,598**
	Net expenditure	**1,004,775**



Appendix IV

Overview of Energy Usage in 2015

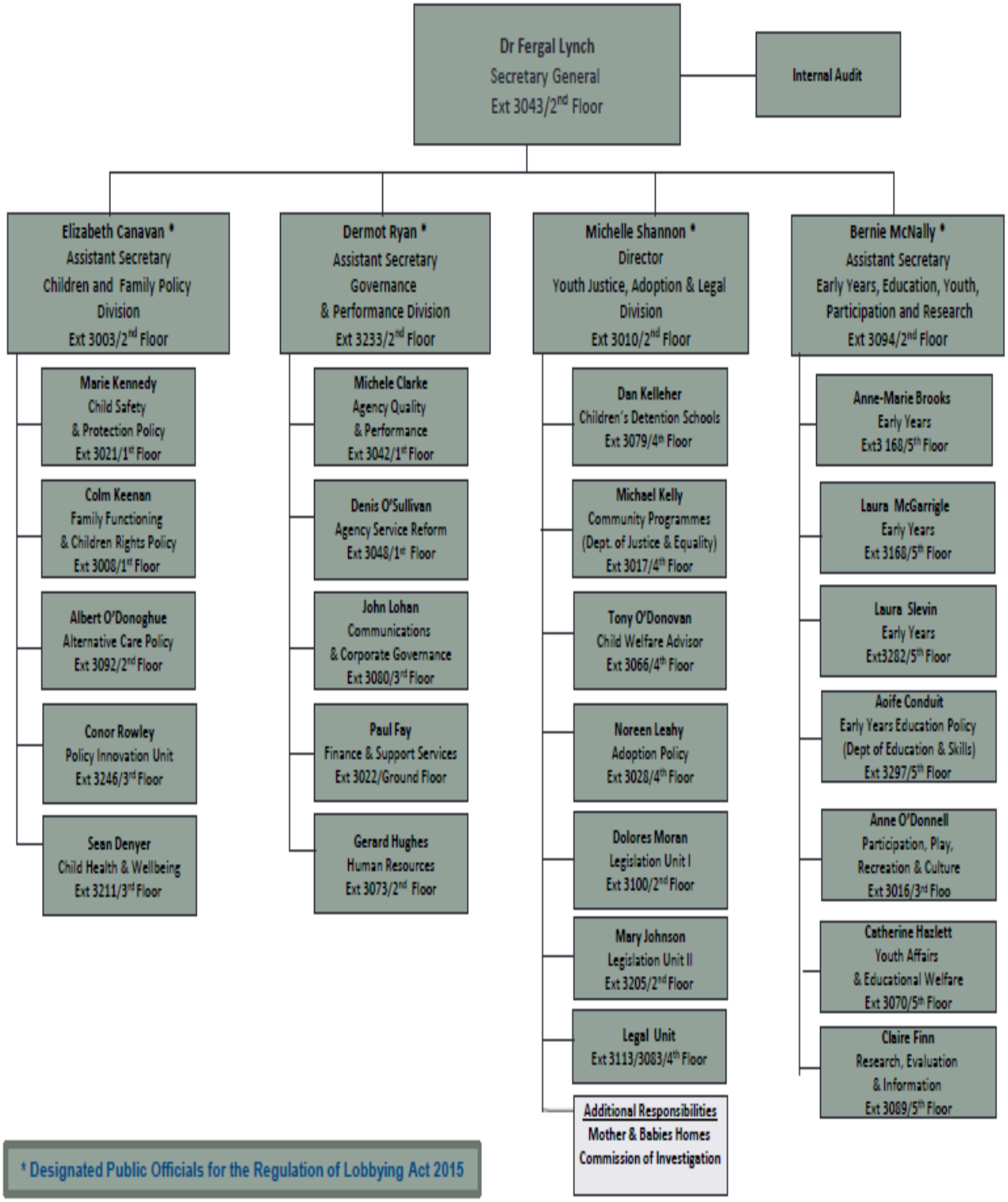
This section sets out the energy usage in the Department of Children & Youth Affairs for 2015 and the steps taken to improve our energy performance. Returns are made to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on an annual basis and the 2015 performance is detailed below.

Agencies of the Department are responsible for reporting their own energy consumption to the SEAI and their consumption is not included in these figures.

	Electricity kWH / % of floor area occupied by DCYA	**Gas kWH / % of floor area occupied by DCYA**	**Total kWH / % of floor area occupied by DCYA**	**Total kWH/FTE**	**Baseline Year comparison (2012) / Total kWH**	**Baseline Year comparison (2012) / Total kWH/FTE**
2012	332177.52	276134.21	608311.74	4651.29	-	-
2015	316147.19	323581.77	639728.96	4356.15	-5.16%	6.35%

The main initiative taken during 2015 was the Department's engagement in the OPW Optimising Power@work campaign. Quarterly meetings were held with the Aramark representative to discuss results of their monitoring programme, and take advice on how best to further reduce energy consumption.

Appendix V
Organisation Chart



Bodies under the aegis of the Department and associated Commission

Tusla, Child and Family Agency
Mr. Fred McBride
Chief Executive Officer
Heuston South Quarter
St. John's Road West
Kilmainham, Dublin 8.

Adoption Authority of Ireland
Ms. Patricia Carey
Chief Executive Officer
Shelbourne House
Shelbourne Road
Dublin 4.

Children Detention Schools
Mr. Pat Bergin
Campus Manager
Oberstown
Lusk
Co. Dublin.

Office of the Ombudsman for Children
Dr. Niall Muldoon
Millennium House
52-56 Great Strand Street
Dublin 1.

Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes (& Certain Related Matters)
Judge Yvonne Murphy
73 Lower Baggot Street
Dublin 2.

Gaisce, the President's Award
Yvonne McKenna
Chief Executive Officer
Ratra House, North Road
Phoenix Park
Dublin 8.