

# BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES

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

**Annual Report for the  
first year of implementation,  
April 2014 – 2015**



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Department of Children and Youth Affairs  
43-49 Mespil Road  
Dublin 4  
Tel: +353 (0)1 647 3000  
Fax: +353 (0)1 667 0826  
E-mail: [contact@dcya.gov.ie](mailto:contact@dcya.gov.ie)  
Web: [www.dcy.a.ie](http://www.dcy.a.ie)

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# Foreword

by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

I am pleased to welcome the publication of the first Annual Report on the progress on implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for children and young people, 2014-2020*. The report sets out in detail the extensive work for children and young people being undertaken by all Government departments and agencies since the launch of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* in April 2014.

*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is the first overarching national policy framework comprehending the age ranges spanning children and young people (0-24 years). It represents a fundamental change in the way we view children and young people, moving away from the failures of the past, to make Ireland a country 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.

I am pleased with the progress that has been made in 2014: implementation structures have been established, and all Government departments and agencies are actively progressing the 163 specific policy commitments detailed in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. An Implementation Plan has been set out and crucial cross-sectoral priorities have been identified. What we have done in the initial year of implementation is to lay the groundwork for strategic and sustainable progress to achieve optimum outcomes for our children and young people.

Improving children and young people's lives across the five national outcomes identified in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* involves building cross-departmental, interagency and cross-sectoral engagements. This is in many ways our first challenge and while there is understandable urgency to meeting many of the more visible and immediate issues facing children, we must take the time to ensure we have the infrastructure to maximise our response to those issues. I am confident that establishing these key elements has provided a strong foundation for our work over the coming years in the achievement of the commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* by 2020.

I want to conclude by acknowledging the contributions of the previous Ministers for Children and Youth Affairs – Frances Fitzgerald, TD and Charles Flanagan, TD – to the development and implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. I also want to acknowledge the work of all the groups involved in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure: the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, Sponsors Group, Advisory Council, Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group, and the children and youth participation structures, as well the work carried out by my officials in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The continued dedication and commitment from all will ensure that we achieve better outcomes for all of our children and young people.

**Dr. James Reilly, TD**  
*Minister for Children and Youth Affairs*

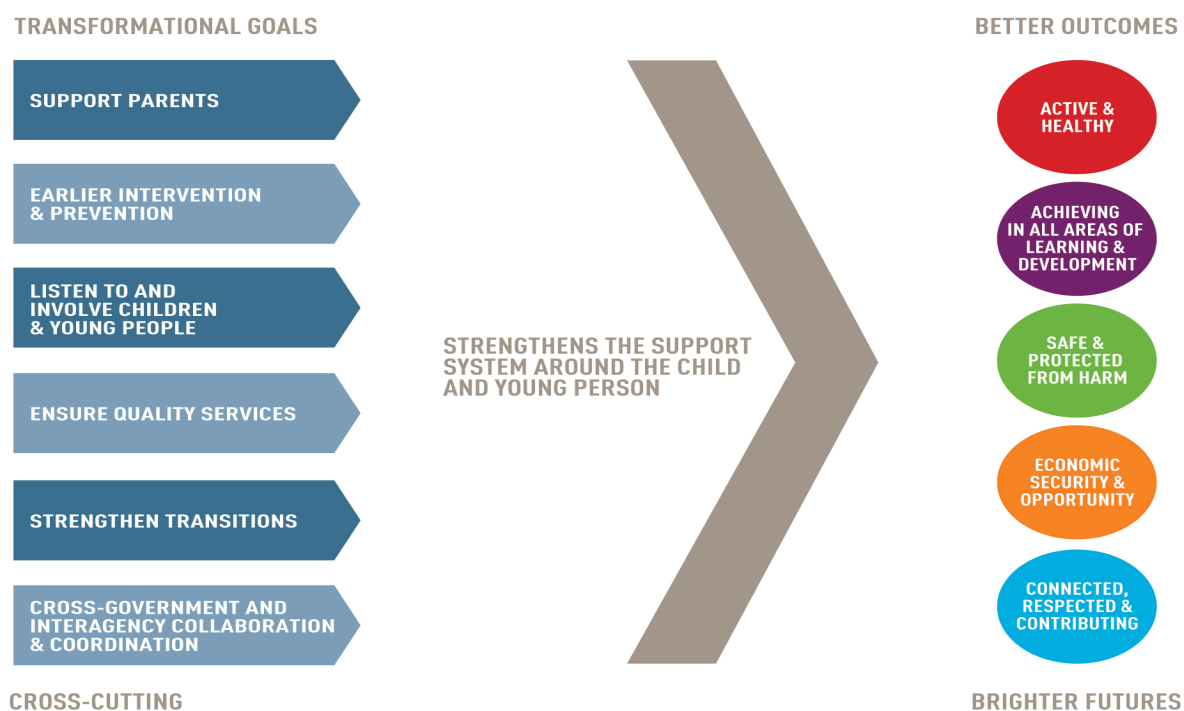
# Part 1: Introduction and Overview of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*

*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for children and young people, 2014-2020* was launched in April 2014. This first Annual Report aims to provide a summary of progress made across all Government departments and agencies in the first year of implementation.

*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* comprehends the continuum from infancy through early and middle childhood to adolescence and early adulthood, spanning the age range 0-24 years. It provides the overarching framework for the development and implementation of policy and services for children and young people by:

- establishing a **shared set of outcomes** for children and young people to which all Government departments and agencies, statutory services and the voluntary and community sectors work to ensure a coherent response for children and young people;
- identifying the **range of commitments** in place across Government and progressing these based on a structured, systematic and outcomes-focused approach;
- prioritising the **key cross-cutting transformational goals** under each outcome area, which requires concerted and coordinated action to ensure the realisation of the respective outcomes;
- emphasising an **integrated and evidence-informed approach** to working across Government, on horizontal and vertical levels – an approach which is child-centred, benefits from interagency and multidisciplinary working, and which transfers to all sectors and settings working with children and young people.

The five National Outcomes and the six Transformational Goals to achieve them are represented diagrammatically below.



As noted in the Taoiseach's introduction to *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, 'a central theme of the Framework is implementation'. **The task in Year 1 has therefore been to put in place the arrangements to enable Government and interagency collaboration.** To achieve this, the Implementation Team, located in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), has established the implementation structures and developed an Implementation Plan to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach to the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The Implementation Plan details specific actions for the 163 commitments made in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Each Government department and agency has outlined actions for 2014, 2015 and 2016 under each of its commitments, as well as stating its desired outcome for 2017.

This emphasis on the initial phase of implementation aims to ensure tangible and substantial progress is made in advance of the mid-term review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* in 2017, at which time the process can be revisited and progress appraised.

In preparing this Annual Report, the DCYA has coordinated reporting across all Government departments and agencies to provide an overview of progress made against commitments identified in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Following this introduction, the report consists of three parts:

- **Part 2 summarises the key developments to date**, including cross-governmental progress and contributions from the voluntary and community sector. In recognition of the significant and broad-based infrastructure guiding the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, the Chairs of the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, the Advisory Council, and the Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group have each provided comments on implementation to date from their perspectives.
- **Part 3 details the development of the Implementation Plan and the infrastructure to implement it**, with reports from each of the working groups established to deal with specific aspects. Progress on the development of the Outcome Indicator Set is provided by the DCYA Research Unit. Also included are details on the selection of cross-sectoral priority commitments identified by the Sponsors Group that form the basis of the 2015 work plan for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (see Appendix).
- **Part 4 details the status of progress made to date** on the implementation of commitments, based on returns from Government departments and agencies. A summary report from each Government department is included, with actions taken in association with their various commitments.
- **Finally, the Appendix provides cross-sectoral logic models of priority commitments for 2015** undertaken by the following Government departments:
  - **Department of Children and Youth Affairs:** (1) Enhancing effective prevention and early intervention; and (2) Inclusion of children with a disability in mainstream pre-schools.
  - **Department of Social Protection:** Tackling child poverty.
  - **Department of Health:** Getting children and young people more active (implementation of National Physical Activity Plan).
  - **Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government:** Cross-Government and interagency collaboration.

The complete table of returns with information supplied by Government departments and agencies relating to their actions for the first year of implementation, along with the Implementation Plan for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, are both available from the Policy Innovation Unit, Department of Children and Youth Affairs (see [www.dcy.ie](http://www.dcy.ie)).

## Part 2: Key Developments

### 2.1 Key developments in the initial year of implementation

#### Implementation infrastructure

- A robust implementation infrastructure has been established. This includes the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, Sponsors Group, Advisory Council, Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group, and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) Implementation Team – all of which are now in place and fully operational. Connections with the children and youth participation structures are also being developed in line with the recently launched *National Strategy for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (June 2015).

#### Implementation plan

- An Implementation Plan has been developed and provides a roadmap for implementation of commitments made in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for children and young people, 2014-2020*. It includes the actions currently underway in Government departments and agencies to achieve the significant and complex range of commitments listed within the framework.
- The Implementation Plan is a point of departure from which strategic and sustainable actions will be advanced each year based on progress, which will be monitored in the Annual Report. It is envisaged that existing and emerging actions will be further developed in supporting the realisation of commitments as related policy developments continue apace.

#### Summary of progress on commitments

Government departments and agencies have made a strong start in the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Action on the majority of the 163 commitments is in progress, while a small number of the commitments have already been realised.

- **Status of action on the 69 commitments under the six Transformational Goals:**
  - 59 are in progress;
  - 5 have been finalised;
  - 4 are nearing completion;
  - 1 has been exceeded.
- **Status of action on the 89 commitments under the five National Outcomes:**
  - 67 are in progress;
  - 16 have been finalised;
  - 5 are nearing completion;
  - 1 has been deferred<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Action for Commitment 5.4, 'Hold a referendum before the end of 2015 on a proposal to amend the Constitution to reduce the voting age to 16', has been deferred.



- **Status of the 5 commitments under implementation processes:**
  - All achieved.
- **The majority of commitments, 140 out of a total of 163, are on track** to achieve their interim outcome for 2017 (when a mid-term review will be conducted on *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*), while some commitments have already been fully met.

## Enhancing the process

- While acknowledging time delays in establishing the full *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs has committed to actively advancing the required structures and processes and also in developing innovative mechanisms above and beyond those outlined in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* to ensure sustainable momentum in advancing the framework. This is being achieved via the following:
  - **Development of an Implementation Plan**, which is a point of departure from which strategic and sustainable actions will be identified and refined each year based on the progress status as identified in the Annual Report.
  - **Putting in place a mid-term review in 2017** to ensure front-loading of progress on commitments and affording the opportunity to revisit and reprioritise key actions.
  - Establishing one Advisory Council structure, rather than sector-specific structures, to ensure greater coherence in unifying the policy domains of Early Years, Children and Youth.
  - **Leading the Sponsors Group** to identify key cross-sectoral priorities in line with their respective remits via a logic-modelled format and seeking to ensure connectivity across policy domains (*full details included in Appendix to this report*).
  - Ensuring that the constituent groupings in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure will have the opportunity to inform the **identification of annual priorities** and to comment on progress via the Annual Report.
  - **Developing an Outcome Indicator Set**, which will allow for a comparison regarding the wellbeing of children and young people, through the identification and progress of indicators across the five national outcomes over the implementation period of the framework.
  - **Aligning the constituent strategies** (Early Years, Youth, and Participation) and ensuring progress on implementation is included in the overall reporting process of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

## Cross-government working

- While the majority of commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* have been assigned across Government departments and agencies, most of these are being progressed by the Lead Department or Agency, in liaison with partner departments and agencies, where required.
- The complexity of cross-government working is illustrated by the range of actions in response to the commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is, along with the key Sponsors, committed to ensuring not only the realisation of these commitments, but also that they focus on optimising the outcomes for children and young people.
- The Chairs of the working groups within the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure note the complexity of cross-government and sectoral working, yet emphasise the need for a clear and comprehensive focus on children and young people, and a strong and sustained engagement in the implementation process if we are collectively to achieve optimum outcomes.

- Cross-sectoral priorities were selected on the basis that they represent intractable issues that require specific and substantial cross-governmental action in order to progress. These priorities were identified by the Sponsors Group, presented to the Advisory Council for input and approved by the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium.
- The identification of cross-sectoral priorities is an innovative mechanism devised to act as a catalyst for implementing a number of the related 163 individual commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, while ensuring a strategic and sustainable approach to optimise implementation.
- These cross-sectoral priorities provide a work plan for 2015, as well as a model for interdepartmental working. They include significant issues such as child poverty; physical health; children with additional needs in Early Years care and education; enhancing prevention and early intervention in policy and provision; and ensuring more streamlined and coordinated local structures.
- In the coming years, the constituent groupings within the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure will have the opportunity to inform the identification of such priorities. This will enhance ownership and assist in ensuring a truly cross-sectoral and collective effort is brought to bear on some of the key intractable issues impacting on the lives of children and young people.

### Community and voluntary sector contribution

- It is important to note that the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is not merely a whole-of-government policy framework. To be truly effective, the framework should be society-wide, sector-wide and systems-wide. This is a key point of emphasis because there are a range of areas where the State is not the provider of services and supports for children and young people. Rather, rich and diverse sectors are in place that provide such services (e.g. Youth, Early Years, etc.) and therefore their active engagement in the implementation and realisation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is crucial.
- In recognition of the scale of child poverty, the Advisory Council had proposed the identification of one overarching cross-sectoral priority. While acknowledging this key theme, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is of the view that in the initial phase of implementation, the identification of one overarching priority could dissipate focus on the key cross-sectoral priorities which the Department wishes to align and which may also run contrary to the broader objectives of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and the principles of progressive universalism. Notwithstanding this, both the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Social Protection have agreed to advance the work on addressing the respective priorities of prevention and early intervention, and child poverty as exemplars for how the Advisory Council and Government departments can collaborate on further priorities in due course.

## 2.2 Comments from Chairs of key Groups

### Dr. Fergal Lynch, Secretary General of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and Chair of the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium

In my role as the Secretary General of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, it is my responsibility to chair the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium. The Consortium draws together high-level representatives from across Government departments and agencies to ensure effective oversight and drive implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. I have been assisted in this by the Deputy Chair of the Consortium from the Department of the Taoiseach.

The Consortium has the potential to be a very positive forum for driving implementation and problem-solving. There has been strong engagement from a range of key departments and agencies; yet this needs to be strengthened in other policy domains. Key to ensuring that this is an effective forum is consistent engagement at an appropriately high level (Assistant Secretary or equivalent) to ensure that members have decision-making capacity and an overview of the work of their department or agency. In general, this has been the case and it is anticipated that this will be built upon in the second year of implementation.

Cross-departmental working has become an increasing feature of policy development and implementation, particularly in the areas of social care. It is imperative that the need for cross-departmental input is focused and relevant to all participants whose input is required to achieve government-agreed outcomes. There are, it should be acknowledged, challenges across all departments to provide this contribution. Nevertheless, as the national policy framework for children and young people, comprehending one-third of the population, the high-level strategic engagement and support from all groupings within the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure remains a critical factor if we are to achieve our goals.

The Consortium is also a forum for addressing the challenge of ensuring that children and young people are given appropriate centrality in the thinking of all Government departments and agencies; this is of particular importance in those areas where there may not be an immediate focus of attention on children and young people in their own right. Developing this culture is one of the central challenges of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and the Consortium has progressed this in the first year of implementation, and will continue to do so.

It is my intention that we continue to build on the foundations provided by the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure and drive towards those transformational changes targeted by this broad-ranging, challenging and crucial framework to improve outcomes for children and young people.

### **Dr. Owen Keenan, Chair of the Advisory Council**

The Advisory Council has welcomed the publication of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and endorsed its targets. The Council members are committed to supporting the implementation of the framework in full so that these targets will be achieved.

The Council has met on six occasions, from its inaugural meeting in November 2014 to June 2015. It has been represented at the Policy Consortium meetings of November 2014 and April 2015. Two reference groups comprising members of the Council have been established to work with Lead Sponsors on the specific issues of child and youth poverty, and prevention and early intervention. It is hoped that the contribution of the Council in advancing the delivery of desired outcomes for each of these priorities will be helpful and significant. The Council has welcomed the finalisation of the *National Youth Strategy* and the publication of the *National Strategy for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making*, and looks forward to the publication of the proposed *Early Years Strategy* as soon as practicable.

The Advisory Council appreciates the scale and complexity of the challenge of implementing *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* in full and welcomes the annual reporting process and mid-term review scheduled for 2017. On behalf of the Council, I would like to make the following observations:

- Delivering on the 'whole of government' commitment to the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is a prime example of the challenge of the public sector reform agenda. Children and young people's lives cannot be disaggregated to fit neatly within the specific statutory parameters of a wide range of departments and agencies. The successful

implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* requires a much more coherent and integrated way of working than heretofore. The risk is that the system will simply function as it always has done. As is clear from this Annual Report, significant progress has been made to date. However, already there is evidence of some departments and agencies not fully embracing their responsibilities under the Framework. This is an issue not only of understanding and capacity, but also of hearts and minds – and of leadership. There is a need for both political and administrative leadership to ensure that all departments and agencies meet the demands of the Framework’s effective implementation. The structures for supervising the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* – especially the Policy Consortium and recourse to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy – are strong, but will only prove effective if they are used to ensure a concerted drive towards effective delivery. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs plays a pivotal and progressive role, but can only succeed if it has full cooperation and commitment at ‘whole of Government’ level.

- The Council has identified child and youth poverty as a key overarching concern in meeting *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures’* vision for children and young people in Ireland. Poverty is multi-faceted in its effects – experience of poverty negatively impacts children and young people’s health, their capacity to learn, to participate, to socialise and, ultimately, to earn and to contribute to society. The Council supports the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* 2020 target to lift over 70,000 children (aged 0-17 years) out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level. However, the position has worsened since 2011, with 138,000 children in consistent poverty in 2013, an increase of 23,000 children on 2012. Consequently, efforts now need to be intensified to lift 101,000 children out of consistent poverty to meet the target by 2020. As time passes and the challenge becomes greater, very significant and determined action is required in the context of Budget 2016 if this target is to remain credible.
- It is significant that in addition to establishing a Reference Group on Child and Youth Poverty, the second such Group established focuses on Prevention and Early Intervention. These are two sides of the same coin: efforts to tackle child poverty here and now will ultimately be thwarted unless the longer term root causes are tackled through timely evidence-based programmes and services from the early years onwards.
- This highlights a further point that is relevant to the monitoring of the implementation of the Policy Framework. While the annual reporting of progress in meeting *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures’* commitments is essential, it is also important to track in tandem what is happening to children and young people, i.e. the realities of their lives. Ultimately the test of the Framework will be in how it has contributed to improving the lives of children and young people, rather than simply satisfying ourselves that the identified actions have been taken.

The Advisory Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and is committed to engaging as effectively as possible with colleagues from statutory departments and agencies in contributing to the achievement of its goals.

### **Dr. Sheelah Ryan, Chair of the Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSC) National Steering Group**

In April 2014, the Children’s Services Committees Steering Group met and acknowledged, as a very positive step, the inclusion of Children’s Services Committees (now Children and Young People’s Services Committees, CYPSCs) in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* National Policy Framework structures and its commitments. This is an acknowledgment of the continued commitment and local leadership shown by the Committees to interagency working for children and young people since 2007. As Chairperson of the National Steering Group, I accordingly took up membership of the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium to represent CYPSCs and to highlight pertinent issues

requiring consideration at national level. It is my observation that the Consortium has been well-attended and is beginning the serious discussions required to work on those more complex issues. Continuity of individuals at the Consortium will be required, however, to make genuine headway.

Also in April 2014, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) indicated its intention to reconfigure the CYPSC National Steering Group membership in order to better align with the structures of *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures*. Two urgent issues for the development of CYPSCs were highlighted by the National Steering Group:

- the relationship between CYPSCs and Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs);
- the resourcing of local CYPSC Co-ordinators.

In line with the policy mandate of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, the DCYA extended the age range of CYPSCs from children aged 0-18 years to children and youth up to 24 years of age. Consequently, CYPSCs now reflect the expanded age remit, and enhanced representation, to be more reflective of the broad range of stakeholders operating in and across related policy domains. A Task Group on Children and Young People's Services Committees was convened in September 2014 and led by the DCYA to work on the development of a *Blueprint for the development of Children and Young People's Services Committees*. This document was published in June 2015 and sets out the policy direction for CYPSCs over the coming years, including an Action Plan for 2015-2017.

As Chairperson of the National Steering Group, I commend the good and focused policy and strategic leadership that has been provided by the DCYA within this reporting period. The *Blueprint* confirms the mandate and strengthens the role of CYPSCs. We have a re-energised National Steering Group, with wider representation and senior decision-making wisdom, and a National Co-ordinator for CYPSCs, bridging the policy to local implementation space and providing leadership, building participation and advocating on behalf of the CYPSC approach, up, down and across. There are also 22 CYPSCs giving life and meaning to policy, leading local implementation of interagency planning, co-ordination and service delivery for children and young people.

I also make the following observations:

- As the key interagency vehicle at local level for the implementation of Government policy regarding children and young people, CYPSCs are vehicles for change. They have developed an expertise in devising local responses to local need. As such, it is imperative that each constituent CYPSC member organisation, agency and sector and their parent Government Department commits to an interagency and whole-of-government approach by actively participating in and supporting the work undertaken at the CYPSC table to improve outcomes for children and young people. In particular, it will be important to:
  - finalise membership of the CYPSC National Steering Group;
  - clarify and strengthen relationships between Local Community Development Committees and CYPSCS;
  - intensify engagement by Health, Education and Justice in CYPSC structures and work.
- CYPSCs must be fully supported and resourced and therefore enabled if they are to deliver on the six commitments outlined in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Furthermore, the key obstacle to national roll-out of CYPSCs to every county in Ireland is the provision of local co-ordinators. This is being actively managed so that provision and standardisation of the CYPSC Co-ordinator resource is achieved.
- CYPSCS are making strides in achieving together for children and young people and are playing a strong role in supporting their member organisations' interagency work, for example, the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support approach of Tusla – Child and Family Agency. With over one-third of Ireland's population aged up to 24 years, CYPSCs are the key forums for all statutory and community/voluntary service providers within a county

to coalesce for planning, co-ordination and collaboration in order to improve services, and ultimately outcomes, for children and young people.

- Within an evidence-informed approach, CYPSCs are utilising local data, systematic and local research, and the practice wisdom that comes from each Committee member to inform its planning and decision-making. This provides a strong basis on which CYPSCs can provide important local intelligence from every county in Ireland up to national level through the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* implementation structures. We must recognise the potential strength of CYPSCs to support the realisation of the six transformational goals identified in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, thereby influencing an improvement in practices and services.
- It will be essential to develop a robust and realistic reporting mechanism for CYPSCs in the coming months, one that captures how our children and young people are doing while also placing an emphasis on learning more about how national policy can be successfully implemented locally. With reference to achieving this type of quality information, it is very relevant that work on developing the Outcome Indicator Set for the national outcomes for children and young people is progressed so that CYPSCs' reports can align with national reports. It will also be important to consider other important indicators such as family wellbeing and indicators to measure effective interagency working.

As Chairperson of the CYPSC National Steering Group, I am committed to supporting interagency working to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Ireland through the successful operation of local CYPSCs. This local implementation requires continued national leadership and sustainable resourcing. It will require more change and a doubling of efforts from all of us. At all levels throughout the infrastructure for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, it is crucial that departments, agencies and sectors working directly and indirectly with children and young people commit to an enhanced appreciation and application of interagency work to ensure optimum outcomes.

I look forward to continuing to bring to our national forum the fruits of local interagency working and trust in continued whole-of-government support for this challenging, but ultimately rewarding work.

# Part 3: Development of Structures and Processes

## 3.1 Development of Implementation Plan

The structures and processes outlined in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* are given shape through a detailed Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan outlines the approach to the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* with specific regard to the first phase of implementation, covering the period 2014-2017, at which time the framework will be revisited and progress appraised. The Implementation Plan details the range of actions under each of the 163 key policy commitments across various Government departments and agencies. The commitments are diverse and wide-ranging. Some are very specific and readily actionable. Others will evolve over time. Several of the commitments are high-level, multi-dimensional and structurally complex, and will therefore require further development through a strategic and concerted focus of the implementation process.

The Implementation Plan 2014-2017 for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is available from the DCYA website ([www.dcy.gov.ie](http://www.dcy.gov.ie)).

## 3.2 Establishment of implementation infrastructure

A key focus of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is on effective implementation to ensure accountability, drive implementation and provide a forum for stakeholder engagement. This has been addressed through the establishment of a comprehensive implementation infrastructure. These new structures consolidate and elevate many of the previously existing consultative and interdepartmental processes within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs into the following work groups:

- Children and Young People's Policy Consortium;
- Sponsors Group;
- Advisory Council;
- Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group;
- *Better Outcome, Brighter Futures* Implementation Team;
- children and young people's participation structures.

While there was some delay in establishing a number of these structures, solid progress has been made during the first year of implementation in developing this significant and broad-based infrastructure. An overview of each of these groups is detailed below.

### 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 and 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 departments, agencies and sectors. The Consortium is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, with a Deputy Chair from the Department of the Taoiseach.

The Consortium was established and held its first meeting in April 2014. Subsequent meetings were held in July and November 2014 and April 2015.

## Sponsors Group

The Sponsors Group is a sub-group of the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium and is chaired by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It consists of 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
<b>Outcome 1</b> Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing	Department of Health
<b>Outcome 2</b> Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development	Department of Education and Skills
<b>Outcome 3</b> Safe and protected from harm	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
<b>Outcome 4</b> Economic security and opportunity	Department of Social Protection
<b>Outcome 5</b> Connected, respected and contributing to their world	Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
<b>Transformational goals and Chair of the Sponsors Group</b>	Department of Children and Youth Affairs

The Sponsors Group has 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 identified cross-sectoral priority commitments for progression in 2015 (see *Section 3.4 below*).

The Sponsors Group met in June, September, November and December 2014.



## 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 consists of four constituent groupings:

- The first three groups have representations 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.

The Advisory Council, chaired by Dr. Owen Keenan, was established and held its inaugural meeting in November 2014. Subsequent meetings were held in December 2014 and January, February, April and June 2015.

## Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) National Steering Group

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) 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 framework at local level and driving local interagency work.

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

The first meeting of the reconstituted Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group was held in April 2015.

## Better Outcome, Brighter Futures Implementation Team

An Implementation Team has been established as part of the Policy Innovation Unit within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to lead the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The 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 focus of the Implementation Team in the initial year of implementation has been to establish and ensure the effective operation of all elements of implementation structures. An additional and significant focus of the Implementation Team has been on promoting the identification of cross-sectoral priorities among the Sponsors Group, to ensure that key issues are identified and addressed in a strategic and sustainable manner. The Implementation Team has actively worked with the constituent groupings described above in the development of work programmes for their respective remits.

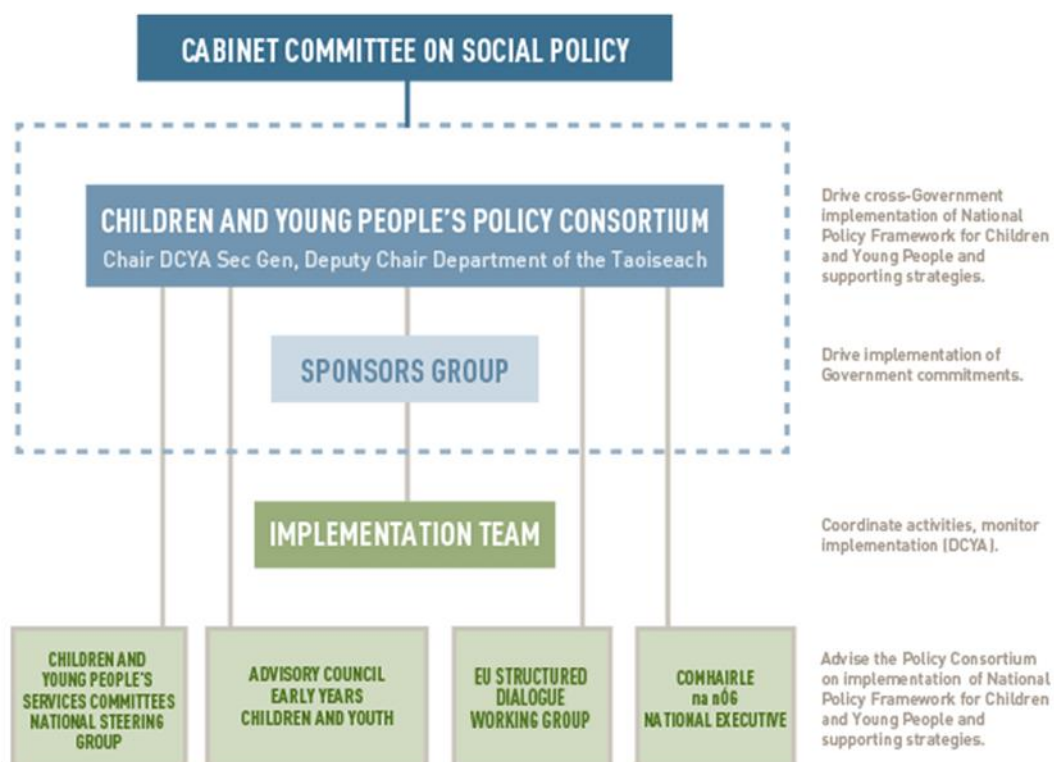
## Children and young people’s participation structures

Consultation with children and young people informed the development of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and will continue to inform its implementation. Children and young people will be able to engage with the implementation process through the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and through the EU Structured Dialogue Working Group. Both of these groups will have a formal link with the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium.

It is a priority for 2015 to embed this participation process in the implementation structures. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs will examine the optimum approach for this, having regard to the recently published *Strategy for Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making*.

Moreover, to underscore the importance accorded to the theme of participation, representatives on the Advisory Council are tasked with ensuring the voice of children and young people inform the work of the Council. In addition, the Children and Young People’s Services Committees National Steering Group has a position for a young person in the group to ensure that the voice of young people informs developments in this domain.

## Summary of implementation infrastructure



### 3.3 Development of Outcome Indicator Set

The development of the Outcome Indicator Set to track progress across the five national outcomes is being led by the Research and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The methodology will draw on that used to develop the National Set of Child Well-being Indicators (National Children's Office, 2005). The process involves two stages:

**Stage 1: Data preparation**, including:

- compile inventory of outcome indicators that are used elsewhere by conducting a review of international, national and regional studies/reports, to be documented in a short literature review;
- preliminary identification of possible data sources at national level;
- identification of national data sources for a reduced set of indicators;
- assign each of the available statistics to one of the five national outcomes specified;
- organisation of indicators by theme.

**Stage 2: Selection process**, including:

- development of selection criteria and a process that will utilise the implementation structures of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, including consultation with children and young people;
- propose and agree selection criteria;
- select Outcome Indicator Set through a Delphi-type process and agree on selection with *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Implementation groups;
- review of children's consultations.

Significant progression of this work has taken place across the second half of 2014 and early 2015. Much of the data preparation work is now complete. Preliminary work on the selection process has already taken place. The selection process methodology will be agreed and implemented in the coming months. It is expected that the selection will be finalised and a final set of indicators agreed in 2015, with a summary report published.

In the development of this Outcome Indicator Set, it is important to note that changes in population-level indicators are not easily attributable to a particular policy, programme or initiative, and do not answer questions about 'why' particular results were or were not achieved. However, a set of key child indicators across the five national outcomes will support the tracking of change over time and (where possible) benchmark Ireland's progress relative to other countries. Results will serve to highlight possible trends and potential policy issues arising, which will inform the annual focus of implementation in the future.

### 3.4 Enhancing Implementation: Identification of cross-sectoral priorities

The majority of the 163 commitments detailed in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* will be progressed through the normal programme of work of Government departments and agencies and progress tracked annually.

In addition, through the development of the implementation plan, it was considered that there are a number of significant issues that could be described as requiring concerted effort or capable of delivering considerable results, and these have been identified by each of the sponsors in the

Sponsors Group as cross-sectoral priorities for 2015. These have been agreed by the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium as actions that will represent the substantive programme of work for the initial phase of implementation in 2015 and will inform the activities of the constituent groupings in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure. They will require coordinated, collaborative and collective working across Government departments, agencies and sectors.

The cross-sectoral priorities were selected on the basis that they represent:

- an area where the commitment required multilateral action and addresses an intractable problem;
- an area through which collective and coordinated input would optimise outcomes;
- an area that identifies a thematic approach comprising a cluster of commitments to ensure a more strategic and efficient response to delivery of key themes.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has developed this approach to enliven the realisation of many of the commitments, while identifying key thematic areas that cover a range of themes in terms of structures, policy and provision. These can each support a strategic approach that adds value to the implementation process and ultimately contribute to enhancing the outcomes for children and young people.

**The cross-sectoral priorities for 2015 are:**

Lead	Identified cross-sectoral priority
Department of Social Protection	Child poverty reduction via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policy target;</li> <li>• coordinating priority actions for social targets;</li> <li>• applying social investment approach;</li> <li>• addressing EU Country Specific Recommendations.</li> </ul>
Department of Health	Complete and implement the National Physical Activity Plan.
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Prevention and early intervention.
Department of Children and Youth Affairs (with Department of Education and Skills and Department of Health)	Inclusion of children with additional needs in Early Years education.
Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government	Cross-Government and interagency collaboration.

The above priorities are intended to provide a focus for the cross-sectoral work in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* for 2015. They have been mapped in a logic model format, which offers a plan to progress them within a roadmap that is, at this stage, more iterative than definitive and which will be subject to ongoing development, to be informed by the constituent groupings within the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure. These cross-sectoral logic models are included in the Appendix of this report.

### 3.5 Identification of Actions and Progress Status

As a first step in the development of the Implementation Plan process, each Lead department/ agency was requested to examine their commitments and to set out:

- what actions they would be undertaking in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016;
- what outcome they want to have achieved by 2017 (the mid-point of the framework).

The Implementation Plan sets out this information as follows:

Commitment	Lead and Partners	What are the key actions in each year to deliver this commitment?	What do we want to have achieved by 2017? (mid-point of framework)
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This was then circulated to all Government departments and agencies involved in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Each was asked to complete the framework for commitments for which it has Lead responsibility. Leads were also asked to liaise with Partners when completing the Annual Report to inform their response.

Assigning action on individual commitments also offers an illustration of the complex and varied engagements involved in the realisation of these commitments. Notwithstanding this, the Annual Report seeks to track progress in clear and accessible manner. As such, the information presented in the Annual Report returns document (available from Policy Innovation Unit, Department of Children and Youth Affairs) is built around two key questions, each with four options to account for progress, as follows:

1. Specific actions associated with commitments?	2. Overall status of commitments?
Status of actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In progress</li> <li>• Nearing completion</li> <li>• Finalised</li> <li>• Exceeded</li> </ul>	Status of commitment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On track for 2017</li> <li>• Deferred</li> <li>• Fully met</li> <li>• Exceeded</li> </ul>

## Part 4: Progress on Implementation

### 4.1 Progress status

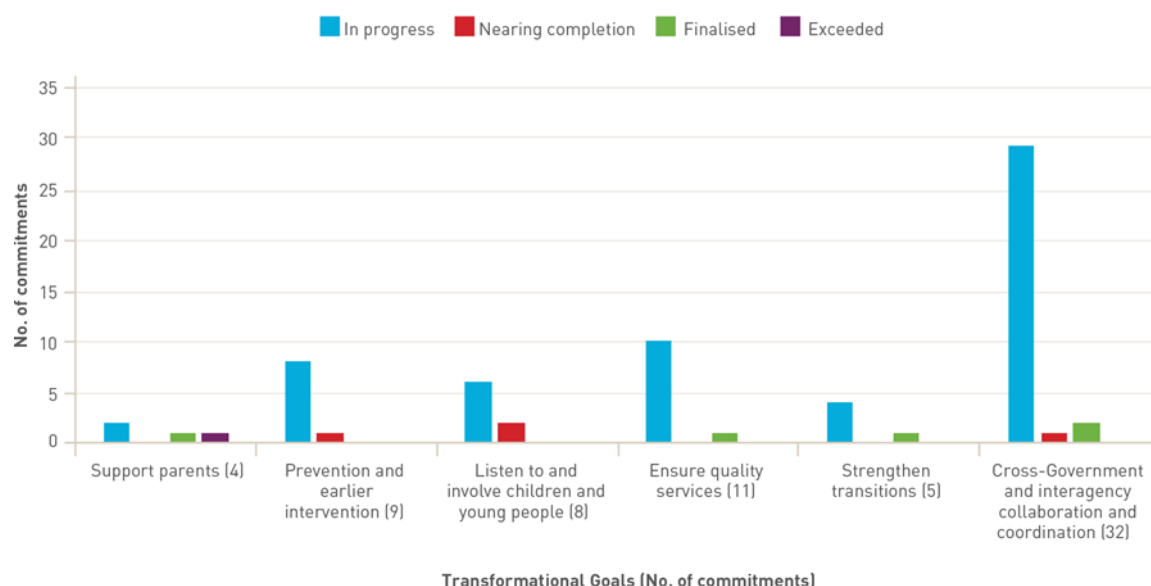
The progress on commitments in this first Annual Report presents a positive picture of the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. For the majority of commitments, actions are in progress, while some have already been finalised. Similarly, the majority of commitments are described as being 'on track for 2017'. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has aimed to ensure that charting progress for the initial phase of implementation (2014-2017) will provide tangible action and sustainable momentum in the delivery of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

The information in this section is presented as a diagrammatic summary of the overall status of commitments and actions for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* based on returns from Government departments and agencies. The information is further contextualised by comments from various departments and agencies involved in delivery of the commitments, in particular those with a role as sponsor across the five national outcomes and the six transformational goals.

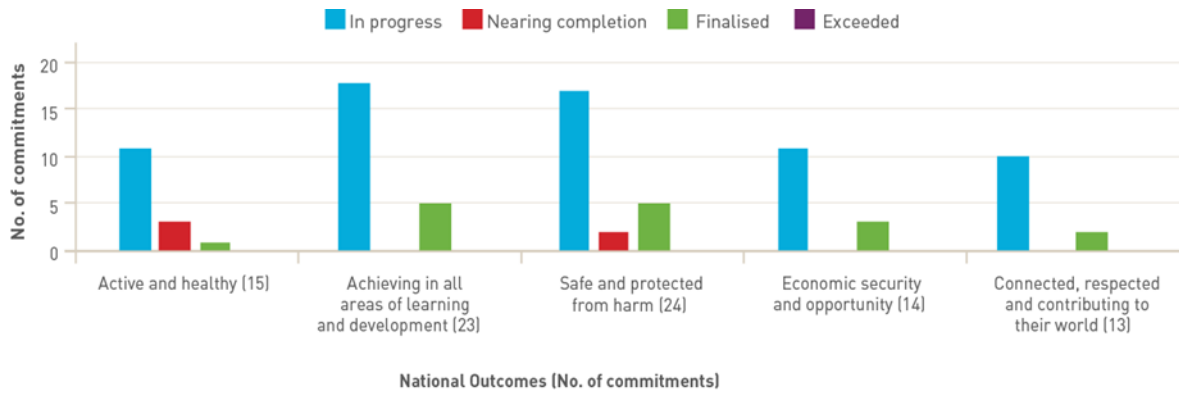
The responses illustrate the diversity and complexity of the commitments and the need for collaboration and connectivity between departments, agencies and sectors working with and for children and young people.

### 4.2 Transformational Goals and National Outcomes

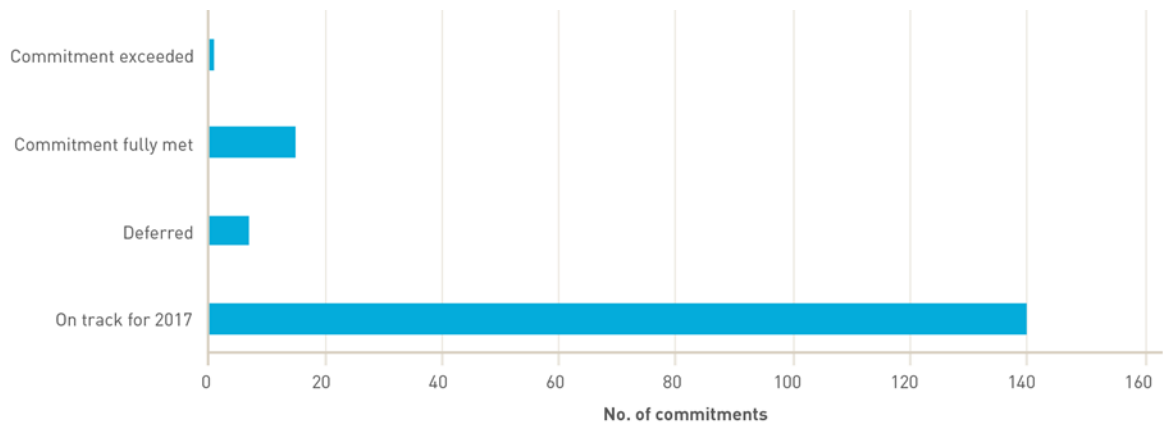
#### Progress on Transformational Goals



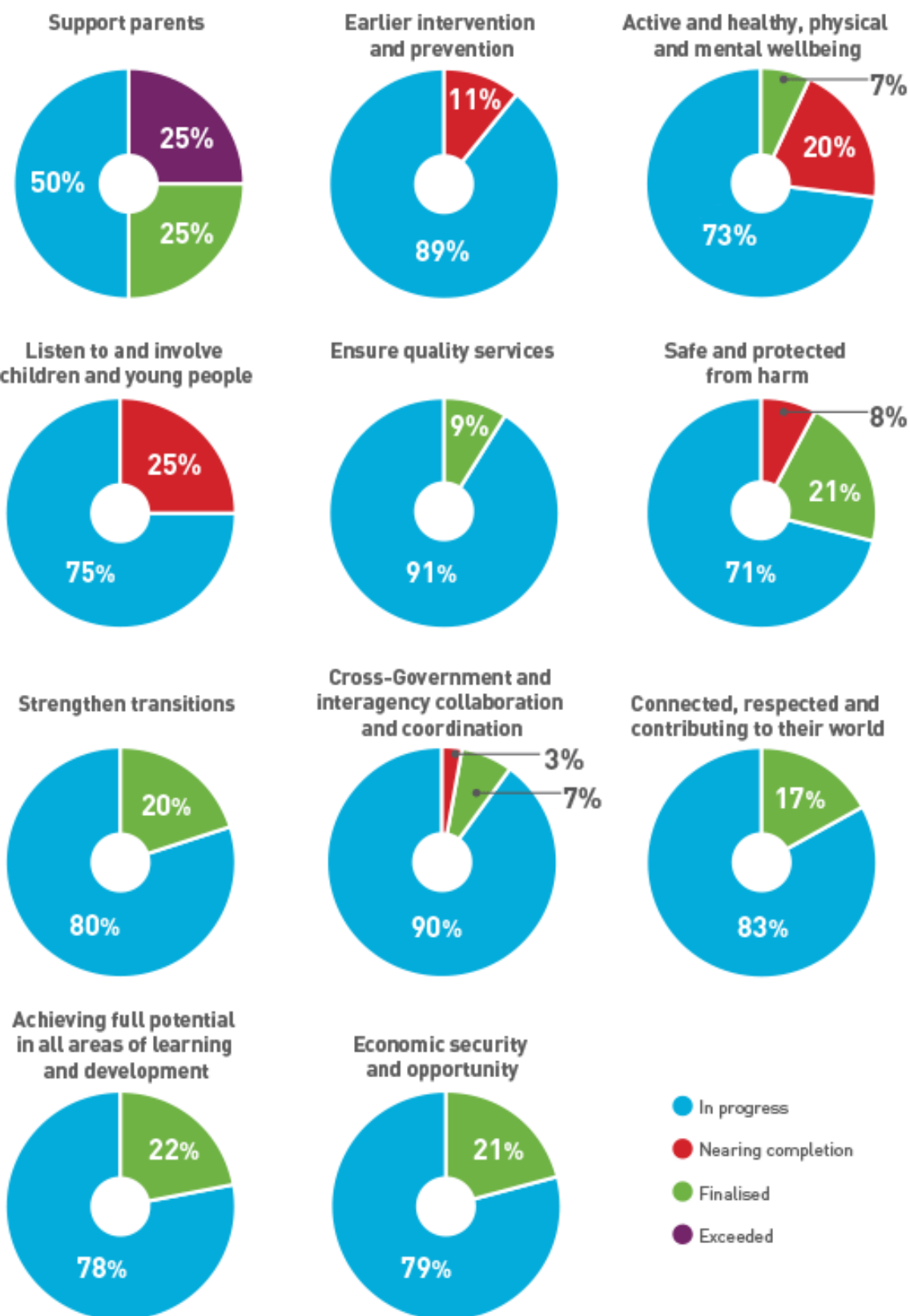
## Progress on National Outcomes



## Overall commitment status



## Progress on actions on Transformational Goals





## 4.3 Comments from Government departments and agencies

### Department of Children and Youth Affairs

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) has Lead responsibility for **Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm** of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. In addition, the DCYA has a wide contribution to make on a number of other outcomes, as well as acting as lead sponsor for the transformational goals. The DCYA's main contributions during 2014-2015 are summarised below.

With regards to Outcome 3: Safe and protected from harm, recent notable advancements include the publication by the Houses of the Oireachtas on 14 April 2014 of the **Children First Bill 2014**, which will put elements of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2011) on a statutory footing. The introduction of this legislation has been a key Programme for Government commitment and will form part of a suite of **child protection legislation**, which already includes the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 and the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.

Government agreed to have the provisions providing for the right to an **aftercare plan** submitted to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for drafting, having regard to the recommendations made by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children and the consideration by the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs. A Protocol was completed in 2014 on *Young People Leaving State Care*, dealing with accommodation issues of young people leaving care. It was overseen by the DCYA and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, and agreed between Tusla – Child and Family Agency and the County and City Management Association.

Two sets of **Child Care Regulations**, governing the care and welfare of children detained in special care settings and the registration of such settings, were finalised in 2014. The promulgation of these Regulations will take place in 2015, following a number of technical legislative amendments following from the Child and Family Agency Act 2013.

Revised guidance for the **National Review Panel on Child Deaths** was drafted and agreed with the Chair of the National Review Panel, HIQA and Tusla. This guidance is now available on relevant websites.

As regards other important cross-governmental commitments, the DCYA welcomed the Supreme Court decision to **uphold the 31st Amendment to the Constitution**. The Amendment is important to fundamentally reforming and re-orienting the way we make policy and provide services for children.

The **Tackling Youth Crime: Youth Justice Action Plan, 2014-2018**, published in early 2014, is part of the National Crime Strategy. Relevant actions will be pursued throughout the lifetime of the plan, which will include action on tackling youth crime in the community.

A **Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters** was established by the DCYA in February 2015.

The **Children and Family Relationships Act** was enacted on 6 April 2015, which provides legal clarity on the parentage rights of children in diverse family situations. The DCYA worked closely with colleagues in the Department of Justice and Equality on policy areas relevant to its remit.

In addition to the five national outcomes, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* also prioritises key **cross-cutting transformational goals** under each outcome area, which require concerted and

coordinated action to ensure the realisation of the respective outcomes. This challenging objective is a longer term process that requires ongoing actions to bring about and sustain the necessary changes to support those commitments under the five national outcomes. The various stakeholders have commenced work in this regard and the DCYA in particular, as the Lead department on the matter of transformational goals, has worked to ensure that this process of change is driven right from the outset.

As noted earlier, the DCYA has, as its cross-sectoral priority, chosen Commitment G5 under the transformational goal relating to **Prevention and Earlier Intervention**. Across 2015, the DCYA will work to launch a process of change in preventative investment in early interventions, which it is hoped will lead to greater recognition of longer term improved outcomes and reduction of pressures on crisis intervention services.

The **Area-Based Childhood (ABC) Programme** is an innovative initiative announced in the Programme for Government and will run from 2013-2016. All 13 sites are now under contract and are operational.

The DCYA developed and published a **High Level Policy Statement to support and strengthen children and families**, entitled *Parenting and Family Support as an Effective Prevention and Early Intervention to Promote Best Possible Outcomes for Children*. This will guide the provision of universal evidence-informed parenting supports (Commitment G1).

Listening to and involving children and young people is a core principle that informed the development of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and it is also one of the six transformational goals. A key pillar of this transformational goal is the **National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020**, launched in June 2015 as one of the constituent strategies of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (the others relate to Early Years and Youth, both forthcoming). The strategy is guided by Article 12 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child and builds on the foundations of the National Children's Strategy (2000-2010).

The **National Youth Strategy** (forthcoming) and the **Blueprint for the Development of Children and Young People's Services Committees** (published in June 2015) are both examples of the leadership role of the DCYA in ensuring coordinated and coherent policy and provision for children and young people.

Work to ensure quality services and support **effective transitions** permeate a number of strands across Government departments. This will continue to inform all relevant areas of work and engagement with young people, as well as those specific commitments that are being progressed. There is a strong focus on transitions in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and in the constituent strategies of Early Years, Youth, and Participation.

**Cross-Government and interagency collaboration and coordination** is an integral element of the work driving *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and sustaining change beyond its immediately identified commitments. It runs together with an ambitious programme of public sector reform, led by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is a framework for the whole of government, which recognises that securing better outcomes for children and young people cannot be achieved by any one department or agency alone. The DCYA has progressed the transformational goal of cross Government and interagency collaboration and coordination in a variety of ways, including:

- Establishment of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Sponsors Group and identification of **cross-sectoral priorities**. Apart from leading on the cross-sectoral priority of prevention and earlier intervention, the DCYA also supports the other cross-sectoral priorities.

- The DCYA has been working with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Health on developing a **model for the commissioning of better outcomes**.
- An Interdepartmental Group on the **Cost of Childcare** was established in April 2015. This is chaired by the DCYA and includes representatives from the Department of Education and Skills; the Department of Social Protection; the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; the Department of Finance; and the Department of the Taoiseach. It should report to Government in Summer 2015.

The DCYA also has responsibility for five commitments relating to the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. These are in the areas of establishment of infrastructure; implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*; communications; and oversight. All five have been fully met or exceeded in the first year of implementation.

## Department of Health

The Department of Health has Lead responsibility for **Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing** of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

The **Health and Wellbeing Programme** represents the Department of Health on the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Consortium and works to ensure alignment between Department of Health policies and *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Examples of this include collaboration with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) on the development of the Department of Health's forthcoming **Obesity Policy** to ensure the views of children and young people were included in the consultation process.

Progress by the Department of Health in 2014 included the successful enactment of the Public Health (Standardised Packaging of Tobacco) Act 2015 and the ongoing progress towards preparation of the legislation to introduce the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill. These two pieces of legislation will be key to **denormalising tobacco and alcohol** and ultimately protecting children and young people.

Other examples of policy that impact positively on children and young people include:

- The **National Physical Activity Plan** is nearing completion, with publication and launch expected by mid-2015. This plan will dovetail with other strategic policy areas, in particular mental health, sports policy, children and young people.
- The launch of the new **QUIT Personal Support Service** on 30th December 2014 by the HSE fully met the Commitment 1.13 of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The QUIT team now provides support across a range of channels (by telephone, online and social media) as well as the network of face-to face HSE QUIT services in many locations around the country, providing one-to-one and group support for smokers.
- The **Healthy Ireland Council**, established in June 2014, identified in their Action Plan for 2015 a need to advocate for a focus on the health and wellbeing of children as a national priority and suggests collaborating with the DCYA and the Advisory Council to progress implementation. This is a significant opportunity that will be pursued in 2015.

In leading Outcomes 1 and 2 of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Skills are collaborating to embed and integrate health and wellbeing into the educational sector

More broadly, the Primary Care Unit of the Department of Health made significant progress in establishing integrated services or 'hubs' for children and young people at community level. In October 2014, the HSE launched the Community Healthcare Organisation's Report, setting out plans for a comprehensive **reorganisation of health services** outside the acute hospital system.

In supporting the monitoring and full implementation of National Standards in relation to children, a scheme was commenced in November 2014 whereby HIQA registers and monitors **standards in designated residential centres for children and adults with disabilities**. HIQA published over 600 inspection reports for people with disabilities in 2014, with the lessons learned continuing to improve the quality of services. In addition, the National Disability Authority has been commissioned to carry out an independent review, to capture learning to date from the introduction of the system of regulation, standards and inspections in relation to residential disability services and to look at good practice. The Final Report is expected to be completed by June 2015.

Furthermore, to strengthen the transitions between child and adolescent and adult services in the areas of physical and mental health services, the Government has provided an additional €125 million and some 1,150 new posts for **mental health** since 2012. The HSE's 2015 National Service Plan commits to developing integrated health promotion teams and programmes based on existing resources at area level in collaboration with Health and Wellbeing and voluntary partners in the context of *Healthy Ireland*. The National Disability Authority has developed a 10-year **Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with a disability** under the aegis of the National Disability Strategy (under the remit of the Department of Justice and Equality), to be published in 2015. The Department of Health and the HSE provided input on the health-funded elements of this strategy and will continue to participate in cross-sectoral engagement to implement it.

The Government has continued to provide funding since 2012 and 2014 to develop mental health services in line with *A Vision for Change* as it relates to children and young people. The focus is particularly on improving access to early intervention youth mental health services and coordination of service supports, with the aim of improving mental health literacy and reducing incidents of self-harm and suicide. The prioritising funding has also been used to strengthen Community Mental Health Teams for both adults and children.

## Department of Education and Skills

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) has Lead responsibility for **Outcome 2: Achieving in all areas of learning and development**.

With the far-reaching commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* impacting on practically all aspects of the DES' core functions, highlighting key areas inevitably means that important aspects of the Department's work that impact on the lives of children, where progress continues to be made, are not included in the following summary.

One of the DES' commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is to '*build on existing data collection systems and, using the public service identifier, strengthen the collection of data and information on primary and post-primary pupils in order to inform future policy-making*'.

The integration of data systems on children's learning pathways and outcomes could only be achieved through the development of a primary pupil database to complement and link with similar data holdings at pre-school, post-primary and higher and further education. This data gap had been identified in the DES' *Data Strategy* (2008) and referenced in the DCYA's *National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives, 2011-2016* (2011). The implementation of the **Primary On-Line database** in 2014 has addressed this data gap. In mining the integrated information on children's lives, the effectiveness of interventions will be more easily assessed.

The DES also made a commitment to '*research and adopt strategies to strengthen transitions through the educational system (into primary, from primary to second-level, from second-level into*

*higher or further education, employment or, in the case of early school-leavers, to Youthreach*)'. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed a suite of materials to support the **reporting and transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary schools**. The materials were presented under the umbrella title of 'Education Passport' and are available at [www.ncca.ie/transfer](http://www.ncca.ie/transfer). With the Primary On Line database, also coming on stream, information on students who do not transition will also become available.

The DES is also committed to providing **opportunities for early school-leavers** to engage with further education and training within the framework of youth and educational welfare services, Education and Training Boards, and SOLAS. To place this in a strategic context, SOLAS published a 5-year *Further Education and Training Strategy, 2014 -2019* in May 2014. This strategy sets out five high-level goals as a roadmap for the further education and training (FET) sector as follows:

1. Skills for the economy.
2. Active inclusion, including a Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.
3. Quality provision.
4. Integrated planning and funding.
5. Standing of FET.

With the implementation of the *Further Education and Training Strategy*, the FET sector will be able to respond more effectively to the training needs of young people, thereby delivering better outcomes.

## Department of Social Protection

The Department of Social Protection, in its Lead role for **Outcome 4: Economic security and opportunity**, identified child poverty as a key cross-sectoral priority for the 2015 work programme for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. A logic model has been prepared on this priority action, to implement a multi-dimensional approach to **tackling child poverty**, which was presented and agreed with the Advisory Council and Policy Consortium during 2014.

The **Social Inclusion Monitor 2013** illustrates the importance of social transfers in lifting children out of poverty. In 2013, social transfers reduced the 'at risk of poverty' rate for children from 44.8% to 17.9%, a poverty reduction effect of 60%. The comparable figure in 2012 was 58.5%. Ireland is among the best performers in the EU in terms of the poverty reduction effect of social transfers.

Despite pressure on the Department's budget, Budget 2015 increased expenditure on children by €96 million. **Child benefit** was increased by €5 per month and an additional €2 million was allocated to the **School Meals Programme**, bringing the total spend to €39 million.

The new **Back to Work Family Dividend**, which was introduced in Budget 2015, will provide €22 million to help lone parents and long-term unemployed families to return to work and will result in an additional €1,550 per child being available in the first year of employment or self-employment.

The Department published the social impact assessment of Budget 2015, which found that for the first time since the economic crisis, welfare and income tax policies will result in an increase in average household incomes of 0.7%. It also found that households with children (earning and non-earning) generally gain more than those without children.

The combined expenditure on child benefit, qualified child increases for welfare recipients, family income supplement and the back to school clothing and footwear allowance, amounted to €3 billion in 2014.

**Child benefit payments** were made to 615,000 families in respect of 1,178,000 children in 2014, at an estimated expenditure of around €1.9 billion.

In the 2014 **Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme**, over 166,400 families with some 304,400 children benefitted from the scheme, at a cost of almost €42.6 million.

In 2014, **Family Income Supplement (FIS)** was paid to some 50,300 families in respect of some 111,600 children. Expenditure on FIS for 2014 is estimated to be over €280 million.

## Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government has Lead responsibility for **Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing to their world** of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

This outcome covers a diverse range of Government policy areas and departments, touching on the provision of safe, supportive and developmental opportunities for young people, promotion of active citizenship, participatory democracy and engagement with the political process, including voting, volunteerism, civics, human rights, promotion of equal treatment and interculturalism, and measures to protect against and remedy all forms of discrimination.

### Local and Community Development Committees

One of the objectives in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* relates to having a reformed public sector, resulting in greater cross Government collaboration and coordination and increased accountability and resource efficiency. This Department's commitment in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* that relates to this objective is: *'The establishment of new Local and Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in each county and city, bringing a more joined-up strategic approach to local and community development'* (G51).

Local and Community Development Committees (LCDCs) are new multi-agency committees made up of statutory agencies and community and voluntary groups operating at local level ('private sector' groups make up 51% of the membership of LCDCs). They were established under the 2014 Local Government Reform legislation to bring about a collaborative approach across government and agencies to the planning and delivery of local and community interventions.

LCDCs have commenced work on developing the community elements of a **Local Economic and Community Plans** for their areas. They will be undertaking a public consultation exercise in relation to the Plans. This will include engagement with local groups and structures, including, for example, with the Children and Young People's Services Committees.

Related *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* commitments include G16, G47, G48, G52 and G68.

### Public Participation Networks

In 2014, the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government made recommendations on more extensive and diverse input by citizens into the decision-making processes at Local Government level as part of the Local Government Reform Programme and recommended the setting up of **Public Participation Networks (PPNs)** across the Local Government sector. Section 46 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, which was commenced on 1st June 2014, provides the legislative basis which gives effect to the Framework for Public Participation and the PPNS.

Over the second half of 2014, PPNs were developed within each Local Authority area. The PPN will be the main link through which the Local Authority **connects with the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors** in the Local Authority area and through which community representation is sourced for appropriate committees of the Local Authority, including the **Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs)**. The PPN will set in place a plan to promote the wellbeing of this and future generations in the local area. It will also act as the conduit for information flows between the community and Local Authority.

Among the principal aims of the new structures and processes is to enable community organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the Local Government system and to allow a diversity of voices and interests to be facilitated and involved in the decision-making processes of the Local Authority. The PPN is inclusive of all sections of society and the Department will promote participation among those whose voices are less often heard, including young people.

By stimulating greater citizen engagement with the Local Authority, the PPN will complement (rather than diminish, compete with, or substitute for) local representative democracy. The participation of members of local communities – whether as individuals or as members of local groups in public life and their right to influence the decisions that affect their lives and communities – are at the centre of democracy. Open and inclusive policy-making enhances transparency and accountability, and builds civic capacity.

Related *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* commitments include G16, G20, G47, G48, G49, G51 and G52.

## Department of Justice and Equality

Good progress is being made on the actions for which the Department of Justice and Equality has responsibility. The Department has put in place a network of internal responsible officers and a reporting framework on deliverables, with the overall performance being monitored at Assistant Secretary level.

Progress has been made in relation to all of the commitments, in particular G.22 and 3.17 with the enactment on 6th April 2015 of the **Children and Family Relationships Act 2015**. This Act enables an expert to be appointed to ascertain the views of the child in proceedings on guardianship, custody and access. The Act also provides legal clarity on parentage rights of children in diverse family situations.

With regard to Commitment 3.20 on *'tackling young crime and diverting children and young people from criminal behaviour'*, staff from 15 trial site projects received training in using the **YLS/CMI 2 risk assessment tool**, following two positive evaluations of the use of a trial site process to test new methods of risk assessment, intervention planning and case management. The risk assessment tool, which is an evidence-based licensed tool provided through Multi Health Systems (MHS) in Canada, began to be used in 2014. On foot of the positive evaluation of the assessment tool, the Irish Youth Justice Service decided to roll out use of the tool by all 100 Garda Youth Diversion Projects.

On Commitment 4.8, comprehensive guidelines with regard to how the Refugee Appeals Tribunal deals with children in the **refugee appeals process** were published by the Tribunal on its website in January 2015.

In terms of Commitment 3.22, on foot of a recommendation from the Penal Policy Review Group, the Irish Prison Service has introduced a **Parenting Programme**, which represents the coming together of both statutory and voluntary bodies with the common goal of improving outcomes for

families affected by imprisonment. The programme has been piloted in one prison and will be rolled out on a prison-by-prison basis since each location will have to build the community links and support to enable the running of programmes.

The Department of Justice and Equality's remaining commitments for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* are on track for 2017.

## Health Service Executive

The actions in the framework which are the responsibility of the HSE are progressing as planned. Actions are on track for completion within the given timeframe or are being adjusted in order to accommodate issues that have arisen over the last six months.

In 2014, the HSE successfully raised awareness of the value of our **child health service** both internally and externally, a service which is available on a universal basis and is underpinned by legislation. Work in relation to 0-2 year-olds will be greatly enhanced over the coming years as a result of significant funding secured through The Atlantic Philanthropies in 2014. Good intersectoral cooperation is being fostered and the multidisciplinary approach being pursued will contribute to a more effective and efficient response to this critical agenda. In addition, all of our child health indicators improved in 2014, including immunisation rates and child health development screening rates.

## Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

Although the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation does not have Lead responsibility for any commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, it is a Partner to a number of commitments and continues to support the Lead departments or agencies involved.

All 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) produced **Local Enterprise Development Plans (LEPDs)** for 2014. Each year, LEPDs set out the range of activities that the LEO will be pursuing within its functional area to support businesses and entrepreneurial development, including young people, by setting out strategic objectives, actions and initiatives with key metrics and associated impacts and outputs.

The first **Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur** competition took place in 2014, which proved extremely successful, attracting over 1,000 participants across the 31 LEOs. The competition is aimed at entrepreneurs aged under 30 with an outstanding idea/commercial venture for a start-up or existing business.

The **Student Enterprise Awards** programme, run by the LEOs, is an enterprise programme that gives second-level students the opportunity to experience all the realities of entrepreneurship – from coming up with their business ideas, writing a business plan, to producing the product, researching the market, promoting the business and managing the books. Over 370 secondary schools and 17,000 students nationwide participated in the programme throughout the year, which culminated in a National Final.



## Tusla – Child and Family Agency

Tusla welcomes the development of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The relevant key objectives within the framework have been incorporated into the corporate and operational plans of Tusla. The Agency thanks the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for this opportunity to feed into the Annual Report for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

## Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Reform of the Public Service is an important element of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Improved cross-Government working for children and young people forms part of an overall reform for the public services and publicly funded services. The **Public Service Reform Plan, 2014-2016** and the **Civil Service Renewal Initiative** are key drivers of this overall Government reform programme and implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* will contribute to and exploit this wider reform programme.

The second Public Service Reform Plan, 2014-2016 was launched in 2014 and builds on the progress of the first Reform Plan. As well as focusing on reducing costs and increasing efficiency, this new phase of reform has the ambitious goal of building a Public Service that will have positive outcomes for all stakeholders, including citizens, businesses and public servants themselves. The aim is to improve public services, while continuing to achieve greater efficiency in how those services are delivered.

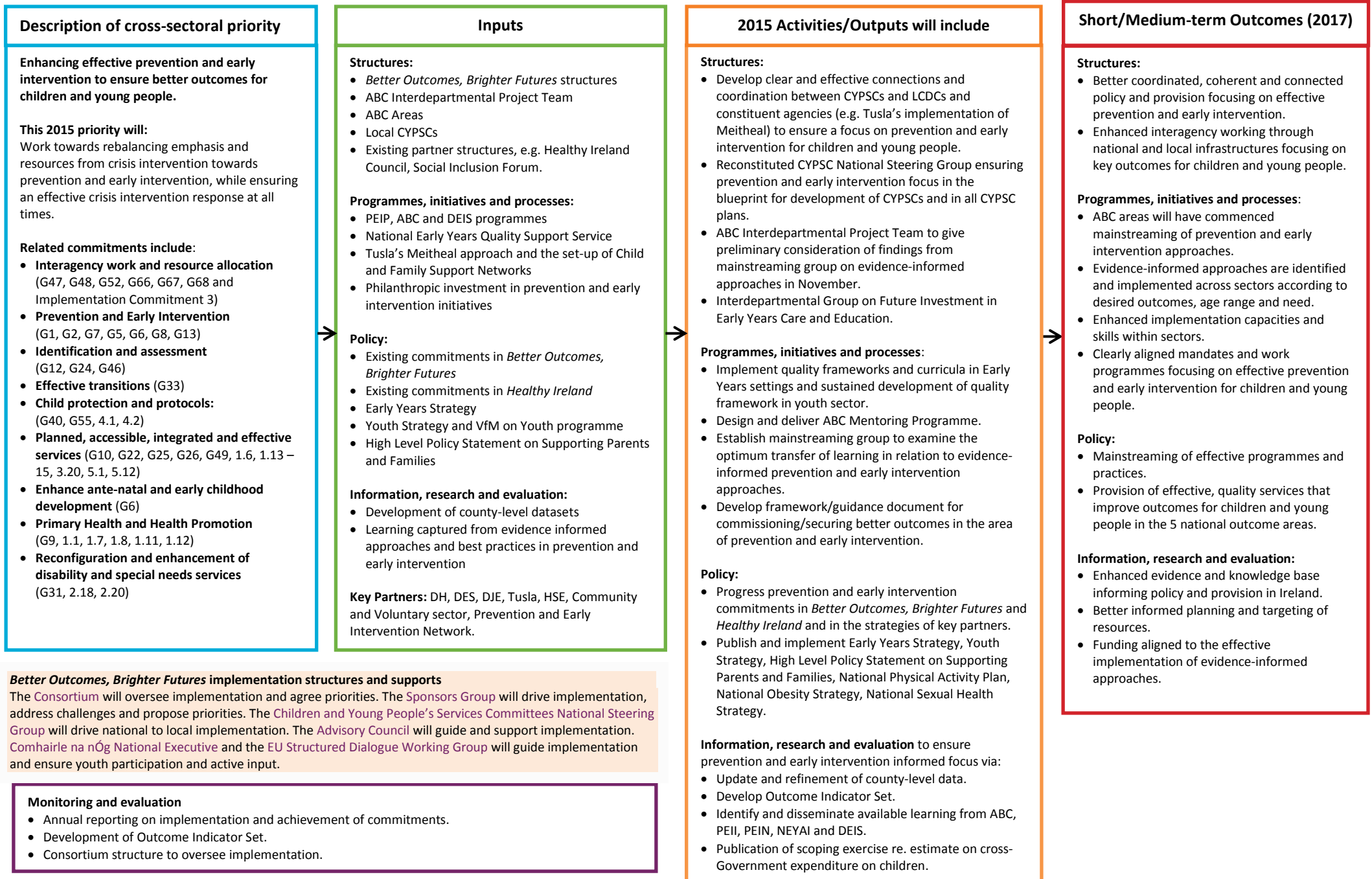
The key priorities of the 2014 Reform Plan include:

- the use of alternative models of service delivery and better engagement with customers;
- making maximum use of digitisation and open data to deliver services and information in innovative ways;
- utilisation of the 'reform dividend' to support service improvements;
- greater openness, transparency and accountability.

## **Appendix: Logic models of Cross-sectoral Priority Commitments for 2015**

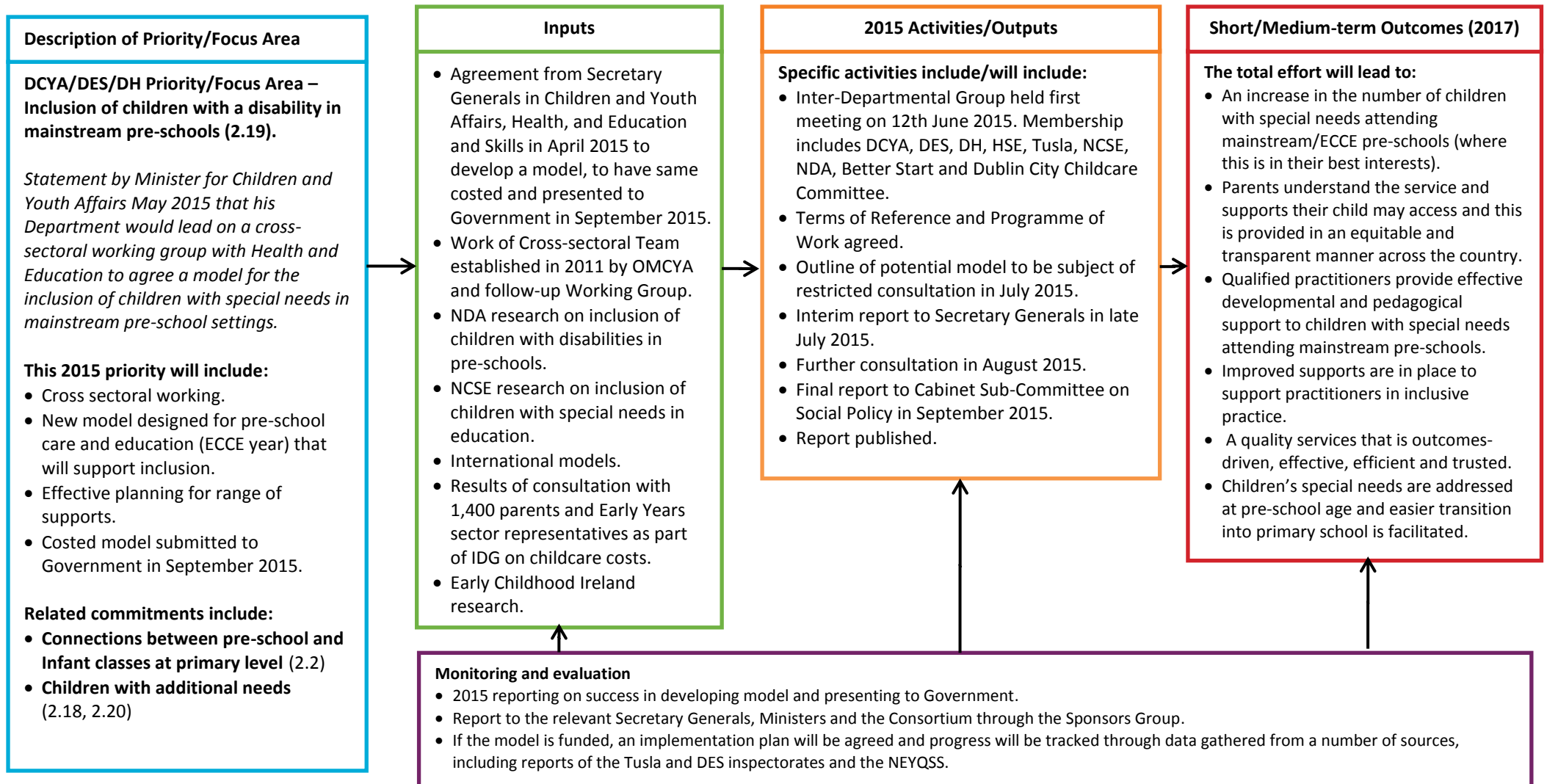
## Department of Children and Youth Affairs: 2015 Cross-sectoral Priority – PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is the Government's overarching **National Policy Framework** for children and young people (aged 0-24 years). This **cross-government approach** will run from 2014 until 2020 and accommodate a number of constituent strategies. The Framework sets out common outcomes, policy commitments and key actions to ensure innovative and effective ways of working. The underpinning **principles** will ensure that policy and practice protect the rights of children and young people, are family-oriented, promote equality and are evidence-informed and outcomes-focused. The **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.



## Department of Children and Youth Affairs: 2015 Cross-sectoral Priority/Focus Area – INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY IN MAINSTREAM PRE-SCHOOLS

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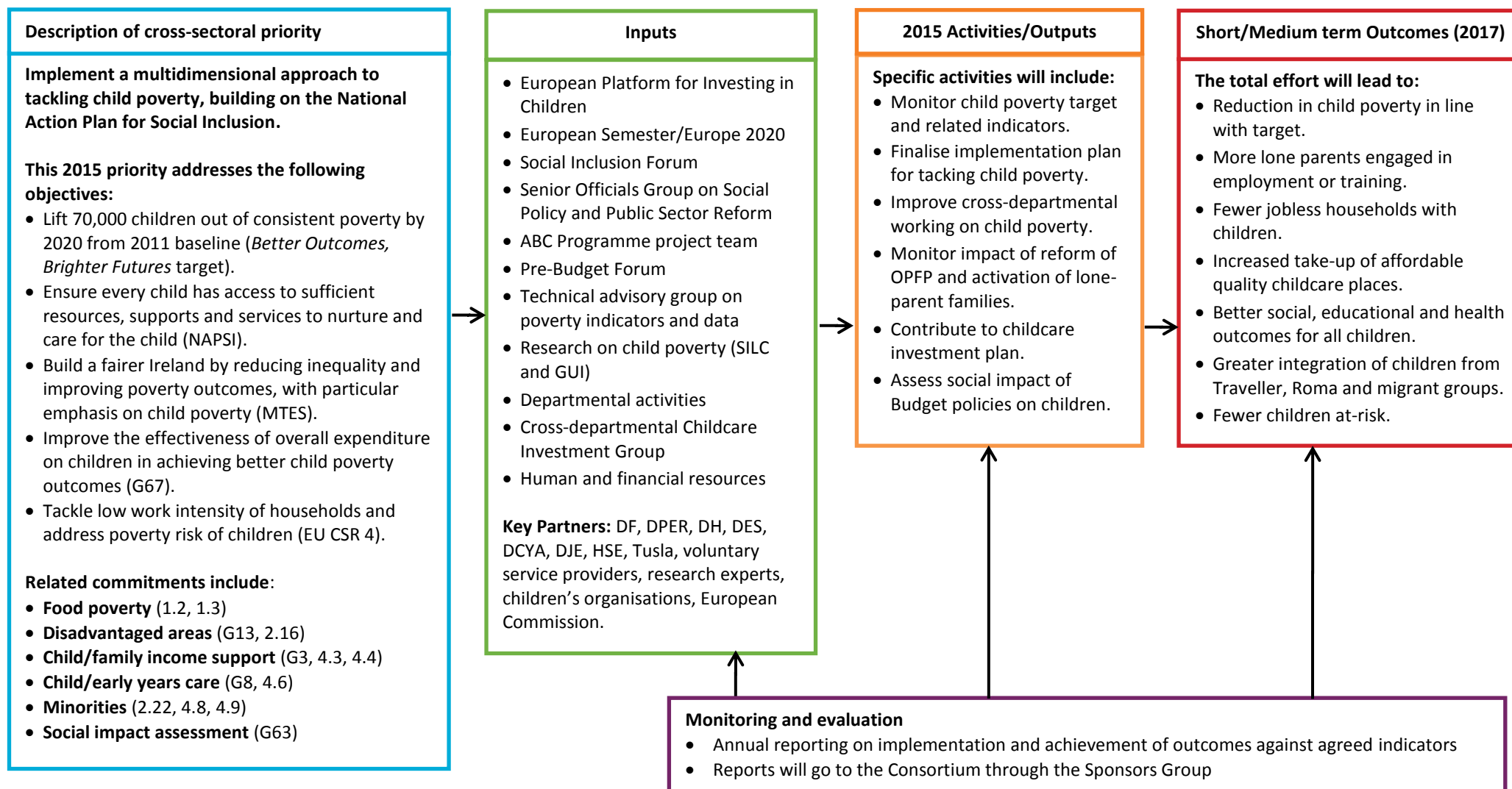


### **Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures implementation structures and supports**

The **Consortium** will oversee implementation and agree priorities. The **Sponsors Group** will drive implementation, address challenges and propose priorities. The **Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group** will drive national to local implementation. The **Advisory Council** will guide and support implementation. **Comhairle na nÓg National Executive** and the **EU Structured Dialogue Working Group** will guide implementation and ensure youth participation and active input.

## Department of Social Protection: 2015 Cross-sectoral Priority – TACKLING CHILD POVERTY

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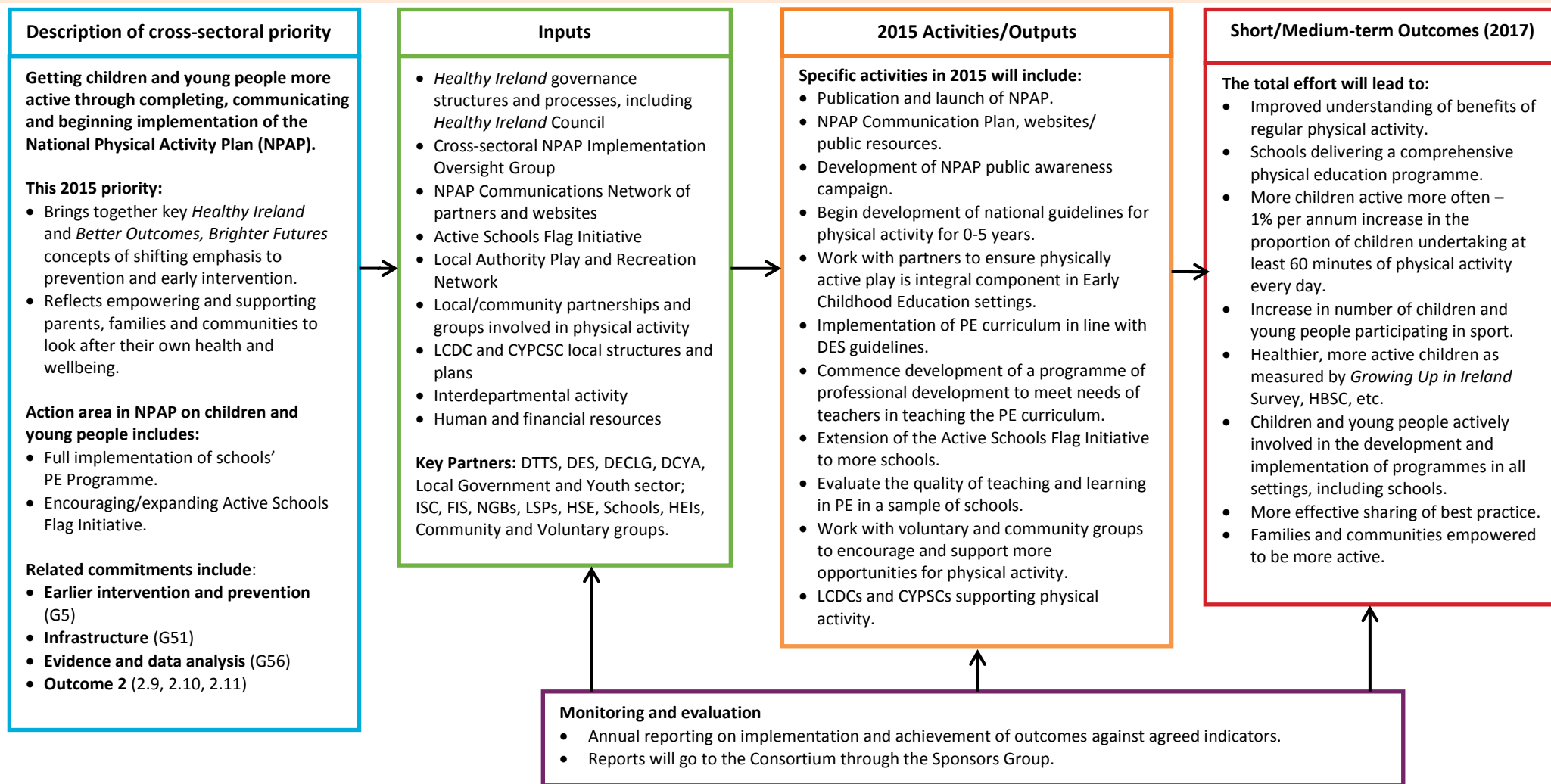


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## Department of Health: 2015 Cross-sectoral Priority – GETTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE MORE ACTIVE (Implementation of National Physical Activity Plan)

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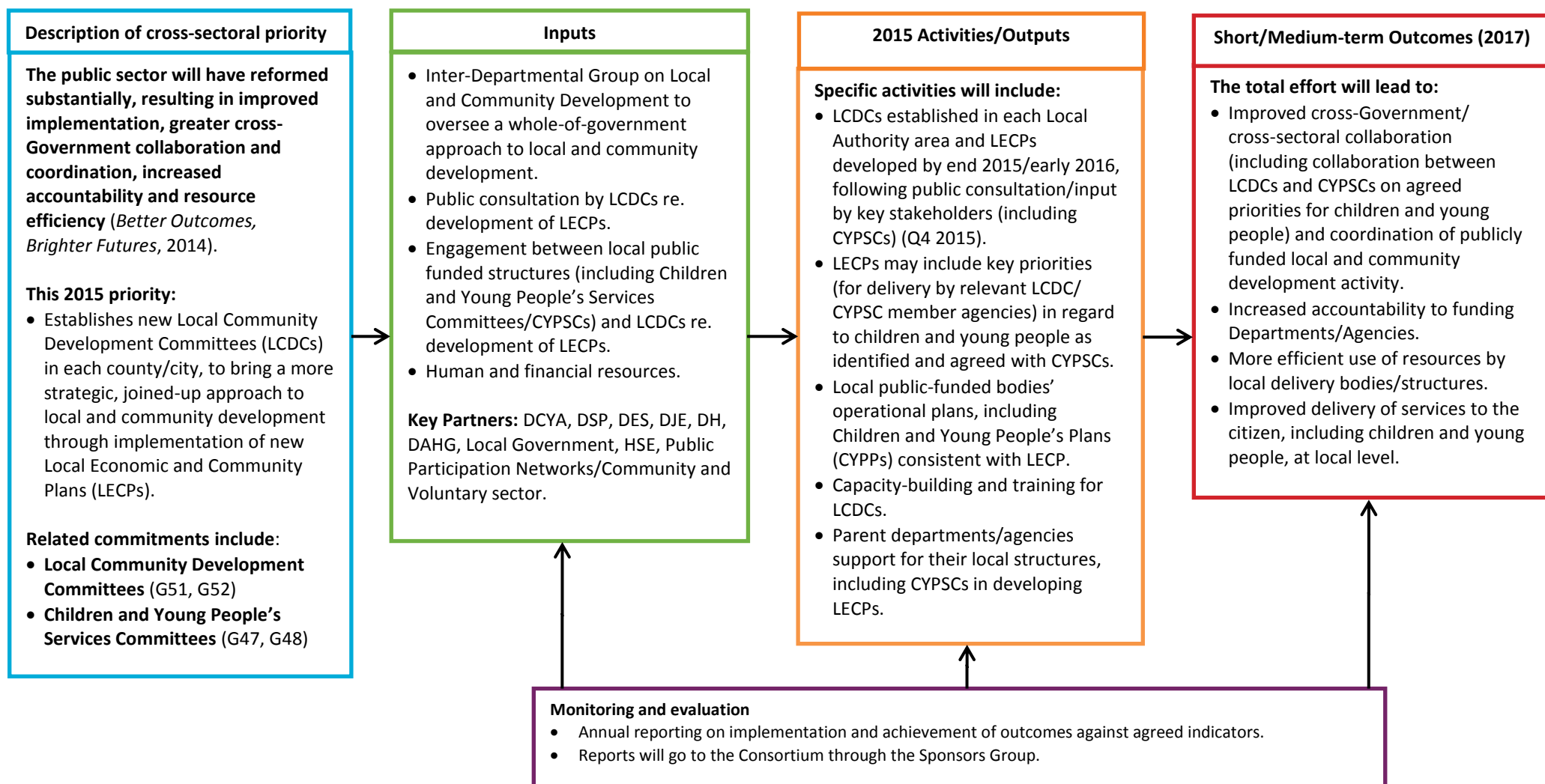


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## Department of Environment, Community and Local Government: 2015 Cross-sectoral Priority – CROSS-GOVERNMENT AND INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

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