

BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES

The national policy framework
for children & young people
2014 - 2020

**Annual Report for the
third year of implementation,
April 2016 – 2017**

**Active &
Healthy**

Achieving

Safe

**Economic
Security**

**Connected
& Respected**

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Part 1: Minister's foreword

Putting children at the centre of Government policy: Actions on childcare, child poverty and childhood obesity mark a significant year

Supporting, protecting and caring for children should be a mission for every Government. By establishing *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* three years ago, Ireland made a commitment to take actions that support children, young people and families. In the past year, we have been working hard to honour that commitment, and as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs it is an honour to chair and to work side by side with all who contribute to that process. Their advice, guidance and support continues to help shape a country where policies have a child focus, and where the voices of our young people are listened to and respected.

Combating child poverty is a key goal that we must all work to achieve. There have been significant developments in this area during 2016 and 2017, not least of which was the first big step towards affordable, accessible, quality childcare. There have been other positive steps too, including the extension of the School Meals Programme and an increase in the income disregard for lone parents.

As Minister, I am committed to building on this progress. Action on child poverty remains a priority for me. The structure of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* also allows us to identify emerging challenges that must be met to ensure the well-being of our children.

Childhood obesity is one such challenge. Last September, the Government responded to the call for action with the publication of *A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016–2025*. The document is a blueprint requiring a number of Departments, including my own, to take action. Our work has already begun on implementation: This year, youth work in communities across Ireland is being supported by a 15% increase in funding to €57 million. This money pays for better sport, arts and culture programmes, allowing children to play, explore and discover.

Of course, there is still much more to do, particularly relating to the challenge of Brexit.

We have developed a structure where young people and those who campaign for their rights can be heard. This is crucial at an important point in our island's history.

There are other challenges – challenges which can only be met by working together. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* gives us the structure to continue that cooperation so we can deliver for our children.

I look forward to the work ahead.

Dr Katherine Zappone, TD
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

Part 2: Executive summary

2.1 Key points from Chairs

The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, along with the Chairs of the Advisory Council, the Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group, and the Sponsors Group, have highlighted a number of emerging issues, including:

- The need to take ownership of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* across Government, as well as ownership of particular issues that require whole-of-government attention.
- The implementation of constituent strategies, which is key to the successful implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. While the Advisory Council is concerned about the delay in publication of the Early Years Strategy and in the implementation of the National Youth Strategy, they welcomed the opportunity to engage with Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) officials on both issues.
- There is a continuing need to utilise the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* implementation infrastructure, rather than establishing parallel structures. The Children and Young People's Policy Consortium should be used for inputs regarding children and young people at a national level.
- At a local level, Children and Young People's Services Committees should be used for inputs regarding children and young people, as well as for coordination of services.
- The Advisory Council offers a wealth of experience and expertise on issues affecting children and young people, which should be utilised by Departments and agencies.
- There is a need to retain a focus on the cultural shift in attitudes to children and young people envisaged in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. A key part of this is the implementation of the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020* across Government.
- It is important to make use of evidence and data when making policy decisions, and to keep the focus on tangible outcomes for children.
- The Chairs noted the importance of taking a prevention and early intervention approach in multiple areas such as health, education, childcare and family support.
- The mid-term review will be an important opportunity to consider engagement, outputs, barriers and future priorities. All elements of the implementation infrastructure will have an important role in the development of the review.

The Chairs' full comments are included in Part 3 of this report.

2.2 Indicators

Work on finalising the indicator report is nearing completion within DCYA, and the report will be presented to the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium in June 2017. This will serve as a barometer of progress on the five national outcomes in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and will inform future policy development. For more information see Part 4 of this report.

2.3 Cross-sectoral priorities

In order to generate momentum, make progress on intractable issues and model whole-of-government working, the Sponsors Group identified a series of priority commitments to be progressed in 2016. These are:

Sponsor	Priority
Department of Health	Obesity
Department of Education and Skills	Review of DEIS
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Prevention and early intervention
Department of Social Protection	Child poverty
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	Homelessness

More detail is presented in Part 5 of this report.

2.4 National outcomes

The five national outcomes, and the Departments responsible for leading them, are set out below:

Area of responsibility	Sponsor
Outcome 1 Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing	Department of Health
Outcome 2 Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development	Department of Education and Skills
Outcome 3 Safe and protected from harm	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Outcome 4 Economic security and opportunity	Department of Social Protection
Outcome 5 Connected, respected and contributing to their world	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
Transformational goals and Chair of the Sponsors Group	Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Progress updates on the commitments under each national outcome and on the transformational goals are provided in Part 5 of this report.

2.5 Progress on commitments

In preparing this report, Government Departments and State agencies were asked to account for their progress on commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The results, shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, are arranged by national outcomes and transformational goals, where:

- Green = progressing well
- Amber = progressing, with some minor issues
- Red = not progressing, facing serious issues.

As the charts in Figure 1 and Figure 2 show, implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is progressing well across Government; however, there are some areas that will require concerted effort and specific focus to ensure their advancement. These are dealt with in Part 5 of this report.

Figure 1



Figure 2



2.6 Advisory Council workplan and priorities

The Advisory Council continued to advance the priorities identified in their workplan for 2016. A revised workplan for 2017 was developed at the Council's strategic planning meeting in September 2016. The priorities for 2017 are:

- Child poverty
- Homelessness
- Education
- Mental health and well-being
- Human rights and equality
- Prevention and early intervention
- Development and implementation of constituent strategies: the Early Years Strategy and the National Youth Strategy
- Implications for children and young people of the UK's decision to leave the EU.

More detail is provided in the Chair's comment in Part 3.3 of this report, and the 2017 workplan is attached as Appendix 1.

2.7 Participation structures

Considerable progress was made in 2016 in including the voices of children and young people in the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. This included linking the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and the Structured Dialogue (Young Voices) Group with the Consortium, as well as ongoing work within DCYA. More information is included in Part 8 of this report.

2.8 Constituent strategies

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures comprises three constituent strategies in the areas of participation, youth and early years. The *National Youth Strategy 2015–2020* was published in 2015, and development of the first report on implementation is underway. The *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020* was also published in 2015, and the first annual report on implementation is available on the DCYA website. More information is contained in Part 9 of this report.

Part 3: Comments from the Chairs of key implementation infrastructure

3.1 Dr Fergal Lynch, Secretary General, Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Chair of the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium

As we approach the end of the first phase of implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, I am pleased to report good progress on implementation across Government in the past year. This follows on from two successful years of implementation in 2014 and 2015.

The Children and Young People's Policy Consortium remains the central driver of implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* across all of Government. It seeks to ensure that whole-of-government working is efficient and effective at a national level and that this is translated to the local level. It streamlines whole-of-government working for children and young people by providing a central forum for inputs with respect to children and young people. In the past year, the Consortium has particularly benefited from the presence of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Dr Katherine Zappone TD as the Chair.

Some challenges to the Consortium's effective functioning remain. In order for the Consortium to drive implementation effectively across the whole of Government, we would welcome consistent engagement from all Departments and agencies at an appropriately high level. The Consortium must also continue to be utilised as much as possible for inputs concerning children and young people, avoiding the need to use parallel structures.

Considerable progress has been made on the cross-sectoral priorities in the last year, including the launch of *Rebuilding Ireland*, the publication of *A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016–2020*, and the review of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). The cross-sectoral priorities – advanced collaboratively between officials and members of the Advisory Council – have made real progress, including the development of the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative for prevention and early intervention and the development of a whole-of-government approach to child poverty.

The Advisory Council's work has been particularly important this year, with the actions in its work plan reflecting some of the most serious issues facing children and young people in Ireland today.

What is clear in the progression of all of these cross-sectoral priorities is the importance of whole-of-government working and a move away from working in silos. An important part of this is taking shared ownership of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and giving it appropriate centrality in strategy and policy documents.

During the past year, the Consortium has continued to lead the cultural change in how children and young people are perceived across Government. A considerable part of this was the inclusion of the voices of children and young people at Consortium meetings in 2016, including the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive in June and the Structured Dialogue (Young Voices) Group in September. I

would encourage all Departments and agencies to utilise these participation structures for involving the voices of children and young people, in line with the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020*.

A key priority for the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium in 2017 is the mid-term review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. This aims to review the engagement with *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, as well as the outputs to date. It will also consider what the priorities are for the second phase of implementation (2018–2020). This annual report provides a strong foundation on which to develop the mid-term review.

Finally, I want to thank all involved in the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* for their commitment and continuing engagement in a process that is, first and foremost, directed towards the lives of children, young people and their families.

3.2 Elizabeth Canavan, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach and Deputy Chair of the Consortium

The centrality of the Consortium's role has been further reinforced by the input of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs during 2016 as Chair of the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium. The Minister's input has re-emphasised the commitment set out at the very launch of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* that a coherent response to the needs of children and young people can only be delivered with the input of all Government Departments and agencies, statutory services, and the voluntary and community sectors that work with them. Others will comment on achievements in specific areas; however, focusing on the Consortium's role, I want to comment on the ways in which I believe it is beginning to deliver at this point in the implementation of the policy framework.

I believe there is a tangible deepening and embedding of the collaborative effort across statutory and non-statutory planning and delivery arrangements. This is being fostered at the Consortium level with the opportunity for exposition and discussion of key developments that have cross-sectoral potential and impact. For example:

- The connections being generated between the health sector, the local government sector and the children and young people's sector are really taking shape in a way that gives confidence that there is no going back. The role of Children and Young People's Services Committees and their relationship with Local Community Development Committees is growing and increasing the potential to guide and influence local planning. Seeing how the health sector in particular is engaging with and using these vehicles is an important endorsement of the achieving a tailored approach to how policy can be delivered locally.
- The dialogue that has taken place between the Sponsor Departments and the Advisory Council on the issue of child poverty has been challenging on all sides, but it is generating a co-ownership of the problem and a stronger alignment on the solutions to tackling child poverty.
- Seeing the growth of a prevention and early intervention approach in areas such as health, education, childcare and family support gives assurance that this key premise – based on evidence – is gaining real ground in the mainstream.

- Finally, other Departments such as the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine articulating their activities from a child and young person perspective gives a sense of the growing acknowledgement of the multiple domains of children and young people's lives and the potential contribution that everyone has to make towards improving their outcomes.

I also want to emphasise the importance of continuing the work in benchmarking achievements and remaining challenges. Again, the Consortium has had an important role in supporting the development of the indicator set for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. As a collective, supporting and promoting this process is important: it represents our collective understanding of how we are doing for children and young people. In time, it has the capacity to guide future policy choices as we better understand the impact being achieved by existing policy. In the same vein, I think the planned mid-term review process is an area where the Consortium has an important role. This is the Consortium's opportunity to create a renewed impetus for implementation and ensure continued momentum. We should take the opportunity this represents to 'bank' what has been achieved; to better understand the processes that supported those achievements, including the specific processes of the Advisory Council and the Consortium themselves; and to consider where the barriers to implementation remain.

3.3 Dr Owen Keenan, Chair of the Advisory Council

The Advisory Council considers the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Policy Framework, with its attendant structures, to be a vital and coherent policy approach to addressing the many challenges children and young people in Ireland face, and it is fully supportive of its implementation.

The Council does have several specific concerns, in response to which it has sought to contribute to effective action over the past year. These concerns are reflected in the Council's workplan, which was substantially developed at its annual two-day residential meeting in September 2016 and subsequently refined, and which includes the following priorities:

- Child poverty
- Homelessness
- Education
- Mental health and well-being
- Human rights and equality
- Prevention and early intervention
- Implementation of constituent strategies (the Early Years Strategy and the National Youth Strategy)
- Implications for children and young people of the UK's decision to leave the EU.

Responsibility for progressing work on behalf of the Council on each of these priorities has been shared among subgroups of members with particular expertise and interest in each issue. In several instances, members of the Council made personnel and other resources from their own organisations available to support the implementation of its work plan.

Child poverty – The Council continued to co-convene a subgroup with colleagues from the Department of Social Protection, which also included participation from several other Government

Departments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The ensuing dialogue and analysis informed a deepening understanding of the complexities involved and how to address them, and facilitated the resultant advisory paper, *Submission on Actions to Achieve the Child Poverty Reduction Target*, which was adopted by the Council in November 2016.

The Council welcomes the fact that several of its recommendations were reflected in Budget 2017, including an increase in the income disregard for lone parents, the extension of the School Meals Programme to non-DEIS schools, the announcement of a childcare package, and an increase in the Youth Work budget. There have also been subsequent developments, including an increase in the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance and a modest increase in the Direct Provision Allowance for children. Although some of these measures fall short of what was advised, the Council acknowledges them as steps in the right direction. Subsequently, the Council hosted a round-table event in June 2017, attended by senior officials of the relevant Government Departments, academics, and NGOs, which considered key actions to accelerate the reduction in the number of children and young people in consistent poverty in Ireland.

The identification of poverty, and specifically child poverty, as a key political priority is very welcome, and there are early signs of a reversal in the previous negative trend. This will require continuing committed and coherent action if this positive development is to be not only sustained but also accelerated. While there is some evidence of a more integrated approach to tackling poverty across Government Departments, the Council believes that more is needed to achieve a broader ownership of the issue and shared responsibility for coherent and effective action.

Homelessness – The Council’s priority is to monitor and assist in the implementation of Rebuilding Ireland as it relates to children and young people. The Council has had ongoing engagement with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG) on the issue, including a presentation from DHPCLG at its November 2016 meeting and participation in discussions at the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium. In addition to its concerns arising from the current housing crisis – including, for example, the unsuitability of hotels and B&Bs, child protection concerns and the necessity for effective standards, services and supports in the short term – the Council is also keen to contribute to a range of strategies to prevent families from becoming homeless in the future, including the identification of families most at risk. The Council considers that effective action on this front must encompass a focus on prevention and early intervention, integrated with an effective anti-poverty strategy.

Education – The Council shares a particular interest in the issues and inequalities that most affect children and young people at the margins, including educational disadvantage, non-formal learning, children on short hours, exam stress, and mental health and well-being. It devoted a substantial portion of the November 2016 meeting to a presentation on and discussion of educational inequalities, and welcomed the opportunity for engagement with senior colleagues in the Department of Education and Skills in February 2017. This included a briefing on recent policy reviews and developments and the sharing and discussion of respective perspectives.

Mental health and well-being – The Council has a concern about the stresses experienced by many young people and the appropriateness and effectiveness of the services and supports available to those with particular needs. Three members of the Council are also members of the National

Taskforce on Youth Mental Health, which is a helpful channel both to keep the Council briefed on the Taskforce's work and to contribute the Council's primary concerns and insights.

Human rights and equality – The Council's intent is to work with DCYA to advise on the implementation of key human rights and equality commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The Council has held initial discussions with DCYA and intends to link with key independent human rights bodies and other relevant bodies.

Prevention and early intervention – The Council has previously contributed to the identification of priorities for action in developing an effective approach to prevention and early intervention. The Council has also advised in relation to DCYA's Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBi) and will continue to support and advise on its implementation.

Implementation of constituent strategies – The Council wishes to be supportive of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures constituent strategies, the National Youth Strategy and the Early Years Strategy, particularly the implementation of the former and the continuing development of the latter. The Council has welcomed the opportunity to engage with colleagues from the Early Years and Youth Affairs units and is keen to contribute to progress on both fronts.

Implications for children and young people of the UK's decision to leave the EU – The Council has responded to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs' request for advice on the implications of Brexit for children and young people and has participated in the Minister's Sectoral Dialogue on Brexit event. Consideration of the issues arising has identified several serious potential implications relating to children's rights and child protection concerns, as well as some potential opportunities. The Council is committed to continuing this focus, mapping high-level risks and opportunities, and advising the Cabinet Subcommittee on Brexit of potential implications for children and young people, as well as ensuring that compensatory arrangements are put in place, as far as possible.

In addition to various subgroup meetings and meetings with colleagues from Government Departments, the Council met in plenary session on five occasions throughout the year: in September (residential) and November 2016, and in February, April and June 2017. At the residential meeting, the Council members reviewed its performance over the previous year, developed its work plan for 2016–2017, and decided to have longer meetings to facilitate engagement in deeper discussions on issues. The Council was pleased to be joined by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on the second day of the residential meeting, and had other opportunities for discussions with her throughout the year. The Council also participated in each Children and Young People's Policy Consortium meeting throughout the year.

In general, the Council welcomes the continued focus on the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and is prepared to redouble its efforts in contributing to the achievement of the framework's priorities. It considers that the proposed *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* mid-term review is timely, both to review progress to date and to refocus and re-energise implementation to maximise the achievement of its goals by 2020, particularly on the most intractable challenges, of which child poverty is the greatest. The Council believes there is also a need for a continuing, but strengthened, focus on the opportunities and constraints in delivering an effective whole-of-government response, as this will be key to the full implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

3.4 Éimear Fisher, Assistant Secretary, Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Chair of the Sponsors Group

As the recently appointed Chair of the Sponsors Group, I would like to thank my colleagues for their engagement and collaboration with the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* processes and structures over the last 12 months.

The commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* are drawn from all of Government. My short time as Chair has reinforced my previous experience and view of the importance of the policy framework in connecting work for children and young people nationally and locally. The Sponsors Group, as a key part of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* structure, helps to ensure that the State and its partners work better together to plan service provision in a way that is centred around the child and young person, and to emphasise interagency and multidisciplinary working. The Sponsors Group has a major role in advancing the cross-sectoral priorities to realise the five national outcomes. I am keen that the vision underpinning *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is strengthened as we move forward into the second phase of the framework's implementation.

The Sponsors Group is working collaboratively with the Advisory Council to advance priorities such as child poverty, homelessness, and prevention and early intervention initiatives.

As we are about to enter the second phase of the implementation process, it is timely to review and reflect on what has been done to date and how we can improve on implementation structures where necessary. This is a good opportunity to refocus and clarify our common aims for the remaining period up to 2020. I look forward to the outcome of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* mid-term review, which is due to commence shortly following the publication of this report.

The success of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is highly dependent on strong links and good working relationships across the Departments represented by the Sponsors Group. I am confident that the energy and will is there in the Sponsors Group to realise practical outcomes. For the remainder of 2017, the Sponsors Group will work with the Advisory Council and other stakeholders as guided by the Consortium in advancing the key cross-sectoral priorities.

I look forward to continued collaboration and engagement with the many stakeholders involved in the year ahead.

3.5 Dr Noelle Spring, Chair of the Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group

Over the last year, the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) National Steering Group continued to oversee progress in relation to the development of CYPSC and the progression of the CYPSC workplan and agenda.

The work of CYPSC is integral to the work of implementing *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020*. CYPSC are vehicles for change in their local areas and are ambassadors for interagency working. The collaborative efforts to date in relation to CYPSC and other stakeholders in the interests of children and young people are to be commended.

One of the landmark achievements over the last year was the full national roll-out of CYPSC, resourced by DCYA and Tusla. This expansion is now complete and brings the number of established CYPSC to 27 across all local authority areas. Following a successful recruitment campaign by Tusla, every CYPSC now has a local coordinator in place. The National Coordinator for CYPSC has organised ongoing training and network events, which have supported the new local coordinators as they become accustomed to their role. The National Steering Group wishes them well in their endeavours and offers the local coordinators its full support and confidence as they carry out their work.

The development work of CYPSC at the local and national levels has continued apace. The implementation of the *Blueprint for the development of Children and Young People's Services Committees*, which commenced in 2015, aligns the mandate for CYPSC expressed via *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and enhances interagency cooperation to realise the five national outcomes. The blueprint, which is our guiding document, drives the CYPSC work in relation to better outcomes for children and young people aged 0–24.

A robust framework for CYPSC planning and reporting has been developed and was approved by the CYPSC National Steering Group in June 2017. This will focus on planning at a local level, roles and responsibilities, alignment with national priorities, linking with *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* implementation, and reporting and monitoring. The framework sets out the parameters within which CYPSC planning and reporting will be conducted. It will serve as an overarching guide for all CYPSC stakeholders on the CYPSC planning and reporting cycle, supporting the CYPSC initiative to realise its core objectives and to achieve Government commitments pertaining to the CYPSC initiative set out in national policy. The framework is a living CYPSC resource that will be developed and modified as the CYPSC initiative learns and grows and as current system gaps are addressed.

A National Implementation Group, comprising members from DCYA and Tusla along with the National Coordinator for CYPSC, was established to provide support towards effective operations at the national level. This group meets prior to each National Steering Group meeting and informs the Steering Group of any pertinent issues as they arise. The National Steering Group work plan was finalised in 2016 and work continues on advancing its priorities.

In order to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people, as well as effective interagency working, DCYA and DHPCLG finalised a protocol with regard to the interaction of CYPSC and Local Community Development Committees (LCDC). DCYA and DHPCLG issued this guidance document to CYPSC and LCDC in December 2016. The key priorities of each CYPSC's Children and Young People's Plan will be agreed between the CYPSC and the LCDC for inclusion in the community element of each local authority's Local Economic and Community Plan.

The CYPSC national website (www.cypsc.ie) was developed as a focal point for information on CYPSC and as a gateway to information on individual county-level committees, and it serves several functions, including:

- Promoting interagency working through CYPSC to a wide-ranging audience across sectors, professions and disciplines
- Providing current information to all levels of CYPSC infrastructure
- Facilitating information exchange between local CYPSC.

2016 saw a total CYPSC investment from DCYA and Tusla of approximately €1.8 million, compared to approximately €800,000 in 2015. Part of this investment was a second round of seed funding, with an average of €25,000 being made available to each CYPSC (compared to an average of €5,952 in 2015). This funding was provided to support innovative work as outlined in individual CYPSC Children and Young People's Plans, and/or to support and inform the development of the plans. Almost all of the proposals received take a dual approach, working to increase the availability of timely, useful data through to needs identification and providing funding to key projects supporting the delivery of actions within the Children and Young People's Plans. It is hoped that this funding will provide a springboard for the ongoing development of CYPSC and that it will provide the basis for shared investment across other Departmental or agency stakeholders.

Looking to the future, CYPSC has the potential for advancing cross-sectoral work and further engagement at the local CYPSC level. Already, CYPSC have been identified as vehicles for progressing certain initiatives, activities, policies and strategies. I hope, through my participation on the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, that CYPSC will be promoted as vehicles to support the delivery of programmes that will greatly enhance the lives of children and young people around the country. The vision for the role of CYPSC is ambitious and the National Steering Group will provide the necessary leadership, guidance and direction at the local and national levels to ensure the vision is realised.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Martina Moloney, former Interim Chair of the Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group. Ms Moloney was instrumental in progressing the CYPSC agenda and its development over the course of her tenure throughout 2016, and oversaw the full national roll-out of CYPSC. I remain grateful to Ms Moloney as she reverts to the role of Vice Chair, and I look forward to working together in our respective roles.

I would also like to express my thanks and gratitude to all those involved in CYPSC around the country, including the Chairs and Coordinators who give their time in advancing the work of CYPSC and in delivering for children and young people in their local area. Many thanks to Colma Nic Lughadha, the National Coordinator for CYPSC, for the excellent work carried out and without whom progress would not be attainable. I also extend a big thank you to Tusla and DCYA staff for their collaborative efforts, which are clearly evidenced by the work carried out in advance of each National Steering Group meeting.

Finally, sincere thanks to the other members of the National Steering Group for their time and effort since I was appointed as Chair. I look forward to working collaboratively with everybody in building on the considerable progress that has been achieved to date.

Part 4: National outcomes

4.1 Development of an indicator set

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures commits to the development of a set of indicators that will track progress for children and young people aged 0–24 years across the five national outcomes outlined in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020*. The five national outcomes for children (under 18 years) and young people (under 25 years) are:

VISION

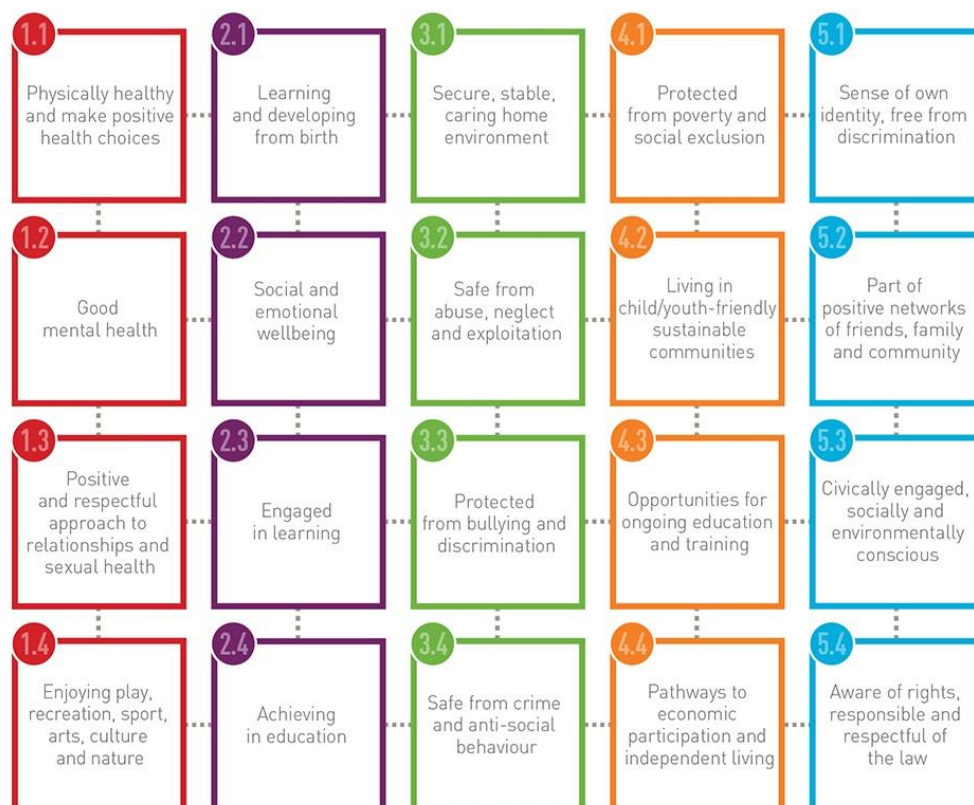
Our vision is to make Ireland the best small country in the world in which to grow up and raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.

NATIONAL OUTCOMES



AIMS:

Children and young people are or have ...



Children and Young People have a voice and influence in all decisions affecting them

Purpose

The purpose of the indicator set is to act as a barometer of progress on the five national outcomes in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and to inform future policy development. Indicators will not explain how or whether a particular action or commitment on the policy framework gave rise to or caused a particular outcome, but they are important because they will:

- Help track progress towards improving outcomes for children
- Assist in identifying trends
- Contribute to priority setting or resetting
- Inform policy formulation and service provision
- Provide for international comparisons, where possible.

The Indicator Report

Work on finalising the indicator report is nearing completion. This will be presented to the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Policy Consortium at the end of June 2017.

The indicator report includes short descriptors of the 70 indicators, which are presented in a tabular summary form. The report focuses on presenting data at two time points: the most recently available data, and data from an earlier point as close as possible to the establishment of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* in 2014.

The report contains contextual data, which are intended to include information on the number and proportions of children and young people in the population generally, as well as demographics about minority or subgroups with particular needs, such as the number of children and young people with disabilities, with special educational needs, in direct provision, in care and carrying out caring roles.

The report also includes an appendix with summaries relating to each indicator. Each summary in the appendix includes a small piece of text about how the indicator links to the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* policy document as well as information about the source of the data for each indicator and whether the indicator is included in the *State of the Nation's Children: Ireland 2016* report.

The indicator report will be followed by the dissemination of more disaggregated data on each of the indicators and a methodological report that will outline the full process undertaken in the development of the indicator set.

4.2 National outcomes

Each of the national outcomes has a Sponsor Department, with responsibility for that commitment. These are:

1. Active and healthy, with physical and mental wellbeing: Department of Health
2. Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development: Department of Education and Skills
3. Safe and protected from harm: Department of Children and Youth Affairs
4. Economic security and opportunity: Department of Social Protection
5. Connected, respected and contributing to their world: Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

Part 5: Reporting on commitments

5.1 The reporting process

In the development of this report, Government Departments and agencies were asked to account for their progress against commitments contained in the implementation plan, having regard to:

- The overall commitment
- The specific actions for 2016
- The desired outcome for 2017.

Departments and agencies were asked to complete a short form based on a 'traffic light' reporting mechanism, which used the following descriptors:

- Green = progressing well
- Amber = progressing, with some minor issues
- Red = not progressing, facing serious issues.

Government Departments were also asked to provide a short statement on their activities for children and young people over the previous year. Mindful of how much progress has been made since the launch of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* in April 2014, and seeking to ensure that Government Departments and agencies were not constrained by this, the inclusion of material relating to activities that benefit children and young people beyond the commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* was also encouraged.

This section of the report outlines the work each Sponsor Department undertook in 2016 for children and young people, with a focus on the national outcomes and the cross-sectoral priorities. It should be noted that while each Sponsor Department has overall responsibility for its own outcome area, individual commitments under that outcome may still be the responsibility of other Departments or agencies. The status of commitments under each national outcome is presented under the commentary from the relevant Department.

This section is followed by the status of commitments under the six transformational goals, and an overall picture of commitments achieved or in progress. Finally, additional context is provided on whole-of-government working with commentary from other Government Departments and agencies.

5.2 Department of Health

The Department of Health (DoH) is leading implementation of National Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing. Officials from the Health and Wellbeing Programme represent the DoH on the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Policy Consortium and works to ensure alignment between DoH policies and *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

As part of the ongoing collaboration on implementation of both *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and the Healthy Ireland Framework, representatives from the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Advisory Council and the Healthy Ireland Council met to explore potential areas for collaboration, including on youth mental health and well-being. Both Councils have committed to continuing to engage to identify and progress areas of mutual interest.

Smart Start, a training programme for pre-school, was expanded to 800 facilities. The programme consists of six units: Health Promotion, Emotional Well-being and Literacy, Physical Activity, Nutrition and Healthy Eating, Oral Health, and Health and Safety (Accident Prevention).

The establishment and launch of the *National Healthy Cities and Counties of Ireland Network* in November 2016 represents a further step in establishing a strong structure to enable and support local authorities to fully contribute to the implementation of Healthy Ireland, and the ongoing implementation of this work will also seek to support alignment and collaboration between LCDs and CYPSCs.

All of the priority actions that were identified within the Sexual Health Action Plan for 2015–2016 have been progressed. Appropriate governance structures for implementation of the National Sexual Health Strategy have been established, including reconfiguring the Health Service Executive (HSE) Crisis Pregnancy Programme as the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme and appointing a Clinical Lead for Sexual Health.

From 1 January 2016, smoking a tobacco product in a vehicle in which a child is present is prohibited by legislation. In May 2016, legislation was introduced to ensure that graphic warnings on tobacco products occupy at least 65% of the surface area of cigarette packs.

Both Budgets 2016 and 2017 increased the price of a 20-pack of cigarettes by 50 cent. The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 Committee Stage commenced in the Seanad in 2016.

In addition, the introduction of standardised packaging of all tobacco products will commence in September 2017.

Both of these policy areas to control tobacco and alcohol have a strong focus on protecting children from the harms associated with the use of these substances and aim to denormalise tobacco and alcohol use in wider society.

Ireland's first National Maternity Strategy, *Creating a Better Future Together: National Maternity Strategy 2016–2026*, was published in February 2016. This important strategy endorses a health and well-being approach to support and empower mothers and families to improve their own health and well-being and give children the best start in life as a strategic priority, in addition to access to safe, high-quality, woman-centred care.

The introduction of general practitioner (GP) care without fees to children under six years of age represents a major step forward in improving access, quality and affordability of healthcare in Ireland. The under-sixes GP service contract, which includes age-based preventive checks focused on health and well-being and a cycle of care for children with asthma, underlines the Government's commitment to enhancing primary care and keeping people well in their own communities. To date, approximately 94% of GMS GPs have entered into agreements with the HSE for the provision of services to children under six, and almost 364,000 children under six have access to GP care without fees through a medical card or GP visit card.

The Programme for Government commits to extending in phases, and subject to negotiation with GPs, free GP care to all children under 18 years of age. Legislative changes will be required for any such extension of GP care without fees to further cohorts of the population.

The extension of GP care without fees to children aged 6–11 years is one of the actions listed in the HSE's *National Service Plan 2017*. However, the timetable is subject to the outcome of discussions with GP representatives on this and other contractual matters.

The President signed into law the Health (Amendment) Act 2017 on 31 March 2017. This legislation provides that all children in receipt of a Domiciliary Care Allowance payment will now be eligible for a medical card in their own right. This measure is expected to benefit an additional 9,800 children, and the new medical cards will come into operation from 1 June 2017.

In 2016, the Department approved €4 million in funding for the HSE to recruit 83 new full-time staff in speech and language therapy (SLT) services to specifically focus on SLT waiting lists in primary care and social care for children up to 18 years old. A significant number of posts have been filled and recruitment is ongoing.

Funding of €5 million has been provided for the development of psychology services in primary care with a focus on enhanced counselling interventions for children and adolescents. The HSE expects to recruit for more than 114 assistant psychology posts on a two-year pilot basis to deliver rapid-access low-intensity psychological interventions for young people. The HSE is also recruiting 20 staff-grade psychology posts for services for children in geographical areas where there are inadequate numbers of posts in place. A computerised cognitive behavioural therapy programme for young people will be provided, which will be adapted from the work already completed for the programme for adults.

The issue of waiting lists for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was addressed in 2016 and improvement was made to CAMHS placements in age-appropriate in-patient units. The Standard Operational Procedure for CAMHS was also rolled out nationally during 2016. Development of counselling services continued across both primary and secondary care, including the provision of three new Jigsaw youth mental health services in Cork (two sites), Dublin (two sites) and Limerick (one site); development of Community Mental Health Teams and improvement of 24/7 response and liaison services also continued.

Two new mental health clinical programmes were established in 2016, specifically Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Adults and Children, and Dual Diagnosis of those with Mental Illness and Substance Misuse.

A total of €6 million in additional funds was allocated to minor capital works. A total of €7 million was allocated to capital works at Lakeview, Kerry and Blackwater House, and €2 million was allocated for homeless mental health services.

2016 also saw an increase in undergraduate psychiatric nurse training places to include better CAMHS provision.

A commitment in the National Carers' Strategy is to identify support services needed by children and young people with caring responsibilities and create mechanisms for young carers to contact service providers. In the latest progress report on implementation of the National Carers' Strategy (September 2015 to December 2016), the HSE has reported that:

Primary Care Team (PCT) members, in particular the public health nursing service, identify children in a caring role. Where they assess that a child is burdened by their caring role PCT members will review the client's Individual Care and Support Plan and mobilise resources in order to relieve the child of such burden. The PCT member will seek advice from their line manager and consider child welfare and protection issues. Where this is deemed to be a child welfare and protection issue, a referral is made to Tusla.

In 2016, the DoH approved a further €4 million in funding to provide 75 additional multidisciplinary posts in disability services in order to continue the implementation of progressing disability services for children and young people. Fifty of these posts were used to develop early intervention services in order to facilitate the implementation of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) led by DCYA.

The HSE has streamlined the provision of suitable placements and supports for school-leavers with disabilities who have continuing support needs, in cooperation with disability service providers, and has achieved a high degree of success in providing young people with the services that meet their needs. All those leaving school in 2016 with continuing support needs received the quantum of day service required. €HSE has allocated €10 million in 2017 to provide appropriate services and supports to approximately 1,500 young people with disabilities and autism who will require continuing health-funded supports on leaving school or rehabilitative (life skills) training this year.

The HSE's National Clinical Programme for Paediatrics and Neonatology has developed a new National Model of Care for Paediatric Healthcare Services in Ireland. The model provides a blueprint for neonatal and paediatric services and will form the basis for all planned service developments in this area. The establishment of the new children's hospital in Dublin provides a unique opportunity to introduce a new model of care for all paediatric services, which will enable us to tackle current and future challenges in child health.

An internationally recognised design team, supported by an experienced National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (NPHDB) and Project Team, is in place to drive the project to develop the new children's hospital and focus on delivering the project in accordance with national policy for optimal design and value for money. The granting of planning permission in April 2016 for the hospital, satellite centres and related buildings was a huge and very welcome milestone for the project. The first phase of construction (site clearing works) began on site in August 2016. The tender process for the core construction elements for the new children's hospital and the paediatric outpatients department (OPD) and urgent care centres was also undertaken in 2016.

Significant progress was also made by the Children's Hospital Group in 2016 on planning and designing the transition arrangements required to ensure patient safety and successful integration to the new facilities.

Under the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment's (DCCAE) Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty, the DoH and the HSE are supporting DCCAE and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on a 'warmth and wellbeing' pilot, which aims to establish if the provision of extensive energy efficiency upgrades to homes can have a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of the people living in the home. While the first year of the pilot targeted over-55s with chronic disease, in 2016 planning began to extend the scheme to include families with children aged under 12 years who have a diagnosed chronic respiratory condition.

A Steering Committee was established to advise the Minister of State for Communities and the National Drugs Strategy, Catherine Byrne TD, on the development of a new strategy, which will take effect from 2017 onwards. The Committee has been mandated to develop an integrated public health approach to substance misuse, and is expected to submit its report to the Minister in the second quarter of 2017.

The Programme for a Partnership Government committed to establishing a National Taskforce on Youth Mental Health 'to consider how best to introduce and teach resilience, coping mechanisms, greater awareness to children and young people, and how to access support services voluntarily at a young age.' The Taskforce, which comprises members from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors, was established within the first 100 days of Government and is being chaired by Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People, Helen McEntee TD. A Young Person's Reference Group and a Consultative Forum were also established to ensure that the voices of young people were included. The Taskforce is due to complete its work in 2017.

A Youth Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Pathfinder project continued its work in 2016. This project aims to apply a youth mental health lens to the ambitions and actions of Connecting for Life, the national strategy to reduce suicide, as well as examining a number of initiatives to improve whole-of-government working.

Comment on cross-sectoral priority: Child obesity

Tackling child obesity was identified as the cross-sectoral priority under National Outcome 1 for 2016, incorporating the 2015 priority area of increasing physical activity in children and young people. Mental health and well-being of children and young people was also identified as an additional cross-sectoral priority for 2017.

A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016–2025 was published and launched in September 2016. In accordance with Action 1.1 of the plan, which is being led by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), DoH and other partners continue to work on implementing a 'whole-of-school' approach for healthy schools. The *Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative* was also published in 2016, indicating stabilisation in the rates of overweight and obesity, and a communications campaign on childhood obesity with *safefood* and other stakeholders also continued through 2016.

Healthy Lifestyles – Have Your Say: A Consultation with Children and Young People was published at the same time as the Obesity Policy and Action Plan. This report outlines the views of children and young people on factors that help and hinder them in having a healthy lifestyle and reflects the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* commitment to include the voices of children and young people in decisions and policies that affect them.

Healthy Food for Life – National Healthy Eating Guidelines was published and launched in December 2016. *Healthy Food for Life* is a toolkit which includes a food pyramid guide to everyday food choices for adults, teenagers and children aged five years and over.

Get Ireland Active! The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland was published and launched in January 2016. All of the priority actions in the plan that were identified for 2016 have been progressed through partnership with other Departments, agencies, Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs)

and local authorities (LAs). A cross-sectoral working group has been established to oversee the plan's implementation and has met on a number of occasions to progress its implementation.

5.3 Department of Education and Skills

In 2016, the Minister for Education and Skills published the *Action Plan for Education 2016–2019*. The plan encompasses five high-level goals that permeate the strategic actions and targets set out for the education and training sector. These are to:

- Improve the learning experience and success of learners
- Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs
- Help those delivering education services to continuously improve
- Build stronger bridges between education and wider community
- Improve national planning and support services.

Significant progress in achieving these goals has been made across the education sector. In schools, the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 was published in July 2016 to provide families with fairer access to their local schools, and *Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools*, a new quality framework for school self-evaluation, was published in August 2016.

In the early years sector, a new system of education-focused inspections in the universal pre-school centres, funded through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, was rolled out by the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate at the request of DCYA. The Inspectorate was awarded the Excellence in Policy Award at the 2016 Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards. The National Síolta Aistear Initiative was also put in place in September 2016 and supports the implementation of the national quality and curriculum frameworks (Síolta and Aistear) to improve the quality of educational provision in the sector.

Comment on cross-sectoral priority: Review of DEIS

The DEIS Plan for 2017, launched in February 2017, sets out the vision of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) for future intervention in the critical area of educational disadvantage. In terms of improving educational outcomes, DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools remains the overarching policy instrument of DES to address educational disadvantage. It focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3–18 years). Supports under DEIS are designed to address the needs of schools that require significant additional resources to supplement and support a high percentage of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. A key component of the DEIS programme is the emphasis on school planning, target setting, and monitoring of progress and outcomes.

The DEIS Plan for 2017 is the culmination of more than 18 months of consultation and discourse with education partners and other stakeholders. The plan aims to ensure that future delivery of interventions is fully informed by the practical experiences of teachers, parents, students and NGOs working on behalf of children at risk of educational disadvantage and their families. This process is recorded in the Department's *Report on the Review of DEIS*, which is available on the [DES website](#).

An important element of the DEIS review process was the use of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* structures to engage with other Government Departments and agencies and the NGO sector to consider more effective ways of delivering key supports for schools and school communities.

5.4 Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Key achievements

During 2016, DCYA worked to advance the priorities contained in our [Statement of Strategy 2016–2019](#). Key achievements included:

- Introduction of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), which provides supports for children with a disability to access the ECCE Programme. This was one of the first cross-sectoral priorities identified under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.
- New childcare regulations to underpin a number of key early years sector reforms.
- Expansion of the ECCE Programme to provide 15 hours of free pre-school per week for all children from the time they turn three years old until they go to school.
- Establishment of the statutory Children First Interdepartmental Implementation Group to support the intensive work underway to ensure that all sectors are ready for commencement of the Children First Act 2015 by the end of 2017.
- Establishment of a National Youth Strategy Lead Team to coordinate, progress and monitor implementation of the National Youth Strategy.
- Appointment of the Independent Chair of the group to oversee the first ever National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy.

Whole-of-government working

In line with *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, DCYA has progressed a considerable amount of work with colleagues in other Government Departments, agencies and the wider children and youth sector. These working relationships ensure that the many pressures faced by children, young people and their families are to the fore in our thinking and policy-making.

This includes DCYA's involvement in the progression of the cross-sectoral priorities identified under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*:

- Launching *Healthy Lifestyles – Have Your Say*, the result of a national consultation of children and young people to help inform the development of the new national obesity strategy.
- Providing input into the review of DEIS and the *Action Plan for Education 2016–2019*.
- Progressing a whole-of-government approach to homelessness and to helping families by supporting implementation of *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*.
- Working with other Departments, in particular the Department of Social Protection, to develop a whole-of-government approach to child poverty. DCYA has also established a Children's Equality Commission to ensure that the voices of children who experience or understand economic hardship or poverty are directly heard and acted on by policy-makers.

Budget 2017

DCYA secured additional funding in Budget 2017 in order to protect and expand services to support children, young people and families. In this context, DCYA secured additional funding of €173 million, bringing the Department's total funding to over €1.3 billion for 2017. This included additional funding for Tusla – The Child and Family Agency to allow it to continue with its ambitious programme of reform of services and to build an effective and responsive child protection and welfare system.

Childcare

A major policy priority for DCYA is the development of a new Single Affordable Childcare Scheme to ensure access to high-quality and affordable childcare for low-income families. A lot of the groundwork towards this was carried out during 2016. An Early Years Forum has been established to facilitate the discussion of relevant issues among key stakeholders, as well as to enable consultations involving the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, DCYA officials, and key representatives of the sector.

Comment on cross-sectoral priority: Prevention and early intervention

Background

The Policy Innovation Unit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs has developed the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) to take a coordinated approach to enhancing capacity, knowledge and quality in prevention and early intervention policy, service and practice. In doing so, the QCBI aims to harness the learning derived from the various local area-based initiatives and also draw on sectoral reform programmes such as the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme by Tusla, and the Nurture Programme by the HSE and the Katharine Howard Foundation. It is expected that the QCBI will play a critical role in progressing prevention and early intervention as a transformational goal and cross-sectoral priority under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The ultimate goal is to enhance support for children across Ireland who are at risk of poor outcomes and move them to a positive trajectory.

Overview

The QCBI has the following main objectives and key outputs:

- 1) Enhancing access and use of data relating to children, young people and their families by supporting the consolidation of existing initiatives and the development of a central hub for national- and local-level data.
- 2) Supporting the collection, collation and assessment of evidence required to ground and inform interventions and to create a live dynamic two-way learning platform for policy-makers, providers and practitioners.
- 3) Enhancing the capacity and skills development of policy-makers, providers and practitioners in the appraisal and application of evidence-informed approaches through collaborative programmes of coaching, training and development opportunities.
- 4) Aligning and enhancing sustaining quality systems and standards in prevention and early intervention to mainstream developments and establish benchmarks.

Preparation and project development

During this period, there were important consultations carried out with key informants and experts in the design and planned delivery of the QCBI, reaching more than 80 stakeholders. In addition, a targeted landscape analysis was commissioned to identify relevant initiatives that the QCBI should consider when developing its outputs.

As part of the consultation, the QCBI engaged with relevant national programmes with strong prevention and early intervention elements to identify synergies and opportunities for collaboration. Relevant stakeholders included representatives of the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme by Tusla; the Nurture Programme by HSE; and the DEIS programme by the Department of Education and Skills. Lastly, informed by Ministerial advice, early 2017 saw engagement with leading international experts on prevention and early intervention. They commended the initiative and provided some further input into the development of deliverables under the QCBI.

In addition to this work, key project documents were created to support project development such as an overview plan, log framework and information documents on the key questions related to the QCBI. This work was supported by direct input from the sector. In addition, the governance framework was also discussed and agreed, subsequent documentation was produced, and proposed members were identified for the oversight and working groups. These groups will have direct linkages with *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* structures including the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, the Advisory Council and the Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group.

Developing key outputs

In 2016, a scoping exercise was carried out to identify options and required steps to develop the proposed data and information hub. The report was produced in May 2016 and informed thinking around the development of the data and information hub; later, discussion began with Tusla about the creation of the resource. At the end of 2016, an agreement was reached about funding the Pathfinder Project proposed by Tusla, followed by signing a service level agreement and adopting an overall project plan in early 2017. It was agreed that the online system would link with the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Policy Framework and would contain data related to the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* national indicators and their local equivalents where possible. The initial target group will be local Children and Young People's Services Committees.

Another major output is the creation of a digital resource that will contain an inventory of prevention and early intervention programmes and approaches under the five national outcomes. Furthermore, the resource will also provide the identified impact of interventions as well as the cost, material and human resources needed to implement them. Based on a review of relevant commitments under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and pertinent national programmes and services, priority themes that would form the initial focus of the knowledge exchange platform were identified. A draft tender document was subsequently developed for the purpose of securing the services of a provider to develop the resource through a competitive process, and this document was circulated to key experts.

In early 2017, it was also agreed that local and national innovation schemes would be launched in mid-2017 to support increasing the capacity of providers and practitioners to use data and evidence when implementing prevention and early intervention approaches. Discussion with possible partners

also took place in early 2017. Furthermore, exploratory work was carried out with regard to the creation of a training module on prevention and early intervention that can be taught at universities and colleges as part of a training programme or as a stand-alone course. It is anticipated that the development of this module will begin towards the end of 2017.

5.5 Department of Social Protection

Children and families

The Department of Social Protection (DSP) spends in excess of €3.2 billion per annum specifically on children to support families with children. This expenditure is paid through a combination of universal and targeted child income supports. Expenditure on Child Benefit is estimated to be over €2 billion in 2017.

In 2017, the combined value of Child Benefit and Qualified Child increases is €64 per child per week. This is in line with the commitment in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion* to maintain the combined value of child income support measures at 33–35% of the minimum adult welfare rate.

In addition, DSP has two measures that assist with the costs of children attending school: the School Meals Programme and the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance. Expenditure on both these schemes is in the order of nearly €90 million.

School Meals Programme

Under the DSP's School Meals Programme, funding is provided towards the provision of food for disadvantaged children, benefiting some 1,400 schools and organisations and more than 200,000 pupils.

In 2016, some 50 DEIS schools outside the programme were prioritised for inclusion in the scheme, resulting in 21 joining. In 2017, following the review of DEIS, some 60 new DEIS schools outside the programme have been contacted with a view to their participation. All are being offered a breakfast for all pupils if warranted and a lunch for the majority of pupils. So far, the majority have expressed an interest in participating. Also, for the first time in many years, 175 non-DEIS schools have been contacted and offered a breakfast club from September 2017. Funding for the School Meals Programme was increased by €5.7 million in Budget 2017, an increase of 13.6%.

During 2016, some 300 schools were inspected as part of a three-year rolling programme, and the majority of these were compliant with the scheme's rules.

DSP continues to actively engage with DES as a key partner in the programme.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

This scheme helps eligible families with the extra costs of clothing and footwear when children start school each autumn. A total of over 154,000 families with some 283,000 children benefited from the scheme at a cost of €40 million in 2016.

Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC)

Most weekly social welfare payments include an additional payment in respect of each qualified child up to age 18, which is extended to encompass older school/college-going children up to age 22 under certain circumstances.

It is estimated that the cost of Increases for a Qualified Child (IQCs) in 2016 was around €546 million. Based on 2017 estimated numbers, the expenditure on IQCs is forecast to be €578.9 million this year.

In-work supports

- **Family Income Supplement**

Family Income Supplement (FIS) is currently paid to around 57,000 families with some 127,000 children. Expenditure on FIS is expected to be €422 million in 2017.

- **Back to Work Family Dividend**

The Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) scheme continues to support people to take up employment. At the end of 2016, there were 13,001 people with 22,981 beneficiaries in receipt of payment, with a total expenditure of €28.45 million.

One-Parent Family Payment reforms

The final phase of the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) reforms were introduced on 2 July 2015, bringing the maximum age of the youngest child for receipt of OFP to seven years for all recipients. The majority of customers transitioned to the Jobseeker's Transitional payment (JST), the Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) and the FIS. DSP has begun engaging with lone parents who are on a JST or JA payment on a proactive and supportive basis. This is the first time that the Department has actively engaged with lone parents on this scale with a view to improving their circumstances through access to education, training and employment supports. This is a very significant step forward in addressing the poverty rates for these families.

As of January 2017, more than 9,000 of the 14,500 lone parents who are on JST have been selected for activation. Six thousand of these are in an activation phase, i.e., they have already been selected for activation and have been case managed, are scheduled for an engagement or are awaiting an appointment time. More than 3,000 lone parents have met with a case officer, agreed on a personal plan and are progressing with this plan. Of these, approximately 1,600 have moved into some form of education and training ranging from personal development to childcare to third-level education.

Using Eurostat 2015 data, social transfers reduced the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children from 42.3% to 17.9%, a poverty reduction rate of 57.7%. Ireland is among the best countries in the EU for reducing poverty through social transfers, well above the EU average poverty reduction rate of 39% and ranking second out of the 28 member states.

Pathways to Work

The Pathways to Work (PtW) strategy 2016–2020 adopts a two-pronged approach:

- Consolidation: Consolidating the recent reforms to the Public Employment and Welfare Services and optimising provision to maximise outcomes for its clients.
- Development: Gradually expanding access to activation services, as resources allow, to other non-employed people of working age.

Pathways to Work 2016–2020 commits to continuing to implement the actions set out in the *Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan*.

National Youth Strategy – Comprehensive Employment Strategy

The report of the Make Work Pay Interdepartmental Group was published in April 2017 and made a number of recommendations to improve the efficacy of social protection and other schemes in engaging with persons with disabilities and supporting their employment. These include specific proposals in relation to a reconfiguration of payments for young persons aged 16–22 years. In launching the report, the Minister for Social Protection has promised a period of consultation with persons with disabilities in relation to these recommendations, and DSP has started this consultation process with the disability sector.

Comment on cross-sectoral priority: Child poverty

Whole-of-government approach to tackling child poverty

2015 saw the first reduction in the number of children in consistent poverty since 2008. Compared to the previous year, there were 13,000 fewer children (approximately a 9% decrease) in consistent poverty in 2015. In order to achieve the 2011 baseline target, a new figure of 102,000 children will have to be lifted out of consistent poverty to meet the child poverty target by 2020.

The specifics of the child poverty target are contained under Policy Priorities in the Outcome 4: Economic Security and Opportunity section of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020*. In order to progress the child poverty priority, DSP in conjunction with the Advisory Council set up an ad hoc group to facilitate policy discussion on effective implementation. The group comprised key officials from relevant Government Departments and NGOs – including the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the National Youth Council of Ireland, Barnardos, One Family, and the Children’s Rights Alliance – and was co-chaired by DSP and the Children’s Rights Alliance. The ad hoc group met a number of times from late 2015 until the final meeting on 7 November 2016.

DSP, in conjunction with partner Departments, has produced a paper detailing the whole-of-government approach to tackling child poverty. This paper emphasises the need for a combined approach to tackling child poverty levels in Ireland, involving both income supports and services.

The structure of this paper is informed by the European Commission’s recommendation, *Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage*, which sets out a robust framework to address child poverty and promote child well-being across three pillars:

- Access to adequate resources
- Access to affordable quality services
- Children’s right to participate.

The document includes commentary from the relevant Government Departments in relation to ongoing and planned activities. The document was submitted to the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Policy Consortium. Agreement has been reached to further develop the approach to tackling child poverty through the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* framework.

Social impact assessment

In November 2016, the Department published its [Social impact assessment of the welfare and income tax measures in Budget 2017](#). The assessment takes account of the higher rent limits

introduced to provide increased stability to tenants and the increase in the national minimum wage. The principal finding is that average household incomes increase by 1% (€9.20 per week) as a result of Budget 2017. The bottom two income quintiles gain the most, with smaller gains among the middle and top quintiles. There were gains in income across all family types, with non-earning lone parents and couples with children gaining the most. Earning lone parents were among the family types with above-average gains in 2017. Social transfers continue to perform strongly in reducing poverty, with an estimated 0.8 percentage point reduction in the population at risk of poverty as a result of Budget 2017.

The forthcoming Social Inclusion Monitor 2015 has a specific section on child poverty trends and supporting indicators. The monitor reports that there were 139,000 children in consistent poverty in 2015, a decrease of 13,000 children from 2014. This means that a new figure of 102,000 children have to be lifted out of consistent poverty to meet the child poverty reduction target by 2020. The reduction in child poverty suggests that the recovery in the economy is leading to improved living conditions for households with children. The 2015 monitor features new analysis showing consistent poverty rates across three distinct age groups of children: 0–5 years, 6–11 years and 12–17 years.

The Government's strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion is set out in the [*Updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015–2017*](#). Four of the high-level goals relate to children and are directly aligned to the child economic well-being goals and targets in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. DSP, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, is reviewing the National Action Plan in 2017, with a view to developing a successor plan for future periods. The aligned national social target for poverty reduction, including the child-specific poverty target, will be reviewed as part of this process. The 2017 Social Inclusion Forum will provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on the current plan and inform the direction of its successor.

5.6 Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government

Overview of engagement of SICAP with young people

SICAP encompasses a lifecycle approach and will be engaging with young people who are living in disadvantaged areas and/or who belong to the following priority target groups:

- Children and families in disadvantaged areas
- Lone parents
- New communities (including refugees/asylum seekers)
- People living in disadvantaged communities
- People with disabilities
- Roma
- The unemployed (including those not on the Live Register)
- Travellers
- Young unemployed people living in disadvantaged areas
- NEETs – Young people aged 15–24 years who are not in employment, education or training.

The primary engagement with young people under 18 years is likely to be through Goal one and Goal two. However, the programme also requires LCDCs and programme implementers to pay particular

attention to young people aged 15–24 years who are experiencing unemployment. Young people have been hit hardest by the economic downturn, particularly those in the 20–24 age cohort, which has experienced the highest levels of joblessness. There is a risk that continued unemployment can lead to lasting scarring effects and affect the employment and life chances of a young person for decades to come. Certain subgroups of unemployed youth are at particular risk and will receive specific support. The Youth Employment Initiative special allocation to SICAP in 2015–2017, for example, is dedicated solely to those young people defined nationally as NEETs aged 15–24 years.

Summary of achievements and activities by LCDCs in 2016

During 2016, the Local Economic and Community Plans were adopted in all the relevant local authority areas. The plans include key priorities in relation to children and young people and their families.

DCYA is a key player on LCDCs nationwide. They lead mainly on issues that affect children in areas such as early childhood care and education, youth justice, child welfare and protection, and children and young people's participation, and are centrally involved in driving the implementation of actions identified in the plans that contribute to addressing these issues.

DCYA is a member of the Inter Departmental Group (IDG) for Local and Community Development, which meets quarterly. During 2016, a trilateral meeting between the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG), DCYA and the Department of Health was held to advance cooperation, and to ensure that service needs are identified and addressed and that duplication is reduced.

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) are the key structure identified by Government to plan and coordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. A guidance note on the interaction between CYPSC and LCDCs has been agreed between DCYA and DHPCLG. The document describes a process of working together to ensure the best outcomes for all children and young people in each LCDC area.

Young people from Comhairle na nÓg are fully involved in the relevant local authority structures, in particular the LCDCs.

Comment on cross-sectoral priority: Homelessness

Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness

The implementation of *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* is being advanced across a number of Government Departments and agencies under the oversight of the Cabinet Committee on Housing, chaired by An Taoiseach. The long-term solution to the current homelessness issue is to increase the supply of homes; accordingly, *Rebuilding Ireland* is designed to accelerate all types of housing supply. During the lifetime of the plan, some 47,000 new social houses will be provided.

It is intended that long-term housing needs of those currently homeless, including young people, will be met through housing supports, such as the enhanced Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, and through general social housing allocations. Significant outputs are being achieved in this regard;

housing authorities achieved more than 3,000 sustainable exits from homeless accommodation into independent tenancies during 2016, a record level of exits in a calendar year.

Moving families out of hotels

Accommodating family units in hotel arrangements is inappropriate for anything other than a short period of time. It is intended to move the existing group of families out of these hotel arrangements as quickly as possible, and to limit the extent to which such accommodation has to be used for new presentations. The aim is that by mid-2017, hotels will only be used for emergency accommodation in very limited circumstances.

Rebuilding Ireland ensures that services for families, and particularly for children, in hotels and other emergency accommodation is far better, including: enhanced liaison on family support, child welfare and child protection, including Family Resource Centres; access to free public transport for family travel and for school journeys; and practical supports and advice for good nutrition for those without access to cooking facilities.

New supported temporary accommodation initiatives are currently being delivered to provide family accommodation with a greater level of stability than is possible in hotel accommodation while move-on options to long-term independent living are identified and secured. Furthermore, such arrangements will facilitate more coordinated needs assessment and support planning, including on-site access to required services such as welfare, health, housing services, cooking and laundry facilities and appropriate family supports.

5.7 Overall progress on national outcomes

Figure 3



Overall, strong progress has been made in the implementation of the commitments under the five national outcomes, as illustrated in the diagrams in Figure 3.

The two commitments represented by the red portions of the charts in Figure 3, indicating that they are not progressing/require whole-of-government attention, are:

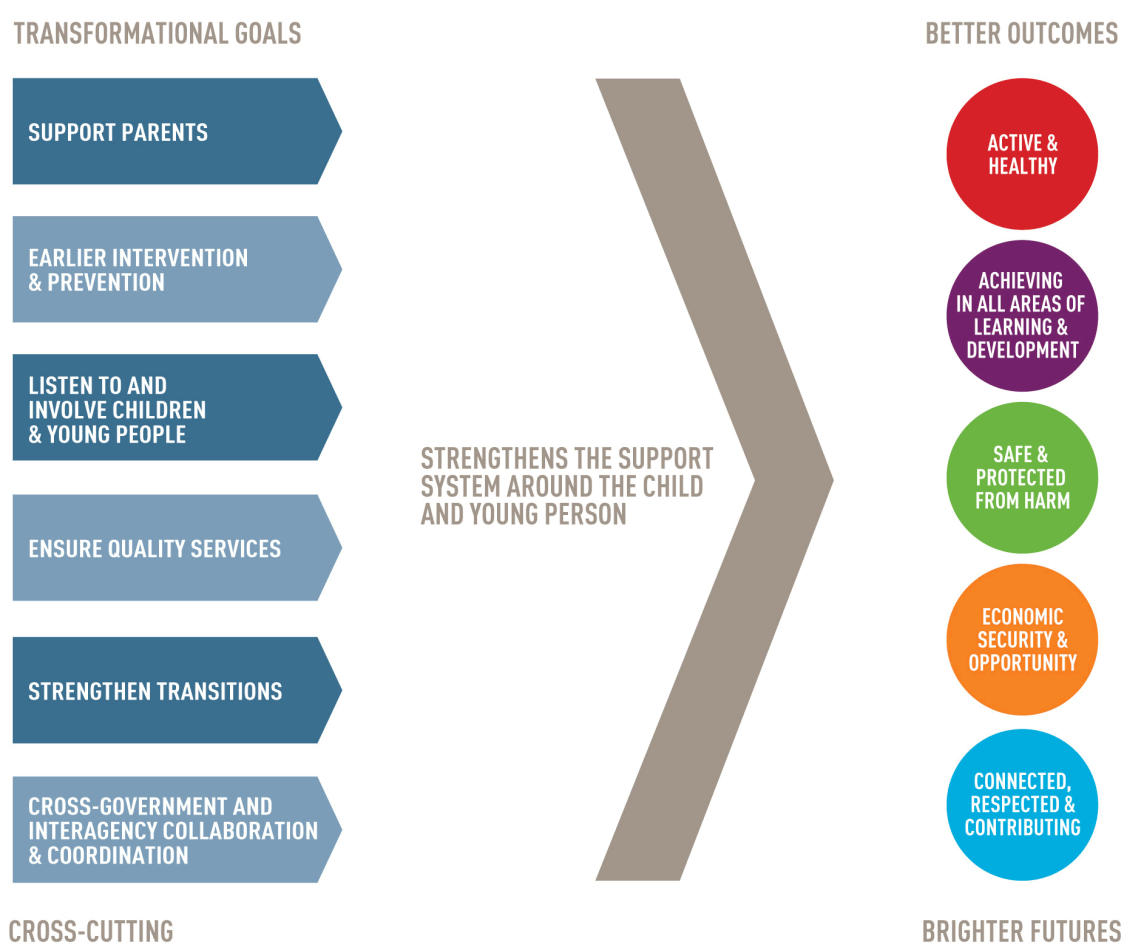
4.2 Set a national child-specific social target to lift more than 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level. This target will include reducing the higher consistent poverty rate for households with children as compared to non-child households (8.8% compared to 4.2%) and for children as compared to adults (9.3% compared to 6%) (DSP, DCYA, DoH, DES, Tusla, HSE).

5.4 Hold a referendum before the end of 2015 on a proposal to amend the Constitution to reduce the voting age to 16 (DHPCLG).

5.8 Transformational goals

In order to deliver better outcomes for children and young people, and thus increase the number of children and young people who achieve the five national outcomes of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, a number of cross-cutting themes that require whole-of-government attention have been identified. These transformational goals are key to ensuring that policies and services are made more effective in delivering better outcomes for children and young people.

Achieving these goals will lead to improvement in the quality and timeliness of support to children and young people and to the effectiveness and responsiveness of policy and services provision. Some of these goals require cultural change, some require the rebalancing of resources, and some require better planning and communication; however, all are required to strengthen the support systems around children and young people to achieve better outcomes.



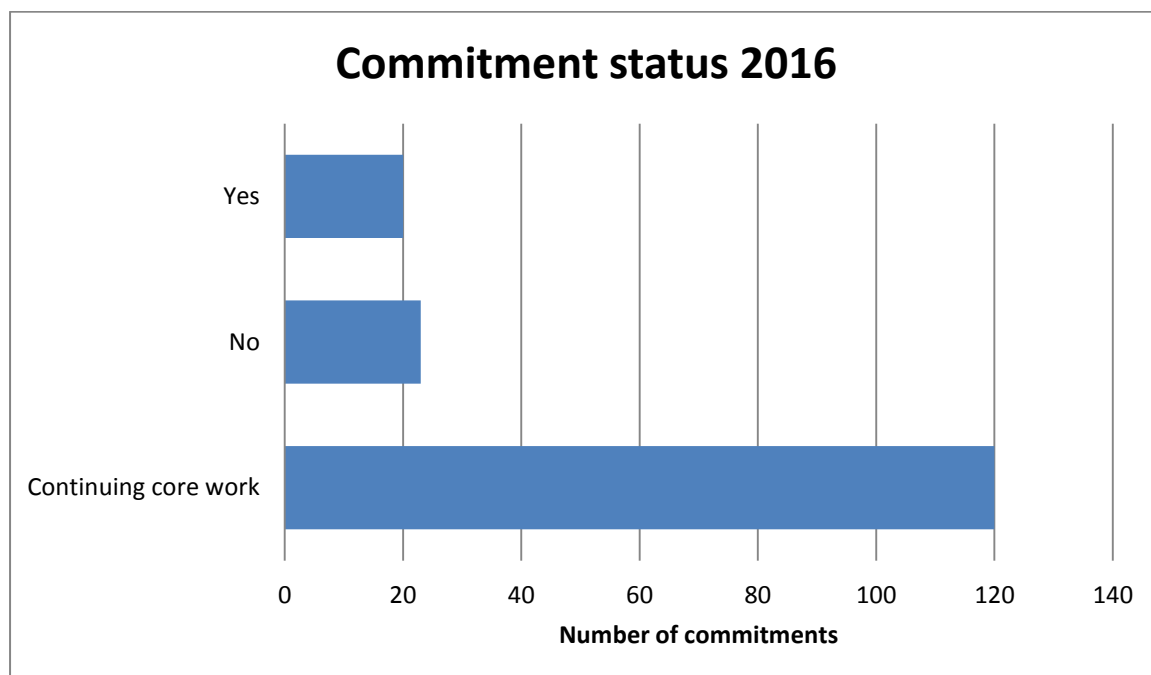
The individual commitments that make up the transformational goals are the responsibility of numerous different Departments and agencies. DCYA has responsibility for the transformational goals at the Sponsors Group.

As shown in the Figure 4, implementation of the transformational goals is progressing well across the whole of government.

Figure 4



5.9 Overall commitments achieved



It should be noted that while a number of the commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* have already been achieved, the framework runs until 2020. Given the intractable nature of some commitments and the complexity of others, it would be unrealistic to expect that they would be achieved less than halfway through the implementation of an eight-year framework.

It is also clear that many of the commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* are, by their nature, commitments that will always be ongoing, and it will never be possible to say that they have been achieved, with no more action required. This is reflected in the diagram above.

The key strategy in achieving collaborative and concerted progress on the commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* has been the DCYA initiative to identify the annual cross-sectoral priorities. This approach clusters a range of commitments under key themes, such as prevention and early intervention, addressing child poverty, etc. Such a strategy ensures that key issues are addressed and advanced in a collaborative fashion, in line with the cross-government and cross-sectoral principles underpinning *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

Part 6: Cross-governmental progress

6.1 Department of Justice and Equality

Regarding commitment G4, paid paternity leave was introduced in Ireland in September 2016 for the first time through the Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016. The Act creates an entitlement to two weeks' leave and benefit for new fathers. The leave can be taken at any time within the first six months following the child's birth. Instrumental in the Government decision to introduce a period of statutory paternity leave is the fact that a child's early years are of life-defining importance. In particular, research confirms that children benefit most from parental care in the first year, and that there is a critical window of opportunity at this time to build a foundation that will define a child's prospects as an adult. There is also evidence to suggest that paternity leave in particular has longer-term benefits for a child's development and learning abilities. The Government recognises that it is in a child's best interests that he or she can be cherished and nurtured by both parents in his or her first months and that, in addition, investing in a child's early years leads to better outcomes for wider society. Accordingly, there is a commitment in the *Programme for a Partnership Government* to further increase paid parental leave in the first year of a child's life over the next number of years.

On commitments 3.7 and 4.8, the International Protection Act 2015 came into operation on 31 December 2016. Applications for asylum, subsidiary protection and permission to remain in the State are now being examined under the Single Application Procedure. The 2015 Act replaces the previous sequential application system, bringing Ireland into line with the processing arrangements applicable in other EU member states. The new processing arrangements will determine certainty of status at an earlier stage for those entitled to seek international protection within the State.

Regarding commitments 3.13, 3.14 and 3.15, the *Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland* was published in late 2016. It contains specific measures for responding to child victims of human trafficking.

Significant progress has been made in relation to commitments G18 and 3.17 with the commencement on 18 January 2016 of the following key provisions of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, which deal with guardianship, custody and access:

- A person other than a parent may become the child's guardian.
- A parent's spouse, civil partner or cohabitant of not less than three years will be able to apply for custody where she or he has shared parenting of the child for two years. A grandparent or other relative will be able to apply to court for custody of a child where she or he is an adult who has undertaken the child's day-to-day care for more than 12 months and the child has no parent or guardian willing or able to act as guardian.
- Relatives of a child such as grandparents or those acting in loco parentis will be able to apply to have access to children more easily in the context of relationship breakdown.
- A child's best interests will be the paramount consideration for the court in proceedings on guardianship, custody or access.
- The court can impose enforcement orders where a parent or guardian has been denied custody or access.
- A child co-parented by civil partners will have the same protections as are enjoyed by a child of a family based on marriage.

- A maintenance responsibility may be imposed on a cohabiting partner for a partner's child where the partner is a guardian of the child.
- Unmarried fathers will automatically become guardians of their children if they meet a cohabitation requirement after 18 January 2016. An unmarried father who cohabits for 12 months with the child's mother, including three months following the child's birth, will automatically become the child's guardian.

In relation to commitment 3.20, the Irish Youth Justice Service and An Garda Síochána approved the use of the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory 2.0 (YLS/CMI 2.0) as the comprehensive assessment tool for use in Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs). This assessment tool equips youth justice workers in the projects to assess the risk of recidivism in project participants and to develop a case management plan on the basis of the specific risks and needs of the individual. This means that interventions can be tailored appropriately and lead to more positive outcomes for project participants. The roll-out of the assessment tool was completed in 2016, with all youth justice workers in the GYDPs trained in its use.

6.2 Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Regarding commitment G42, the *Senior Public Service Leadership Development Strategy 2017–2020* has been finalised and includes development initiatives primarily for the senior civil service, which are to be extended to the wider public service where appropriate.

On commitment G44, a new suite of Customer Service specific training programmes have been designed with Departmental/Organisational L&D business partners.

In relation to commitment G67, the action has been marked as green in relation to ongoing development of policy analysis and evaluation capacity within the public sector, as well as ongoing training and guidance on the Public Spending Code Performance Budgeting Initiative on the basis that work was ongoing in both areas over the course of 2016.

6.3 Department of Finance

- The Home Carer Tax Credit was increased from €1,000 to €1,100 in Budget 2017 to improve supports for families where one spouse works primarily in the home to care for children or other dependents. This credit is of benefit to more than 80,000 families annually.
- In conjunction with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the national minimum wage was increased by €0.50 for 2016 and by a further €0.10 for 2017, and now stands at €9.25 per hour. The minimum rate for young people and trainees was increased proportionally.

These are in addition to the Budget measures which are available to taxpayers of all ages, such as:

- Budget 2017 introduced a package of personal tax reliefs centred on reductions to the three lowest rates of Universal Social Charge (USC). This will reduce the marginal tax rate for incomes up to €70,044 to 49%, comprising 40% income tax, 5% USC and 4% PRSI.
- The Earned Income Credit, introduced in Budget 2016, was further increased from €550 to €950 in Budget 2017. This credit is available to the self-employed with earned income who do not have access to the PAYE credit.

6.4 Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

Enterprise/entrepreneur development

The Student Enterprise Awards programme, run by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), is now in its 15th year and in 2016 attracted almost 22,000 second-level students from 620 schools.

The objectives of the programme are to:

- Give students practical, real-life experience of running their own business
- Encourage students to think about entrepreneurship and self-employment as a viable career choice after school
- Enhance the teaching of business and entrepreneurship in schools by combining classroom learning with real-life experience.

Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur competition is aimed at the now expanded cohort of 18–35-year-olds who may have an outstanding idea or commercial venture either for a start-up or within an existing business. In 2016, 1,840 applications across the three categories of Best New Idea, Best Start-up and Best Established Business were received. This represents an 82% increase since the first programme in 2014. Winners and runners-up at the LEO level received investments in their projects.

Protection of young workers

Both daytime and night-time checks under the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996 continue to be carried out by Inspectors of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). These inspections are differentiated on the basis of age and the school-going status of the worker concerned.

Research into the incidence and effect of official sub-minimum national minimum wage (NMW) rates for young (under 18 years) and inexperienced workers was commissioned through the Low Pay Commission in partnership with the Economic and Social Research Institute and published in January 2017.¹ The research found that while the actual usage of these sub-minimum rates in Ireland is extremely low, a significant number of other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries used such rates. The Low Pay Commission expects to make further evidence-based recommendations to the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation following the addition of a specific question on the NMW to the Quarterly National Household Survey from the second quarter of 2017 onwards.

6.5 Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Following the publication of the *Report of the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group* in 2014, an implementation group was established to progress its recommendations.

The full implementation of the report's recommendations would require the transfer of certain functions between the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Children and

¹ "A Study of Sub-Minimum Wage Rates for Young People".

Youth Affairs. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) is awaiting the outcome of discussions between these two Departments.

At the EU level, there are a number of developments, including the REFIT review of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and the potential review of the e-Commerce Directive, which may have an impact on the governance of online content. DCCAE is engaging in discussions with a view to finding practical solutions to allow and facilitate safe and secure use of the Internet.

Regarding commitment 3.19, DCCAE has continued to engage with Internet service operators, including social media providers, to promote continued evolution of terms of service and community guidelines.

6.6 Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

National Physical Activity Plan

The first National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP) was launched on 14 January 2016 under the Healthy Ireland framework. A cross-sectoral oversight and implementation group was established in 2016, jointly led by the Department of Health and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTS), to oversee implementation of the NPAP. It has since been decided to establish three subgroups dealing with children and young people, communications, and research. The subgroup dealing with children and young people is being designed to ensure that children and young people's particular voices, perspectives and preferences are garnered for the purposes of ensuring the most effective implementation of the NPAP.

DTTS has also engaged with children and young people in a variety of other policy areas, in line with the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020*

Sport Ireland has engaged with a number of sports in the development and delivery of a programme of engaging young people in decision-making in their sports. Sport Ireland is also working with DCYA in the development and delivery of the Train the Trainers programme, which will train facilitators in the appropriate methods to engage with young people. These trainers will be selected from across the national governing bodies and the Local Sports Partnerships network.

Local authorities have been reminded of their obligations to seek the views of children and young people in delivering the Smarter Travel and Bike Week programmes. A competition for children and young people was organised to develop a new logo for Bike Week.

The views of children and young people will be sought when the mid-term review of the National Cycle Policy Framework is undertaken later in 2017.

IRCG Coast Guard Volunteer Units conduct water safety campaigns for primary schools under the School Visit Programme. The programme has been in place for some years and the content has been updated based on feedback from the presenters regarding their own experiences in terms of classroom response. The programme includes instruction on basic water safety, wearing life jackets and how to raise the alarm. The Irish Coast Guard also participated at the BT Young Scientist

Competition in January 2017 and plans to participate in the 2017 Bloom Festival following a similar theme of water safety promotion for young people.

Other organisations that may be involved in similar programmes include Irish Water Safety (IWS), which comes under the remit of DCCAE, and RNLI, an independent charity.

Comhairle na nÓg was part of the consultation process for the Department's *Statement of Strategy 2016–2019*.

6.7 Tusla – The Child and Family Agency

The actions in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* framework that are the responsibility of Tusla are progressing as planned. Tusla – The Child and Family Agency is strongly committed to the Government approach to working for children and young people set out in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* framework.

Tusla's *Corporate Plan 2015–2017* was prepared within the overarching national policy framework for children and young people of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The strategic objectives and the short-term outputs that emanated from the Corporate Plan are based on the high-level outcomes of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Tusla will contribute to the delivery of the national framework through advancing its preventative focus to practice and to the legislative programme which relates to aftercare, adoption and Children First, including arrangements for mandatory reporting and the development of a non-compliance register for organisations that do not have an appropriate safeguarding statement in place.

Please find below details of Tusla's achievements under the Corporate Plan in 2016.

Tusla's child protection processes and systems are responding to children at risk in a timely manner:

- The National Child Care Information System (NCCIS) was deployed in the Mid-West in 2016 following detailed software analysis, development and testing. Roll-out into other areas is ongoing and is due to be completed in mid-2018.
- Project team recruited and capacity developed internally to manage NCCIS
- Developed, modified and maintained the Child Protection Notification System (CPNS) to secure the safety of children at risk of harm
- Review of the National Emergency Out of Hours Service has been completed and monthly performance reports have now been published.
- Completion of the development of the universal e-learning programme for Children First
- Quarterly Integrated Performance and Activity Reports were published throughout 2016.
- The Tusla complaints policy, Tell Us, was implemented in the third quarter of 2016. Guidance for members of the public and staff and a complaints leaflet for young people were developed and published on the Tusla website. Briefing sessions on Tell Us for Tusla staff commenced.
- The Tusla Incident Management Policy was finalised and approved, including two supporting documents: Look-back Review Guidance and System's Analysis Guidelines.
- Established a National Incident Management System (NIMS) Oversight Group.

All processes and systems underpinning children and family policy and services are evidence informed:

- The National Policy Oversight Committee has standardised policy development across the agency.
- An audit was conducted of the current policy catalogue to identify gaps and guide improvements.
- The Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme has been established in 70 Child and Family Support Networks.
- An evidence-informed Practice Project has been developed with the Centre for Effective Services.
- Submissions were made to DCYA regarding the impact of legislative changes, including Children First, aftercare, adoption and family relationships. Briefing sessions were provided to staff regarding the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015.
- *Tusla Quality Improvement Framework: A Tusla Approach to Improving the Quality and Safety of Services* and supporting guidance documents were published.
- National Research Office established and Research needs analysis completed.
- The implementation of a Participation Strategy has advanced and participation documentation and leaflets have been circulated among staff.
- Participation Toolkit and National Training Programme developed and 37 trainers were trained. National training in participation was initiated in the fourth quarter of 2016.
- Rationalisation and development of new metrics completed. Outcomes-based metrics project initiated.

A targeted range of family and parenting supports:

- National roll-out of Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) coordinator posts. Structures established within CYPSC subcommittees to ensure strong linkages with PPFS.
- The Tusla/Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) National Operations Group met on a number of occasions throughout 2016.
- Every young person in special care was assessed and an individual therapeutic plan was provided.
- Strategy and toolkit for commissioning were developed. Commissioning Market Positions Statements developed in five pilot areas. Training on governance and commissioning developed.
- A national standard monitoring and reporting framework for Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Services has been established, with a national DSGBV Services team recruited to provide support for oversight and commissioning developments.
- Implementation of Meitheal, resulting in guidelines, was completed, providing clarity on operational procedures between Social Work services and Meitheal services.
- Meitheal Practice model was established in all 17 operational areas. Performance indicators and definitions are in operation.
- The Parenting Participation Toolkit was completed and disseminated. Parenting Support Champions have been established nationally.
- Development of Tusla's National Children's Charter is at an advanced stage.

- Tusla, through PPFS, has provided seed funding for young people's participation and parental participation projects in all 17 operational areas.
- A number of Forums for Children in Care were established and further development towards identifying additional forums is underway.

Attendance, participation and retention in full-time education are embedded in service delivery for all children:

- Developed performance metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) for all Educational Welfare Services.
- Completion of full review of employment status and employment contracts across all SCP Projects.
- Appointment of permanent Director of Educational Welfare Services (EWS) and commencement of recruitment process for integrated service personnel in order to complete the integrated management structure.
- Published and disseminated School Attendance Strategies to more than 4,000 schools.
- All EWS staff completed Children First training.
- Worked with colleagues in the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and Tusla in the design and implementation of the Children in Care Home Tuition Scheme.
- Commenced nationwide CPD Programme for all school completion staff.
- Developed and implemented school recording and reporting templates and metrics for HSCL within DES and Tusla.

A fit-for-purpose organisation to deliver on our strategic intent:

- A methodology was developed and progress reports prepared on a quarterly basis to measure progress against established milestones in the business plan.
- Completed development of Tusla's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy.
- Development and implementation of a number of ICT systems, including supporting legal case management.
- Continued development and support of ICT architecture, infrastructure and support services.
- Ongoing implementation of minor capital works to address critical health and safety, fire safety and statutory compliance requirements.
- Established the Resource Allocation Programme and delivered the first phase of funding utilising resource allocation rules.
- Established the governance of grant-aided agency programme to develop clear compliance arrangements.
- Commenced the development of new financial regulations for Tusla.
- Commenced implementation of Finance Operating Model.
- A strategic partner to develop the VFM strategy was procured.
- Risk register process and corporate and directorate risk registers were established. Risk management policy issued for consultation.
- Financial performance partnering with internal and external stakeholders enabled resources to be managed to deliver effective services within allocated funding in 2016.
- The agency's Annual Financial Statement in respect of 2015 was produced in 2016 within the stipulated time frame.

- Organisational risk management policy and procedure was finalised and approved. Commenced the production of quarterly incident reports.
- Launched the agency's National Strategy for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) with targets and timelines for agency-wide implementation.
- Provided access to standardised professional training of trainers (Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) level 6) to the majority of Workforce Learning and Development staff.
- Led establishment of a Third-Level Liaison Framework forum to collaborate with third-level institutions on issues of recruitment, practice placements, undergraduate and post-qualification education.
- Delivery of the Leadership Development Programme to Tusla senior managers and ongoing development of an in-house model of leadership development.
- Head of Health Wellbeing and Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) was appointed.
- Implemented Work Positive Programme and developed information for EAP, Tusla Hub and staff policies.
- Developing health and well-being projects.
- Improved HR services were developed through a more cohesive and integrated regional and national structure. HR processes and procedures were streamlined across the agency.
- Business partnership arrangement agreed for the service delivery by Health Business Service for payroll, personnel administration, and Superannuation Recruitment and HR systems.
- Communications unit resourced and a strategic plan of activity developed.
- Effective communications and engagement mechanisms identified and established.
- Managed the design and publication of a large suite of Tusla documents for directorates and project teams throughout the year.
- National Social Work Survey completed by the Centre for Effective Services on interventions employed or required by social workers.
- Online survey completed to identify learning and development needs of staff regarding domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
- PDP for social workers developed and Project Board for the Empowering Practitioners and Practice Initiative established.

6.8 Health Service Executive

National Healthy Childhood Programme

The framework for the National Healthy Childhood Programme was agreed by the National Steering Group for the Revised Child Health Programme at the end of 2016 and is currently in the process of sign-off at the National Director level. Key cross-divisional actions were completed, including the development of a screening pathway for developmental dysplasia of the hip, the development of a pathway for the management of monosymptomatic enuresis and the updating of the school hearing and vision screening (protocols and training). The project to develop a systematic and standardised examination of the newborn will be completed in 2017. The National Healthy Childhood Programme provided input into the development of the implementation plans for Healthy Ireland in hospital groups and Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) to ensure the delivery of the Healthy Ireland – Policy Priority Programme Healthy Childhood (commitment G6).

Breastfeeding Action Plan

Breastfeeding in a Healthy Ireland: Health Service Breastfeeding Action Plan 2016–2021 was published in the fourth quarter of 2016. Since then, a National Breastfeeding Implementation Group has been established and an implementation plan agreed. The HSE continues to invest in online and digital media to promote and support breastfeeding. Online breastfeeding supports were further enhanced in 2016: Access to Ask our Expert online lactation consultants at www.breastfeeding.ie was increased and a HSE Breastfeeding Facebook page was launched for National Breastfeeding Week. National radio campaigns were delivered in July and October 2016 and in February 2017 (commitment G6).

Healthy Weight for Children

The Healthy Weight for Children Working Group was set up in October 2016. It is a subgroup of the Healthy Childhood Programme Steering Group and is co-sponsored by the Healthy Eating and Active Living National Policy Priority Programme. The purpose of the working group is to develop a framework for the prevention of childhood obesity. Initially, the focus will be on the stage from preconception up to six years of age. The group membership includes the HSE, Tusla, academic partners and *safefood*, with whom a key partnership has been established. The framework will emphasise prevention of overweight and/or promoting healthy lifestyles and will draw on best available evidence nationally and internationally, and its implementation will contribute to achieving the aims of *A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016–2025* (commitment G6).

Nurture Programme – Infant Health and Wellbeing

The Implementation Plan for the Nurture Programme – Infant Health and Wellbeing was finalised in early 2016. The Nurture Programme was officially launched in May 2016. All six implementation teams have been established. The teams are updating child health training programmes and are designing solutions using a blended learning approach; reviewing and developing all child health information, including new resources for mothers in the antenatal period and a child health website; promoting infant mental health through improved information and training; and developing standardised records for parents and professionals (commitment G6).

Social Care Disabilities

Social Care Disabilities represent the HSE on the DCYA-led Cross-Sectoral Implementation Group and Project Team for the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to support access to early childhood care and education (ECCE) for children with a disability. HSE Social Care Disabilities established a cross-sectoral working group under Level 6 of AIM to deliver on HSE's responsibilities under this programme.

Achievements of the group over the first year include:

- Definition of health supports critical to participation in early childhood care and education
- Protocol for working with DCYA and Better Start for provision of health supports for children with a disability and processes document developed to support health staff to implement the protocol
- Advisory paper developed on requirements to support children with medically complex needs to access early childhood care and education

- Draft KPIs to monitor the introduction of AIM (requests for support) developed, including demand on, and responsiveness of, health services
- Delivered a standardised presentation on AIM and its implications to health staff across all nine Community Healthcare Organisations.

A Joint Working Protocol with Tusla was completed in June 2016 and signed off by the HSE, Tusla, DoH and DCYA in February 2017. A national cross-sectoral implementation group will now be established to oversee implementation and to achieve integrated services for children and young people who are in the care of the State or are known to Tusla through to adulthood, supported by the relevant services based on individual need (commitments G25, 2.20).

Children First

The commitment of the HSE to developing a blended learning model as an addition to the Children First E-Learning programme is progressing. The Children First National Office has established a subgroup to develop this training. The e-learning module, *An Introduction to Children First*, is active and, as of 12 April 2017, 11,132 HSE staff and 13,287 staff from funded agencies have completed the training. The Train the Trainers Programme and the self-audit by disability agencies are in the planning stage. Several training videos to support the e-learning model have been developed by the Children First National Office with the support of University College Dublin. The Children First National Office is working with HSE procurement and commissioning services to ensure compliance of all funded agencies with Children First Guidelines, and a quality assurance mechanism is also being put in place to audit and monitor compliance on a regular basis. The office is progressing other actions critical to the implementation of Children First across the HSE; these include the development of a risk register, a communications plan and a quality assurance framework, including KPIs and an audit tool and protocol to measure performance and progress. The required governance structure for the implementation of the Children First Act 2015 is currently being put in place. Children First Implementation Committees have been established in three of the nine Community Healthcare Organisations and in four out of seven Hospital Groups. It is intended that all implementation groups should be established by the fourth quarter of 2017 (commitment G28).

Knowledge management

Health Atlas modules are widely used by key stakeholders within the health services to enable relevant decision-making for health and well-being, particularly focused on community-based services and with the functionality to support decisions to target those with the greatest need. Within the Health Atlas environment, the functionality of selection by age group allows most modules to be used to generate a paediatric-specific view of activity, profiling, analysis, etc. A specific example is area profiling tools, which allow area profiling by relevant age groups (including children) to identify those areas with the greatest need across all health geographies and Central Statistics Office (CSO) delineated areas. Further refinement of the profiling capabilities by additional functionality around resource distribution allows the identification of areas where there is a mismatch between population need and availability of resources (commitment G26).

Healthy Ireland Smart Start

The Healthy Ireland Smart Start Health Promotion Programme for Pre-School Services continues to be expanded. By end March 2017, more than 15% of pre-schools nationally were participating in the

Healthy Ireland Smart Start programme, and more than 754 pre-schools are achieving Healthy Ireland status (commitment G29).

HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme

In 2016, the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme continued to fund a range of services for young people, providing Relationships and Sexuality Education Programmes in out-of-school settings. These included:

- Youth health cafés – Funding was provided to support the delivery of two youth health cafés in 2016:
 - Zone Youth Health Café, Blanchardstown
 - Exit Youth Health Café, Tallaght

In addition to providing a welcoming space for young people, these projects were designed to engage with teenagers who are at risk of crisis pregnancy and to provide opportunities for them to receive relationships and sexual health education. The target age group for the youth cafés is 14–19 years.

- Training for young people – Funding was provided for a number of training initiatives aimed directly at young people in 2016, including:
 - Blanchardstown Youth Service, Foróige, Dublin, for the delivery of the Teenage Health Initiative for young men aged 13–17 years
 - Donegal Women's Centre, Letterkenny, for the delivery of a holistic sexual health and personal development education pilot programme for young women experiencing social exclusion
 - Here2Help (formerly Pact), for the delivery of its RSE programme in schools in Dublin, Cavan and Wicklow
 - Real Deal, a peer-led sexual health education training programme for early school-leavers or those at risk of being early school-leavers in the Leinster region and in Mayo
 - Sexual Health Centre, Cork, for a community mobilisation project that involves relationships and sexual health education components for young people in both formal and non-formal education settings
 - SouthWest Counselling Centre, Kerry, for the delivery of the Getting Real personal development programme for adolescents who are at risk of becoming early school-leavers or who are early school-leavers.

The above work will continue in 2017, with the exception of the Real Deal programme, which was completed in 2016, and the RSE programme, which is to finish by end of school year (June 2017).

In 2016, the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme published the Sexual Health and Sexuality Needs Assessment of Young People in Care research project and worked in partnership with Tusla to develop an action plan in response to the research findings. A range of actions to support young people in care and those caring for them will be delivered over the period 2017–2020 (commitment 1.13).

6.9 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

1. Implement all enterprise development measures in the new 2025 Agri-Food Strategy to support younger people in rural areas

Food Wise 2025 identifies that investment in and development of people will drive growth in the agricultural sector. The report identifies a number of skills gaps, including lack of advanced financial and business development capabilities, capacity to absorb new technologies and processes at producer level. Continuing changes to regulatory and farm compliance requirements have implications both for young farmer education and for the lifelong learning requirements of adult farmers. Similarly, rapid advances in the use of information technology, applied software and 'smart' applications are impacting on the farming sector and the education and upskilling of young and adult farmers.

There is also a need to achieve better integration of family farms into local economies by increasing their diversification by creating more open farms, developing agri-tourism opportunities and increasing the range of goods and services provided to local communities. This will allow many family farm enterprises to improve their profitability and provide on-farm employment opportunities for the next generation of farmers. Food Wise 2025 has specific recommendations and actions on human capital for young farmers and on agri-taxation measures that will deliver increased land mobility and improved farm succession, including generational partnerships.

Steps to Success 2016, the first progress report of Food Wise 2025, was published in July 2016. It highlights the progress achieved one year into the implementation of the Food Wise 2025 strategy. Of the 330 detailed actions which were due to commence in 2015 or 2016, 28% have been achieved or substantial action has been undertaken, and a further 67% have commenced and are progressing well.

Steps to Success 2016 provides examples of successful State collaboration across the key themes of Food Wise 2025 – environmental sustainability, human capital, competitiveness, and market development and innovation – as well as examples of innovative approaches by Irish food and drinks companies.

2. Continue to implement supports for young farmers under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Rural Development Programme (RDP)

(i) Implementation of supports for young farmers under CAP:

Under Pillar I, there are two measures targeted at young farmers, namely the National Reserve and the Young Farmers Scheme.

The National Reserve Scheme and the Young Farmers Scheme were introduced under the reform of Direct Payments (CAP 2015–2020). These schemes were designed to provide financial support to young farmers and new entrants to farming during the crucial early years immediately following the setting up of a farming enterprise.

The National Reserve Scheme provides for an allocation of entitlements at the national average level, or a top-up on existing entitlements that are below the national average, to two mandatory categories of 'young farmer' and 'new entrant to farming'.

The Young Farmers Scheme is a separate scheme that provides for an additional payment to young farmers based on activated entitlements.

National Reserve Scheme

In 2015, Ireland used the maximum financing rate of 3% of the Basic Payment Scheme ceiling to fund the National Reserve Scheme, which provided a fund of €24.5 million. In 2015, some 6,500 farmers (more than 5,500 under the Young Farmer category) benefited from the National Reserve Scheme. The success of the scheme in that year resulted in the full National Reserve Scheme ceiling being utilised. As such, the National Reserve Scheme did not operate in 2016.

For 2017, in order to finance the National Reserve Scheme, a linear reduction to the value of all entitlements will be applied to make funding of some €5 million available to young farmers and new entrants to farming.

Young Farmers Scheme

Ireland used the maximum financing rate of 2% of the National Ceiling to finance the Young Farmers Scheme, which provided a separate ceiling of €24.3 million. Unlike the National Reserve Scheme, the Young Farmers Scheme is financed each year via a cut to the Direct Payments financial ceiling. Ireland has committed to applying this 2% cut annually during the lifetime of the Young Farmers Scheme, resulting in approximately €120 million being set aside for the Young Farmers Scheme between 2015 and 2019. More than 8,000 young farmers benefited from payments under the Young Farmers Scheme in 2015 and 2016.

Recent evaluation at the EU level has determined that Ireland had one of the highest execution rates of all member states in relation to the Young Farmers Scheme. In fact, many member states had very low execution rates of their Young Farmers Scheme ceilings.

Summary of payments to date

The National Reserve Scheme and the Young Farmers Scheme, together with the value of associated Greening payments, provided for an allocation of Pillar 1 payments in excess of €52.5 million in Ireland in 2015. This is by far the largest designated amount of funding ever allocated under Pillar 1 schemes for young farmers and new entrants to farming. The 2016 expenditure under the Young Farmers Scheme currently stands at some €18 million. Since the introduction of the National Reserve Scheme and the Young Farmers Scheme in 2015, in excess of €70 million has been paid out to young farmers and new entrants to farming. It is also worth noting that each of these schemes supports young farmers and new entrants to farming on their own, in joint ventures with others and also with those involved in collaborative farming arrangements.

(ii) Implementation of supports for young farmers under the Rural Development Programme (RDP):

The issues of entry to the farming sector and generational renewal were clearly identified in the SWOT and needs analyses of Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014–2020. The primary measures included in the Rural Development Programme (RDP) to address this issue are support under Measure 4 – TAMS II and support under Measure 16 – Collaborative Farming.

- One of the barriers identified to young farmers entering the agricultural sector, or expanding their venture, is the high cost of the necessary capital investment. This need is addressed in

the overarching design of Measure 4 – TAMS II. However, in order to target support specifically at encouraging young farmers and enabling them to take on necessary infrastructural work, the measure's design incorporates a higher rate of aid intensity for young farmers as provided for under the terms of the Rural Development Regulation No. 1305/2013. Thus, young farmers, as defined in the Rural Development Regulation, are eligible for a grant support of 60% of the eligible costs for identified capital projects. This 60% rate compares very favourably with the general 40% rate, and is designed to be a significant support for young farmers and to complement the Young Farmers Scheme under CAP Pillar I.

- The Collaborative Farming Scheme (Measure 16) also provides support to young farmers and is designed to alleviate issues relating to land mobility and generational renewal in the sector. The Collaborative Farming Scheme aims to encourage farmers who are establishing farm partnerships to adopt best practices by engaging the help of experts when drawing up the farm partnership agreement. The financial support is aimed at covering part of the legal, advisory and financial services costs incurred in the drawing up of the farm partnership agreement.

3. Implement financial and administrative measures to facilitate development of collaborative farming and transfers to younger persons

Agri-taxation: Supports to young farmers

The *Agri-taxation Review* was published as part of Budget 2015 and set out the main policy objectives for continuing support through agri-taxation measures, including:

- Increasing land mobility and the productive use of land
- Assisting succession and the transfer of farms.

Both objectives are especially relevant to young farmers, and Budget 2015 included a number of new measures in this regard, as well as measures to enhance and strengthen the existing supports.

There are a number of tax measures specifically aimed at young farmers, specifically 100% Stock Relief on Income Tax for Certain Young Trained Farmers and Stamp Duty Exemption on Transfers of Land to Young Trained Farmers. In addition, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed TD, announced that the Succession Farm Partnership Scheme had been approved and administrative arrangements were being finalised for its commencement in 2017. The scheme will provide a €25,000 tax credit over five years to assist with the transfer of farms within a partnership structure and will promote the earlier intergenerational transfer of family farms. It will encourage and support important conversations within farm families about succession planning.

Supports to collaborative farming

The Collaborative Farming Grant Scheme was introduced in 2014 under the CAP to encourage the uptake of formal farm partnership agreements. Payments for 50% of the costs of engaging professional advisors and legal services are covered by the grant, up to a ceiling of €2,500. In 2016, €337,000 was paid to 244 applicants, which was a significant increase on the previous year when €79,000 was paid to 86 applicants.

Under the 50% Stock Relief on Income Tax for Registered Farm Partnerships income tax measure, all farmers are allowed a relief of 25% on the increase in value of trading stock and work in progress at the end of the accounting period over and above the opening value. However, in the case of a partner in a Registered Farm Partnership, for accounting periods ending after 1 January 2012 and before 31 December 2018, stock relief at a rate of 50% applies.

4. Teagasc will continue to develop its agricultural educational and training programmes, including financial and business modules to help younger farmers build and expand their livelihood

2016 activities

More than 6,000 individuals participated in full-time, part-time and distance learning programmes in 2016. This included participation across Teagasc further education programmes and Teagasc-linked higher education programmes (agriculture, horticulture, equine and forestry). Prior to 2014, total participation rates annually were typically around 3,500. The exceptional demand for the adult Green Cert programme has driven the recent substantial increase in total participation.

In 2016, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) approved the proposal for the Teagasc-led review of the QQI suite of level 5 and 6 agricultural awards.

In 2016, Teagasc initiated its Education Strategic Vision project with a view to establishing education needs and approaches for the land-based sector in the longer term. The project dovetails with the Food Wise 2025 emphasis on human capital needs and future knowledge and skill set requirements for a competitive but sustainable agricultural sector. The Education Strategic Vision project will conclude in 2017.

A key objective was to identify appropriate career and qualification pathways for future entrants to the farming/land-based sector and to identify future teaching and learning approaches that will best enable the technical and personal development of learners. The project also aims to ensure that future Teagasc education curricula are sufficiently flexible and responsive to meet the major changes facing the land-based sector, whether in terms of sustainable farming approaches, technical knowledge, business and financial management, governance and compliance, farm safety and food assurance, emerging digital and biotechnologies, or in other areas.

2017 plans

Teagasc's primary objective for 2017 will be to ensure progression and completion within the target time frame of the 'exceptional' number of Green Cert programmes that commenced over the past two years. In the region of 4,300 people enrolled in the Teagasc Green Cert programme during the period late 2014 to late 2016.

Enrolment levels for full-time further education and Teagasc-linked higher education are expected to be in the region of 1,800 for 2017, representing a slight decline on the peak enrolment levels of recent years. More than 3,000 current adult Green Cert programme participants will continue their studies into 2017. Subject to sustainable resourcing models being put in place, Teagasc will seek to enrol an additional 1,000 or more applicants to the Green Cert programme in 2017.

6.10 An Garda Síochána

An Garda Síochána contributed to the ‘Say No!’ awareness campaign on online child sexual coercion and extortion, which was launched by Europol. The ‘Say No!’ campaign is aimed primarily at children and young people who may be targeted online as victims of online coercion and extortion. The campaign uses a 10-minute video portraying two teenagers, a boy and girl, being exploited online either by a criminal organisation for money or by an individual sexual offender seeking further sexual material. The video includes advice as to how such crimes may be reported to An Garda Síochána. An Garda Síochána is in the process of developing this campaign so that it may be utilised in schools through the CSPE curriculum.

6.11 Local Government Managers Association

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020 has many commitments set out across the six transformational goals that require the involvement and input of the local government sector, leading to the five national outcomes we want for all children and young people:

1. Active and healthy, with physical and mental wellbeing
2. Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development
3. Safe and protected from harm
4. Economic security and opportunity
5. Connected, respected and contributing to their world.

A key component in this regard is the establishment and resourcing of Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSCs) throughout Ireland. During 2016, the local government sector played an active role in facilitating the establishment and continuation of CYPSCs in each agreed area; as a result, CYPSC are now active in all local authority areas throughout Ireland. In each case, local authority employees play a key role on each CYPSC, holding the position of Vice Chairperson, often at the level of Chief Executive or Director of Services (commitments G47, G48 and G49).

In addition to the above, and as part of the Local Government Reform Programme (2014), a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) has been established in each city/county (commitment G51). The main focus for each LCDC in 2016 was the development and implementation of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for their respective area. This is to facilitate the streamlining of the planning and decision-making structures at the local level, including CYPSC (commitment G52). The preparation of these plans was finalised during 2016 and was formally adopted by their respective local authorities. LECPs include direct reference to the five national outcomes for children and young people set out above.

In pursuit of a collaborative approach and a coherent response to local priorities, the planning and implementation role of local statutory structures, committees or other bodies established by a State organisation that are involved in local or community development activity is recognised as important in the context of the work of LCDCs. Such stakeholders include bodies such as CYPSC. It was recognised, however, that as LCDC membership is tightly defined, it is not possible to provide a representative seat for all such bodies. In order to optimise the coordinated planning of their work, it is important to have appropriate linkages and engagement between CYPSCs and LCDCs, and therefore a formal protocol has been drafted to provide such linkages and engagement.

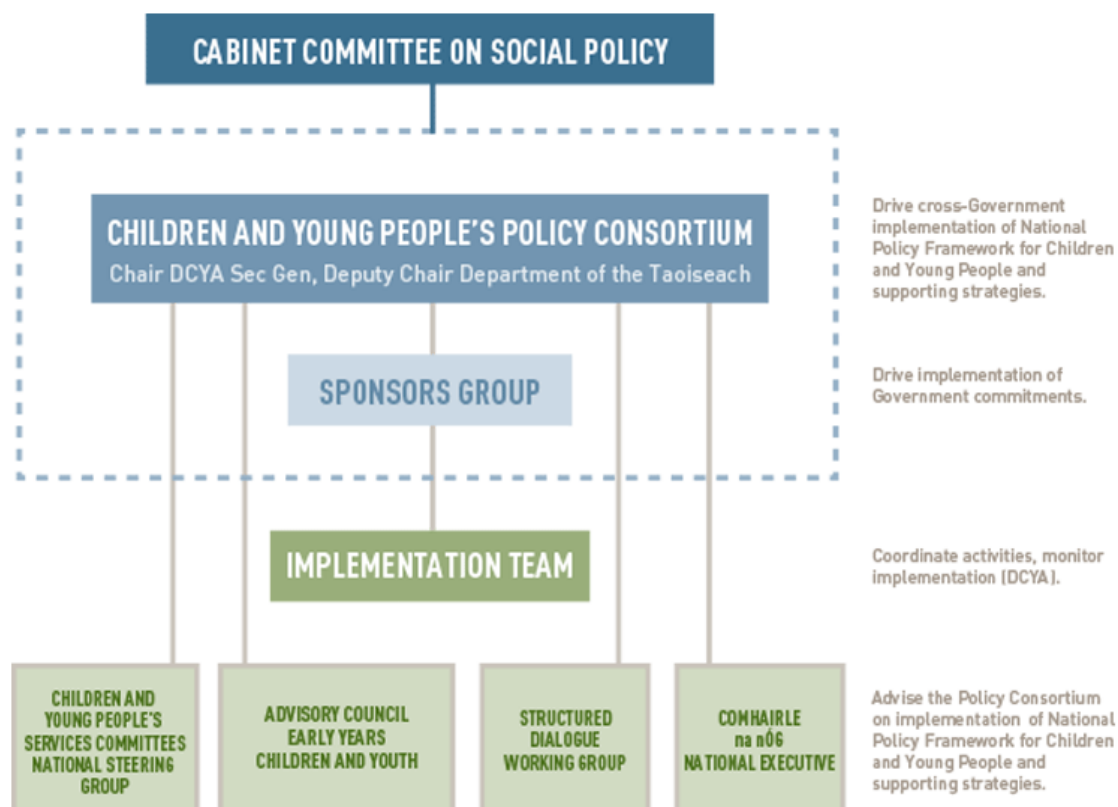
The protocol sets out the arrangements and responsibilities of both the LCDCs and CYPSC involved in community development activity with regard to interagency cooperation in the context of the work of LCDCs and the implementation of the community element of the LECs, and in particular with reference to the five national outcomes for children and young people in Ireland.

The consideration of entering into the formal protocols between local authorities through the LCDCs and CYPSC was advanced in 2016, and it is envisaged that this will progress further during 2017.

Part 7: Implementation infrastructure

This section provides a short overview of the work of the key pieces of implementation infrastructure for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* during 2016.

Figure 5



7.1 Children and Young People's Policy Consortium

The Children and Young People's Policy Consortium represents the keystone in the implementation infrastructure for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. It comprises high-level representation from Government Departments, agencies and Chairs of the respective groupings, including key experts and representatives from a range of sectors and settings working with children and young people.

The Consortium is tasked with overseeing and driving the effective implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* within its respective spheres of responsibility – across Government Departments, agencies and sectors. The Consortium was previously chaired by the Secretary General, DCYA, with a Deputy Chair from the Department of the Taoiseach. However, since June 2016 it has been chaired by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

The Consortium met in March, June and September 2016, and in February 2017.

7.2 Sponsors Group

The Sponsors Group is a subgroup of the Policy Consortium and is chaired by DCYA. It comprises six sponsors: one sponsor for each of the five Government Departments that are the leads for the five national outcomes of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, plus one sponsor for the transformational goals. Each sponsor has been assigned an outcome area, as presented below:

Area of responsibility	Sponsor
Outcome 1 Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing	Department of Health
Outcome 2 Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development	Department of Education and Skills
Outcome 3 Safe and protected from harm	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Outcome 4 Economic security and opportunity	Department of Social Protection
Outcome 5 Connected, respected and contributing to their world	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
Transformational goals and Chair of the Sponsors Group	Department of Children and Youth Affairs

The Sponsors Group plays an integral role in ensuring the realisation and success of the vision underpinning *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* through active collaboration to drive and enhance cross-departmental and cross-sectoral engagement to realise the five national outcomes for children and young people.

The Sponsors Group also identifies and progresses key cross-sectoral priorities for children and young people across Government, subject to approval from the Consortium. The cross-sectoral priorities for 2017 are:

Sponsor	Priority
Department of Health	Obesity
Department of Education and Skills	Review of DEIS
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Prevention and early intervention
Department of Social Protection	Child poverty
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government	Homelessness

7.3 Advisory Council

The Advisory Council provides a forum for the community and voluntary sector and independent experts to actively inform and support the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and its constituent strategies. The Council comprises four constituent groupings:

- The first three groups comprise representatives drawn from the early years, children, and youth voluntary sectoral pillars. Nominations are drawn from umbrella organisations representing each of these constituencies. In addition, the first three groups are supplemented by the appointment of a Ministerial nominee to each, bringing the total to four nominees per constituent grouping.
- The fourth group comprises Ministerial nominees involving key individuals with experience and expertise in themes and trends impacting on the lives of children and young people.

Membership

The Council is chaired by Dr Owen Keenan.

Early years (nominating body: National Voluntary Childcare Collaborative)

1. Teresa Heeney (Early Childhood Ireland)
2. Fergus Finlay (Barnardos)
3. Professor Nóirín Hayes (Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT))
4. Ministerial nominee: Tom Costello (personal capacity)

Children (nominating body: Children's Rights Alliance)

1. Tanya Ward (Children's Rights Alliance)
2. Grainia Long (ISPCC)
3. Karen Kiernan (One Family)
4. Ministerial nominee: Professor Dymphna Devine (University College Dublin)

Youth (nominating body: National Youth Council of Ireland)

1. Séan Campbell (Foróige)
2. Mary Cunningham (National Youth Council of Ireland)
3. John Lawlor (Scouting Ireland)
4. Ministerial nominee: vacant

Independent group: Ministerial nominees

1. Dr Tony Bates (Headstrong)
2. Fiona Coghlan (personal capacity)
3. Adam Harris (asiam.ie)
4. Ronan Myler (BOI)

Developments in 2016

For more information on the work of the Advisory Council, please see the comments from the Chair in Part 3.3 of this report. The Council may be contacted at advisorycouncil@dcya.gov.ie, and is on

Twitter @BOBFCouncil. The Advisory Council's Work Plan for 2017 is provided in the Appendix of this report.

The 2016 meetings of the Advisory Council were held in February, April, June and November; in addition, a two-day residential meeting was held in September. The Council also met in February, April and June 2017. Minutes of Council meetings are available on the DCYA website. The Council also met on a number of other occasions to discuss the impact that Brexit will have on children and young people.

The Advisory Council's key priorities for 2017 are:

- Human rights and equality
- Child homelessness
- Child poverty
- Mental health and well-being
- Education
- Implementation of constituent strategies
- Prevention and early intervention
- Implications of Brexit for children and young people.

The Council has worked to progress these priorities by working collaboratively with relevant Departments and agencies. Key examples include forming subgroups co-convened with officials from the Department of Social Protection and DCYA to progress the issues of child poverty and of prevention and early intervention, respectively.

The Council has also developed links with other organisations in the NGO sector to progress relevant issues, including the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland, and Focus Ireland.

7.4 Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) bring together a diverse group of agencies in local county areas to engage in joint planning of services for children and young people. They are firmly embedded in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* as an important vehicle for implementing the policy framework at a local level and driving local interagency work.

The CYPSC National Steering Group represents CYPSC at the national level. It acts as a vehicle to link implementation at the local level with oversight by the Policy Consortium, with which it has a formal link. The National Steering Group oversees the work of CYPSC and ensures that clear and effective connections are in place between the national and local implementation infrastructures to ensure effective interagency working.

Following the retirement of the previous chair, Dr Sheelah Ryan, in February 2016, Vice Chair Martina Moloney acted as Interim Chair. Minister Zappone appointed Dr Noelle Spring as the new Chair of the CYPSC National Steering Group in December 2016. Meetings of the National Steering Group were held in February and June 2016.

A number of key developments in CYPSC were progressed in 2016, including:

- Local CYPSC coordinators were appointed to achieve full national coverage.

- Seed funding was provided to local CYPSC at a considerably higher level than in 2015 (an average of €25,000 per CYPSC compared to €5,952).
- Guidance on interaction between CYPSC and LCDs was agreed between DHPCLG and DCYA, and circulated to local CYPSC.
- Negotiations got underway to move the post of National Coordinator for CYPSC from the Centre for Effective Services to Tusla.
- Members of the National Steering Group met with members of the Advisory Council to discuss the involvement of the community and voluntary sector. Guidance on this is currently being finalised.

7.5 DCYA Implementation Team

The DCYA Implementation Team manages reporting on implementation and coordinates the work in and across the implementation structures for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. It also assists in identifying emerging themes and trends relating to implementation, and ensures knowledge transfer across the implementation infrastructure.

The Implementation Team's focus for 2016 was on the progression of cross-sectoral priorities, supporting the Advisory Council in the development and implementation of a work plan, and making connections with officials across Government Departments to progress the priorities in the work plan.

Throughout 2016, the Implementation Team worked across Government Departments to progress issues such as child poverty, homelessness, mental health and well-being, and prevention and early intervention. It also worked with DCYA units, in particular the units responsible for the constituent strategies: *The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015–2020*, the *National Youth Strategy 2015–2020*, and the forthcoming Early Years Strategy. The Implementation Team also worked closely with the DCYA Research and Evaluation Unit on the development of outcome indicators.

The Implementation Team, which is located in the DCYA Policy Innovation Unit, has also been working on developing links between *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and other initiatives for children and young people, in particular CYPSC, and their alignment with the five national outcomes in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and the development of the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI). The Implementation Team has also worked to ensure that the voices of children and young people have informed Ireland's approach to Brexit.

The Implementation Team can be contacted by email at policyinnovation@dcya.gov.ie

7.6 Enhancing effective implementation

Leadership, coordination and collaboration

The implementation infrastructure for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* operated very effectively in 2016 and early 2017. The model of collaborative working between officials and members of the Advisory Council, which was introduced in September 2015, has begun to result in tangible outputs, particularly in the areas of child poverty and in prevention and early intervention. This includes the production of both an NGO paper on priorities to tackle child poverty and a Departmental paper on

developing a whole-of-government approach to child poverty, based around the European Commission Country Specific Recommendation for Ireland. On prevention and early intervention, considerable progress has been made on the development of the QCBI. This model of collaborative working has also been used in the areas of homelessness, mental health and well-being, and educational inequality.

Links have also been developed between the different elements of the implementation infrastructure. This includes inviting representatives from the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and the Young Voices (Structured Dialogue) Group to present at the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium. Similarly, members of the Advisory Council met with members of the CYPSC National Steering Group to progress the issue of community and voluntary sector representation on local CYPSC.

Communications

The DCYA Policy Innovation Unit (where the Implementation Team for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is located) continues to produce an e-zine to communicate with stakeholders about progress on *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and related areas of work – such as CYPSC and the ABC Programme – and the development of the QCBI, as well as constituent strategies. Contributions from across Government or from the wider community and voluntary sector would be welcome in future issues (email policyinnovation@dcya.gov.ie). Previous issues of the e-zine are available on the [DCYA website](#).

A number of events were also held in 2016 under the banner of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. This includes a child poverty conference in June 2016, which was attended by the Ministers for Children and Youth Affairs and of Social Protection. Additionally, Ireland's first child summit was held in September 2016 and was attended by Government Officials, Oireachtas members, young people and civil society representatives. This national symposium considered the recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child following its examination of Ireland's children's rights record earlier in 2016.

Part 8: Participation structures

8.1 Comhairle na nÓg

The work of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive (2016–2017) reflects the consistent concerns expressed by children and young people that their voice is absent from debates, yet they have much to say about how schools, teaching and learning can improve.

The focus of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive (2016–2017) is ‘So How Was School Today?’ which will make an important contribution to debates about education in Ireland.

Dáil na nÓg 2015 was hosted by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and attended by the Minister for Education and Skills. The Minister for Education and Skills committed to assigning personnel from DES to work DCYA to support the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive (2016–2017) in taking action on the priority issue from Dáil na nÓg. Each of the 31 Comhairle na nÓg around Ireland elects one representative to the National Executive for a two-year term to engage with appropriate Ministers, policy-makers and other decision-makers.

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive met once a month and developed a survey arising from consultations with young people and educational experts, then circulated it to young people across each of the 31 Comhairle na nÓg. A nominated official from DES has worked consistently with the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and DCYA throughout the year.

The survey, designed by the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, was completed by 3,242 young people from across Ireland, making this the first national-level survey of young people’s views of teaching and learning in secondary schools. A research team from UCD School of Education analysed the findings from the survey and a report has been prepared to present the findings of the survey. The report will be launched by the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive with the Ministers for both Children and Youth Affairs and for Education and Skills in the coming weeks.

Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase

Four hundred fifty-eight young people from 31 Comhairle na nÓg attended the third biennial Showcase event in Croke Park on 24 November 2016. The purpose of the event was to showcase and celebrate the work of the Comhairle and to facilitate Comhairlí to network with one another and with decision-makers from their own local areas and nationally.

The young people took part in workshops on the topic of improving Comhairle na nÓg. The workshops were facilitated by young people, with the support of the DCYA Participation Support Team.

The issues arising from the Showcase that were most pertinent for young people included increasing school involvement and engagement with Comhairle na nÓg, organising and managing meetings and attendance, addressing issues related to funding, improving the quality and frequency of events and trips, and increasing the visibility of Comhairle na nÓg through publicity.

A report on the Showcase was produced in April 2017.

8.2 EU Structured Dialogue (Young Voices)

Structured dialogue with young people serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European cooperation in the youth field. It involves regular consultations of young people and youth organisations at all levels in EU countries, as well as dialogue between youth representatives and policy-makers at EU youth conferences.

Structured dialogue is also a key part of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* implementation infrastructure (Figure 5, page 56) and, along with the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, is one of the primary mechanisms for the voices of children and young people to inform implementation. There has been considerable progress in the last year in developing the links between *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and the structured dialogue process.

Following on from the attendance of a member of the DCYA Implementation Team at the EU Youth Conference in Amsterdam in April 2016, DCYA has continued to work with the Structured Dialogue Group (called Young Voices in Ireland). This has included linking the Young Voices Group with the Advisory Council in April 2016 and giving them the opportunity to address the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium in September 2017.

The Young Voices Group is presently working to develop Youth Check, an impact analysis tool to examine the impacts of a proposed piece of policy or legislation on young people along the five national outcomes in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The group has been working with the DCYA Policy Innovation Unit to develop and refine this concept, and presented an early draft at the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium meeting in September 2016. Work has been ongoing since then, and it is intended to propose a final product at the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium in September 2017.

The Young Voices group has also been working with DCYA on the issue of Brexit to help identify issues for children and young people arising from the UK's decision to leave the EU.

8.3 Seldom-heard children and young people

'Seldom-heard' is a term used to describe children and young people who have fewer opportunities to participate and/or who encounter more obstacles when attempting to participate, including, but not limited to, seldom-heard children and young people who are:

- Bullied
- In care
- Experiencing domestic violence
- From a minority ethnic background
- Homeless or at risk of losing their home/living in temporary/unsuitable accommodation
- In hospital (including those with mental health issues)
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT)
- Living in poverty
- Living in rural isolation
- Living with mental health issues
- Living with parental addiction
- Living with strained family relationships
- Not in school
- Persons with physical and intellectual disabilities
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Travellers
- Unemployed
- Young carers

In 2015, DCYA produced *A Practical Guide to Including Seldom-Heard Children and Young People in Decision-Making*. While DCYA continues to work with many of the groups listed above, this section provides a short summary of two new initiatives progressed by DCYA in 2016 and early 2017.

Children's Equality Commission

The Children's Equality Commission was established to ensure that the voices of children who experience or understand economic hardship or poverty are directly heard and acted on by policy-makers. The Commission will ensure that such action is located within a policy and practice context that embeds real change and development in long-term initiatives. The first phase of this work will be conducted with children and young people from Dublin. Further phases will be conducted in other parts of the country.

The Commission will be composed of Child Commissioners and Adult Commissioners. The Child Commissioners are children who experience or have an understanding of economic hardship or poverty. The Adult Commissioners will be senior policy-makers from Government Departments, State agencies and other bodies relevant to the issues raised by children.

Three panels of children and young people have been established by DCYA to explore the views of children and young people who experience or have an understanding of economic hardship or poverty:

- An Advisory Panel of 12–16-year-old young people, recruited through Focus Ireland, Barnardos, Exchange House Traveller Centre and Mosney Direct Provision Centre
- A panel of 8–12-year-old children from five DEIS primary schools in Tallaght
- A panel of 13–17-year-old young people from Blanchardstown and Tallaght Youth Services.

The children and young people on these panels are the Child Commissioners for the Dublin phase of this work.

The DCYA Citizen Participation Unit has been working for several months with the children and young people on these panels in creative and age-appropriate ways. The findings from the consultations with the panels will inform the selection of Adult Commissioners based on their responsibility for the specific issues raised by the children and young people. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and DCYA will approach relevant policy-makers, invite them to become Commissioners and commit to taking action on the issues raised by the children and young people.

The launch of the Dublin phase of the Commission will include the findings from the work with the children and young people, as well as the commitments to be made by policy-makers, and is expected to take place in the third quarter of 2017.

LGBTI+ Youth Strategy

The Programme for Government (2016) gives a commitment to develop a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI+) Youth Strategy. This is a key commitment for DCYA in the Programme for Government and also makes a contribution towards the Government's broader commitment to continue to strive for full inclusion of LGBTI+ people in Ireland.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020 and *National Youth Strategy 2015–2020* provide a framework within which the National

LGBTI+ Youth Strategy will be developed, with a focus on appropriate measures to ensure that young people identifying as LGBTI+ are supported in achieving their full potential. The National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy will build on the *National Youth Strategy 2015–2020*, which aims to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential by respecting their rights, hearing their voices and addressing their concerns.

The National Youth Strategy identifies LGBTI+ young people as a specific group to be considered in the context of focused provision for marginalised young people; the National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy will identify the additional measures that are required to ensure that young people identifying as LGBTI+ can achieve the same outcomes as all children and young people.

Live consultations with young people in connection with the development of the National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy took place in May 2017. This series of live consultations was preceded by an online consultation, which was hosted on www.spunout.ie and attracted approximately 4,000 responses.

The live consultations included a national consultation in Dublin that was open to all young people who wished to contribute to the development of the strategy; a national consultation in Dublin that was specifically for members of the LGBTI+ community; and five regional consultations, which were specifically for members of the LGBTI+ community. The five regional consultations were held in Cork, Dundalk, Galway, Sligo and Waterford. The live consultations were attended by hundreds of young people from across the country who aided in the development of this strategy through insights from their experiences and their reflections on what challenges remain for young LGBTI+ people in Ireland.

Part 9: Constituent strategies

9.1 *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020*

Ireland is the first country in Europe, and possibly in the world, to have developed a cross-government strategy like the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2015-2020)*. This strategy was launched in June 2015 and is a constituent of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020*. The strategy is guided and influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Goal and objectives of the strategy

The goal of the strategy is to ensure that children and young people have a voice in their individual and collective lives in their communities, in education, on their health and well-being and in legal settings. It focuses on the everyday lives of children and young people and the places and spaces in which they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

The strategy is primarily aimed at children and young people under the age of 18, but embraces the voices of young people in the transition to adulthood up to the age of 24.

Implementation of the strategy

Giving children and young people a voice in decision-making requires a cross-government response, and initiatives and actions from all key Government Departments and agencies are included in the strategy. Government Departments and agencies are required to report to DCYA on an annual basis under implementation structures established for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020*.

The *First Annual Report on Implementation of National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015–2020* was published in July 2016. The report shows a positive picture of how the strategy is being implemented. Government Departments and agencies are actively progressing 93 of the 97 agreed actions for 2015, and have made a strong start, with 87% of the agreed actions reaching completion or in progress. The second implementation report will be published later this year. The uncompleted actions will be included in the 2016 Action Plan with a series of new actions to be reported on in 2017.

9.2 *National Youth Strategy 2015–2020*

Significant progress has been made in implementing the National Youth Strategy in 2016 and 2017. The National Youth Strategy Lead Team was established in July 2016, as well as two subgroups of the National Youth Strategy Lead Team: one to engage with the Advisory Council and the other to oversee the implementation of the Value For Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes.

Advisory Council Engagement Subgroup

This subgroup of the National Youth Strategy Lead Team met with the Youth Constituent of the Advisory Council in January 2017 to map National Youth Strategy outcomes to the Advisory Council's 2017 work plan. The result of this engagement is a clear prioritisation of National Youth Strategy outcomes that the Advisory Council will assist in progressing in 2017.

Value For Money and Policy Review (VFMPR) Subgroup

This subgroup was established to support the implementation of the Value For Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes, which is a key enabler of the National Youth Strategy. The subgroup has representation from across DCYA – including the Youth Affairs Unit (and the Quality Standards Team) and the Research and Evaluation Unit – and the Centre for Effective Services. Other inputs to the subgroup will be introduced as required.

Key messages for the future reform programme include:

1. One new youth scheme will be designed and implemented in line with the VFMPR recommendations and inclusive of a strong focus on quality.
2. A fit-for-purpose performance management, information, governance, and financial reporting and compliance system will be developed and integrated into the new scheme.
3. Enhanced capacity to support implementation of the new scheme will be required.

Proposed elements of the new scheme recommended in the VFMPR include:

1. The current four schemes will become one targeted youth scheme with the following characteristics:
 - Priority focus on young people at risk
 - Primarily geographic-community based
 - Non-formal education approach
 - Out-of-school setting
 - 10–24-year-olds
 - Hardiker Model of needs assessment – scheme priority on Level Two.
2. Seven ‘potent mechanisms’ as the outcomes to be achieved from the scheme:
 - a. Communication
 - b. Confidence/agency
 - c. Planning and problem-solving
 - d. Relationships
 - e. Creativity
 - f. Resilience and determination
 - g. Managing feelings.
3. ETBs as the mid-level governance system.

Communication of the VFMPR

The Department initiated a detailed consultation with the youth sector and providers of youth services about the review’s findings and recommendations. Consultations have taken place with national youth organisations, local youth services and youth officers of the Education and Training Boards that administer funding on behalf of the Department, as well as with other youth interests. A number of regional events were held, an online forum was set up to facilitate discussion with youth

service providers, and young people were involved in the consultations that took place in the context of the National Youth Strategy.

The Department is committed to working collaboratively with the youth sector in the development and implementation of the new programme over the next two years.

Youth Employability Initiative

Action 4.1 of the National Youth Strategy calls for the promotion and development of opportunities for those young people furthest from the labour market through initiatives such as a Youth Employability Initiative, which can be delivered by youth services. In June 2016, DCYA introduced a new €600,000 fund as the Youth Employability Initiative. This fund provided grants to voluntary youth services for programmes that target disadvantaged young people to improve their employability. Twenty-eight community-based youth services are benefiting under the new Youth Employability Initiative, which targets those young people who are most at risk of unemployment and who are not in education, employment or training.

An evaluation of the Youth Employability Initiative was undertaken by the Centre for Effective Services. The Evaluation Report has been received by DCYA and will be published in the coming months.

Irish Aid Development Education Strategy

Action 5.9 of the National Youth Strategy specifically calls for the establishment of a forum of interests to support youth sector implementation of the Irish Aid Development Education Strategy. The *Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017–2023*, which the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade published in December 2016, seeks to provide a programme of coordinated, quality development education training to the youth workforce at the local and national levels, strengthening their capacity to integrate development education into their youth work practice. The strategy also seeks to support the integration of development education into initial youth worker education through higher education institutions. The delivery of CPD training to youth workers and volunteers, building youth organisations' capacity to integrate development education into their strategy, guidelines and practice, is also envisaged. Irish Aid hopes to continue to support development education organisations working directly with young people to increase the number and spread of young people in youth clubs and organisations engaging in quality development education.

Young carers

Action 5.6 of the National Youth Strategy calls for the establishment of a cross-sector/cross-agency working group to consider the needs of young carers and to work towards aligning supports for young carers to help ensure an integrated and coordinated response to their needs.

Carers Forum

While the Department of Health has overall responsibility for the National Carers' Strategy, the Department of Social Protection, as part of its commitments under the National Carers' Strategy, hosts the Annual Carers Forum. The Forum continues to perform an important role in ensuring that the views of carers and their representatives will inform policy development across the relevant Government Departments and agencies. The Forum is intended to be as consultative as possible,

with opportunities for Departments with commitments under the strategy to present highlights of what has been achieved during the year and for carer representative groups to discuss their concerns. At the recent Annual Carers Forum on 25 April 2017, a thematic workshop entitled ‘Supports for Young Carers’ took place. The topics discussed and the progress reported were as follows:

1. Initiating a system to identify young carers through schools, health services, etc.

Progress

- Young carer information is being introduced in some schools.
- Five areas in the country have support programmes for young carers under Family Carers Ireland. There is a dedicated website at www.youngcarers.ie.
- Community Family Support Networks (CFSN) are being established across the country supported by Tusla – The Child and Family Agency.

2. The development of a young carer programme, promoting research on young carers and gathering expertise in dealing with young carers.

Progress

- Resources: Family Carers Ireland – Toolkit for Young Carers and five programmes nationally
- Crosscare Carer Support Programme, CDETB – a collaborative model for working with young carers, ‘Look Again, Think Again’.

3. The provision of a lead person to have ultimate responsibility for young carers.

Progress

- The National Youth Strategy Lead Team has met and discussed the issue and hopes to have proposals to identify an approach to the identification of suitable structures for young carers going forward.

The Supports for Young Carers workshop gave their top three priorities for Government, which were:

1. SPHE Module in school curriculum on Young Carers – Individual support for young carers that is friendly and accessible is what matters.
 2. Regional/national awareness raising and funding of young carers’ programmes.
 3. Decision on lead Government Department.
- Consultation of Young Carers as part of the VFMPR project consultations.

In the coming months, it is planned to hold a consultation event where young carers’ voices will be heard as part of the development of the VFMPR project.

9.3 Early Years Strategy

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures contains a commitment to produce Ireland’s first-ever National Early Years Strategy. This is one of a number of constituent strategies promised under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, including the *National Youth Strategy 2015–2020* and the *National*

Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020, both published in 2015.

The National Early Years Strategy, which is expected to be published later this year, will take a whole-of-government approach to outlining Ireland's vision for the coming decade in seeking to improve the lives of children from birth to six years. It will address a range of issues affecting children in their first years of life, such as child health and well-being, parenting and family support, learning and development, and play and recreation.

The strategy is taking account of *Right from the Start: Report of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy* and the reports of two interdepartmental groups established and chaired by DCYA 2015, specifically the *Report of Inter-Departmental Working Group: Future Investment in Childcare in Ireland* and the *Supporting Access to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme for Children with a Disability: Report of the Inter-Departmental Group*.

The strategy is also being informed by bilateral discussions with the relevant Government Departments and by a range of stakeholder consultations, including one undertaken with children aged three to five years, and the Open Policy Debate on the National Early Years Strategy held in December 2016. The debate brought together more than 80 experts, practitioners and stakeholders from the fields of health, education, early childhood care and education, child protection, housing, community, social protection and social inclusion. Participants included parents' organisations, statutory and non-statutory organisations and advocacy groups, trade union and business representatives, and Government Departments.

In the coming months and before publication of the strategy, DCYA intends to consult with the various structures created to implement *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, including the Consortium, the Advisory Council and the Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group.

Part 10: Mid-term review



Mid-term review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020*

Mid-term review: Summary FAQs



Who

DCYA is carrying out a mid-term review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. This will be done with all the key stakeholders involved in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure and will also include an open call for observations.

What

While there was no plan for a mid-term review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* outlined in the policy framework, DCYA took the position at the pre-implementation stage that such a review would be strategically beneficial. This approach has ensured that progress on implementation is foregrounded and momentum maintained. Crucially, it also affords the opportunity to reflect on and review the progress and process to date. This mid-term review is intended to indicate the status and advances made on both the deliverables and processes associated with the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* as well as to signpost clear direction in the second phase of implementation. It is not merely intended to provide learning on the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, but also to derive such learning for consideration and use in the broader system and sectors working with children and young people and wider social policy areas.

DCYA wants to use this mid-term review to renew and refine the next phase of implementation and action. The intended outcome of this will be a succinct review of the progress, impact, learning and next steps in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* implementation journey. This review aims to identify learning that will be accessible, useable and transferable.

Aim

The delivery of a succinct mid-term review that focuses on status, progress and learning for renewal and next steps, which is to include:

- A review product
- A review process
- A review engagement
- Review outputs
- Identify learning
- Determine content, theme and course of action for phase two of implementation, 2018–2020.

How

While DCYA could tender for a full ‘independent’ review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* to be carried out, it is DCYA’s intention that this review be advanced by those centrally involved in the implementation process with contributions from key informants and observations from those who have not been involved in the process. Technical expertise will be sought in refining and structuring some aspects of the review. It is intended that the review will involve a process of both self-assessment and of external assessment to ensure a rounded and responsive account of progress. The methodologies will include:

1. Review of documentary evidence and progress
2. Stakeholder interviews and focus groups
3. Open survey
4. Perspectives from key informants.

It is planned that the review will focus on challenging the working assumptions of the framework. It will examine the areas of policy, process, practice and product, with specific reference to outputs. The review will also capture the learning that will inform the focus and approach to be taken in the second phase of implementation until 2020, the end of the framework.

Stakeholders and key informants

Group	Role
DCYA Implementation Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of plan for mid-term review• Development and execution of review• Coordination of review process and inputs
Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall monitoring• Report from the perspective of Departments and agencies• Active engagement and input in the review process
Sponsors (separate from the Consortium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case studies on cross-sectoral priorities• Work with DCYA Implementation Team to develop composition/presentation of content• Active engagement and input in the review

	process
Advisory Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input to review from community and voluntary sector perspective • Case study on collaborative working – a model for Government and for community and voluntary sector engagement • Active engagement and input in the review process • Co-host event/summit with DCYA
Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input from national implementation perspective • Provide input from local implementation perspective • Active engagement and input in the review process
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (and wider Cabinet Committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present completed review to Cabinet Committee • Ensure Government/Cabinet support for recommendations of the mid-term review
Comhairle na nÓg National Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input from perspective of children and young people
Young Voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input from perspective of children and young people
Other DCYA support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of review methodology
Other key informants/experts to be identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in enhancing review process, where required

When

While the annual reporting process for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is underway at present, this will be concluded by June, when DCYA presents the annual report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy. The mid-term review will be based on the 2016–2017 annual report and on preceding annual reports. It will commence in July 2017, with completion envisaged in the fourth quarter of 2017.

Key timelines and deliverables:

Outline plan for mid-term review agreed	May 2017
Annual report on <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i> completed and presented to Cabinet Committee	July 2017
Design of research questions, surveys, etc.	July 2017
Completion of surveys by stakeholders; interviews, focus groups	July, August 2017
Collation and analysis of responses	September, October, November 2017
Publication of mid-term review	December 2017

Contact

For further information, please contact the DCYA Policy Innovation Unit: policyinnovation@dcya.gov.ie

Appendix

Advisory Council Work Plan

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: Advisory Council Workplan 2017

Council Workplan October 2016 to October 2017

The Workplan outlined below provides the basis of the Council's work over the coming year. Individual members or groups of members will take responsibility for leading on specific issues. Progress will be monitored at each meeting of the full Council. It is also envisaged that the Council will respond to emerging issues of importance as they arise.

The Council's priorities are underpinned by an overarching focus on and commitment to children's rights and tackling childhood and youth inequalities in Irish society.

1. Child Poverty		
Purpose	Prepare joint NGO submission for Budget 2018, advise on the development of DSP paper on Child Poverty, and present paper to the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium. Support the implementation of the Single Affordable Childcare Scheme.	
Action	Person Responsible	Timeline
Finalise NGO paper	Tanya Ward	Q4 2016
Launch or submission of NGO paper	Tanya Ward	Q1 2017
Finalise paper on Whole of Government Approach	DSP	Q1 2017
Inform development of the Single Affordable Childcare Scheme	TBD	Q1 2017
Meet with representatives of other Departments to discuss departmental paper	Tanya Ward	Q1 2017
Help to communicate the message of the Single Affordable Childcare Scheme as benefitting children.	Advisory Council	Throughout 2017
Presentation of paper on Whole of Government Approach to Consortium	DSP	Q1 2017
Further actions dependant on Consortium	TBD	Throughout 2017
Early Years indicators		
Council members	Tanya Ward, Mary Cunningham, Dympna Devine, Grainia Long, Karen Kiernan, Fergus Finlay	
Departments/Agencies	DSP, DCYA, DH, DES, DHPCLG	
Others	St. Vincent de Paul	

2. Homelessness		
Purpose	To monitor implementation of Re-building Ireland as it relates to children and young people, and to assist in the implementation of the plan.	
Action	Person Responsible	Timeline
Convene bilateral with DHPCLG to discuss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress to date Monitoring Reporting 	Grainia Long	Q1 2017
Specific supporting actions dependant on results of meeting with DHPCLG to include discussion on the following issues:	TBD	TBD

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevention of homelessness, early years provision and food poverty - Use of emergency accommodation (standards, practice, other services to be provided while children in emergency accommodation, and provision of child-friendly spaces to play) - Achievement of target to eradicate use of hotels/B&Bs as emergency accommodation - Use of other forms of emergency/temporary accommodation - Provision of alternative forms of permanent suitable accommodation - Provision of accommodation to enable transition: i.e. among 18+ age group to prevent rough sleeping and enable tenancy sustainment 		
Ongoing monitoring of implementation. Council to review progress quarterly, with input from DHPCLG, TUSLA and DCYA.	Grainia Long	Throughout 2016/2017
Seek data/evidence from range of govt and NGO sources regarding homelessness service/practice	All	Throughout 2016/17
Consider input from children and young people to our work	All	Throughout 2017
Council members	Grainia Long , Fergus Finlay, Tanya Ward	
Departments/Agencies	DHPCLG, DCYA	
Others	TBD	

3. Education		
Purpose	a. To input into the review of DEIS, with a view to ensuring that it takes a sufficiently broad view of the issues and inequalities affecting those at the margins b. To consider wide ranging reforms of the education system in Ireland	
Action	Person Responsible	Timeline
Meet with colleagues from DES Social Inclusion unit, and wider DES to discuss the DEIS review	TBD/DES	Q4 2016
Produce position paper on education reform, beyond schools, to include areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-formal learning • Educational disadvantage generally • Exam stress • Mental health and wellbeing • Children on short hours 	TBD	Q2 2017
Actions arising from paper	TBD	Throughout 2017
Council members	Dympna Devine, Fergus Finlay, Sean Campbell, John Lawlor, Fiona Coghlan	
Departments/Agencies	DES	
Others	Consider commissioning a consultant/researcher to develop a first draft position paper	

4. Mental Health and Wellbeing			
Purpose		a. Develop vision statement on mental health and wellbeing of children and young people b. Work as part of the new Mental Health Taskforce c. Link with Healthy Ireland Council to identify and progress areas of mutual interest	
Action		Person Responsible	Timeline
Develop vision statement on mental health and wellbeing		Tanya Ward/Grainia Long	Q1 2017
Actions arising from paper		TBD	Throughout 2017
Arrange meeting between interested members of the Advisory Council and DH officials		DCYA	Q1 2017
Progress working as part of Mental Health Taskforce		Tony Bates, Mary Cunningham, Grainia Long	Ongoing
Link with Healthy Ireland Council to identify areas of mutual interest		Tony Bates, Fiona Coghlan, Tanya Ward	Q1 2017
Provide useful data/evidence/practice examples to inform our work		All	Throughout 2017
Consider ways to include children and young people in our work		Grainia	Throughout 2017
Council members		Tony Bates, Mary Cunningham, Grainia Long, Fiona Coghlan, Tanya Ward	
Departments/Agencies		DH, DCYA	
Others		Healthy Ireland Council, Youth Mental Health Taskforce, Mental Health Coalition, St Patrick's Mental Health Services.	

5. Human Rights and Equality			
Purpose		To work with DCYA to advise on the implementation of key human rights and equality commitments in <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i>	
Action		Person Responsible	Timeline
Establish subcommittee to work with DCYA		Tanya Ward	Q1 2017
Initial meeting of DCYA and subcommittee		Tanya Ward/DCYA	Q1 2017
Agree workplan for subcommittee		Tanya Ward/DCYA	Q2 2017
Council members		Tanya Ward , Dympna Devine, Mary Cunningham	
Departments/Agencies		DCYA	
Others		Other key independent human rights bodies and other relevant parties as agreed within the subgroup	

6. Prevention and Early Intervention			
Purpose		Work with DCYA to develop and implement the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI)	
Action		Person Responsible	Timeline
Establish governance structures for the QCBI		DCYA	Q4 2016
Represent the Advisory Council on the QCBI implementation infrastructure		Tom Costello	Throughout 2017

Council members	Tom Costello
Departments/Agencies	DCYA
Others	

7. Implementation of Constituent Strategies		
Purpose	a. Inform the development and implementation of the Early Years Strategy b. Inform the implementation of the National Youth Strategy	
Action	Person Responsible	Timeline
Work with DCYA Early Years Unit to inform the development of the Early Years Strategy	Teresa Heeney, Tanya Ward	Until launch of strategy
Work with DCYA Early Years Unit to support the implementation of the Early Years Strategy	Teresa Heeney, Tanya Ward	Once strategy is launched
Work with DCYA Youth Affairs Unit on implementing the NYS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial meeting November 2016 	Mary Cunningham, John Lawlor, Sean Campbell	Ongoing
Council members	Teresa Heeney, Mary Cunningham, Dympna Devine, John Lawlor, Tanya Ward	
Departments/Agencies	DCYA	
Others		

8. Implications of UK decision to leave the EU		
Purpose	To advise Cabinet Subcommittee on Brexit of potential implications of UK Exit from EU on children's rights and child protection	
Action	Person Responsible	Timeline
To map high levels risks/opportunities to children's rights and child protection arising from UK Exit from EU and outline potential areas of priority	Grainia Long	Qtr 1 2017
To contribute to seeking external advice on implications (e.g. Geoffrey Shannon opinion)	All	Qtr 1 2017
To contribute to seminar/event with sector on the issue	Grainia Long	TBD (assuming Qtr 2017)
To contribute to work of All Island Forum sub-committee on children's rights and child protection	All	Throughout 2017
To seek input relevant organisations in NI, and GB and relevant EU/European agencies	All	Throughout 2017
To consider ways in which we seek input from children and young people	All	Qtr 1 2017
Council members	Fergus Finlay, Mary Cunningham, Grainia Long, Tanya Ward	
Departments/Agencies		
Others		

Terms of Reference

1. Advise the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and the constituent strategies of Early Years, Youth, and Participation;
2. Support the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* in and across the community and voluntary sector, and in wider society;
3. Ensure that the specific expertise and perspectives from respective areas of children and young people's services inform the work of the Council;
4. Generate support for change among stakeholders and sectors;
5. Provide an enabling forum in which to support implementation and address challenges in a solution-focused manner;
6. Ensure that the views and voices of children and young people inform the work of the Council.

Council Operational Arrangements (Revised)

1. Meetings of the full Advisory Council will take place at least four times a year and more often if required. In 2017 meetings will be held on
 - Wednesday 1st February
 - Wednesday 5th April
 - Wednesday 14th June
 - Wednesday and Thursday 13th/14th September (residential)
 - Wednesday 22nd November

Regular meetings will take place from 10.30 -16.00 at DCYA Mespil Road, although other venues will be considered. The longer meeting time is intended to ensure that the Council can deal with normal business but also engage in fuller exploration of key thematic areas. Key policy domains will be invited to input in such sessions and engage with the Council so that they can offer direct assistance where required.

2. In the interests of building and maintaining cohesion among members and promoting the effective functioning of the Council, it is not possible to accept substitutes/alternates to members. However membership of sub-groups of the Council is open to colleagues with a responsibility or expertise in the relevant area.
3. Vacancies arising on the Council from the sectoral nominees to be filled by the relevant sector, subject to Ministerial approval. Vacancies arising from Ministerial nominees will be filled by Ministerial appointment. Generally vacancies will be filled as soon as possible following their arising, and it is the intention to seek the broadest representation of perspectives amongst the Council membership as a whole.
4. Where the Council is consulted on any issue, document, etc. it is the intention that a minimum period of three weeks will be provided to provide for effective consultation, especially by the membership bodies represented on the Council.
5. The membership organisations represented on the Council have a particular role in promoting awareness and disseminating information about *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and in promoting and supporting its implementation in and across the community and voluntary sector.

6. All Council members agree to promote and support the implementation of the Framework and to positively engage as the Advisory Council in community and voluntary sector events. DCYA has provided pro forma briefing and presentation for promotion of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* within the C&V sector.
7. DCYA will make available a small amount of funding to assist the technical operations of the Council.

Key Tasks (revised)

In addition to the specific commitments in the Workplan, the Council has identified the following priority tasks over the coming year and beyond:

- Support implementation of the constituent strategies.
- Contribute to the development of Sponsor Department's logic models, and the identification of cross-sectoral priorities.
- Develop mechanisms for responding to regressive policies and activities. Identify progressive approaches and responses which can improve outcomes for children and young people.
- Influence and advise on key budget priorities which will enhance outcomes for children and young people.
- Use *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* implementation infrastructure (Sponsors Group and Policy Consortium, having regard to DCYA use of the Senior Officials Group) to promote issues of concern to the Advisory Council through reporting, agenda and attendance.
- Use the influence, brand and voice of the Advisory Council, judiciously focussing on intractable, cross-departmental issues.
- Provide advice on project specific items & issues: e.g. inform development of Commissioning work being led by DPER, DCYA, DoH and DECLG.
- Routinely access and use the voice and views of children and young people.
- Collaborate with DCYA on a Child Summit in 2017 to be promoted as a *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* event.
- Contribute to the development of the annual report, and the 2017 mid-point review.
- Set out a calendar of operations of the Council which cover key content areas.
- DCYA will examine all statements of strategy from relevant departments to identify key issues which are in the offing so that the Council has clear line of sight so that it can engage and input accordingly.
- Advisory Council to consider drawing up a one page preliminary position paper on each area of its work programme (in addition to commitments already expressed in the workplan). This will cover observations, opportunities and outputs.