

The logo for TUSLA, featuring the word 'TUSLA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The 'U' has a unique design with a dot above it and a horizontal bar through it. The background of the entire page consists of abstract, wavy shapes in shades of teal and lime green, separated by thin white dashed lines.

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Annual Report

2018

www.tusla.ie

Contents

Glossary	i
Chairperson's Foreword	ii
2018 – Our Year in View	iv
1.0 Our Service	1
1.1 Our Mission, Vision, Values and Behaviours	3
1.2 2018 Our Year in Numbers	4
1.3 Key Trends 2014–2018	6
1.4 Our Key Achievements in 2018	7
1.5 Our Corporate Plan 2018–2020	12
1.6 Our Business Plan 2018	15
1.7 Update on the Strategic Action Plan in Response to the HIQA Investigation Report into the Management of Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse	20
1.8 Feedback from our Service Users	23
2.0 Service Delivery	26
2.1 Child Protection and Welfare Service	27
2.2 Alternative Care Services	29
2.3 Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme	31
2.4 Children's Services Regulation	34
2.5 Educational Welfare Service	36
2.6 Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services	37
3.0 Supporting Service Delivery	39
3.1 Project Management Office	39
3.2 Corporate Services	40
3.3 Commissioning Unit	47
3.4 ICT Directorate	47
3.5 Legal Services Unit	48
3.6 Tusla Estates	48
3.7 Communications	49
3.8 Policy and Research Office	50
4.0 Tusla Board, Executive and Corporate Governance	53
4.1 Tusla Board	53
4.2 Tusla Executive	58
4.3 Corporate Governance	58
4.4 Tusla Quality and Risk Systems	59
4.5 Financial Summary	61
Appendix 1 – Statement on Internal Control	63
Appendix 2 – Summary of Corporate Risks and Controls	78



Glossary

Acronym	Definition
ACTS	Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service
AFS	Annual Financial Statements
BOBF	Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures – national policy for children & young people
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPC	Child Protection Conference
CPNS	Child Protection Notification System
CPWS	Child Protection and Welfare Strategy
CRR	Corporate Risk Register
CSR	Children’s Services Regulation
CSSCU	Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit
CYPSC	Children and Young People’s Service Committees
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DSGBV	Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence
EPIC	Empowering People in Care Programme
EWS	Education Welfare Services
EYI	Early Years Inspectorate
FOI	Freedom of Information
FRC	Family Resource Centre
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation

Acronym	Definition
HIQA	Health Information and Quality Authority
HR	Human Resources
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
Meitheal	Early intervention practice model
NCCIS	National Childcare Information System
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NVB	National Vetting Bureau
PAD	Parliamentary Affairs Department
PMO	Programme Management Office
PPFS	Prevention, Partnership, Family Support
PPPG	Policies, Procedures, Protocols and Guidelines
QA	Quality Assurance
QIF	Quality Improvement Framework
QRF	Quality and Regulatory Framework
SCA	State Claims Agency
SCU	Special Care Unit
SEN	Signification Event Notification
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOS	Signs of Safety national approach to practice
TEDI	Tusla Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Tell Us	Tusla’s complaints and feedback policy
WLD	Workforce Learning and Development

Chairperson's Foreword



I am honoured to have been appointed by government to the Chair of Tusla – Child and Family Agency. It is a privilege to have the opportunity to work with so many dedicated staff engaged in the complex and sensitive work of child protection and welfare.

Establishing Tusla as the country's first dedicated State agency for the protection and welfare of children in 2014 was a huge step forward for Ireland. The Agency was set up in a time of great national austerity, where financial constraints coincided with an increasing demand for services. From the outset, Tusla was faced with the challenging task of both addressing legacy issues, while at the same time developing a new, fully integrated approach to the demanding and complex work of protecting children and supporting families.

Rising above the challenges of its formative years, the Agency has made significant progress since its establishment. However, we must continue to make progress and build on the improvements already made if we are to provide a consistent and appropriate service to vulnerable children and families in communities across the country.

This is a young Agency evolving its own culture and learning from the experience of the past. The challenge of caring for vulnerable children and families will never attain perfection in the eyes of all concerned. However, a lot of thought and work has gone into bedding down the Agency and into evolving best practice. Striving for best practice must involve professional dedicated staff having the support and goodwill of government, department and the Board.

Significant progress can be reported over the past year – progress that is aligned to the Agency’s seven strategic objectives – including:

- The implementation of the Child Protection and Welfare Strategy 2017–2022.
- The national roll-out of the new National Child Care Information System (NCCIS).
- The expansion of the Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme.
- The expansion of early invention work through the Prevention, Partnership, and Family Support (PPFS) Programme.
- The development of the Educational Welfare Service (EWS).
- The implementation of Tusla’s new Commissioning Strategy.
- A new Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit (CSSCU).
- The establishment of Children’s Services Regulation (CSR).
- Publication of a Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF) for early years services.
- Tusla’s Strategic Workforce Plan 2018–2020.
- The implementation of the Tusla ICT Strategy 2017–2019.

Additional funding was provided for 2019, which is most welcome and allows the Agency to continue to progress key areas of work as outlined above. However, additional funding will be required for 2020 and 2021 to allow the Agency to deliver on core objectives in the coming years.

I wish to thank the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone, TD, the Secretary-General in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and his staff for their engagement and support as we continue to strive to enhance services and supports.

I want to acknowledge the pioneering work of my predecessor, Norah Gibbons, in establishing Tusla with the conscientious support of Board colleagues who devote time and attention above the call of duty.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Fred McBride and thank our interim CEO, Pat Smyth, our Executive Team, our Board Secretary and all of our staff at over 300 locations in communities around Ireland for their dedication and continuous focus.

I look forward to working, with the support of government and the co-operation of our strategic partners, to continue to enhance the quality and consistency of the service to Ireland’s most vulnerable families.

Pat Rabbitte,
Chairperson

2018 – Our Year in View



*The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone, TD, at Hill Street Family Resource Centre for the announcement of 11 new Family Resource Centres
– 12 March, 2018*



*Visitors to the Tusla National Showcase in the Royal College of Physicians
– 7 June, 2018*



*The launch of the new National Child Care Information System
– 30 August, 2018*



Helen Rouine, Early Years Inspectorate, Brian Lee, Director of Quality Assurance, and Fiona McDonnell, National Service Director, Children's Services Regulation, at the launch of the Early Years Inspectorate's Quality and Regulatory Framework

– 5 September, 2018



Emily Thompson, Senior Speech and Language Therapist, Toby Haslam-Hopwood, Psychologist, ACTS, Kelly Thompson, Senior Clinical Psychologist, Monash Health, Jim Gibson, Tusla Chief Operations Officer, Berni Donovan, General Manager, Chief Operations Office, Stuart Mulholland, Director, Well Tree, Karina Lenihan, Social Care Manager, Donal McCormack, Service Director, Children's Residential Services



Shonagh Cunniffe and Adam Nahusenay interview Interim CEO Pat Smyth as part of the celebrations for World Children's Day

– 20 November, 2018

1.0 Our Service

Tusla – Child and Family Agency, is Ireland’s dedicated State agency responsible for improving well-being and outcomes for children. Established in 2014 with the merger of the Children and Family Services of the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Family Support Agency and the National Education Welfare Board, Tusla represents the most comprehensive reform of child protection, early intervention and family support services ever undertaken in Ireland. With additional responsibility to provide a range of Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) services, the Agency today has over 4,100 employees, and an operational budget of over €750 million, making it one of the largest non-commercial State organisations in the country.

The operation of Tusla is governed by the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, which clearly states that the function of the Agency is to support and promote the development, welfare and protection of children, and the effective functioning of families. The Act is a progressive piece of legislation which views families as the foundation of strong healthy communities, where children and young people can thrive and achieve their potential. Tusla’s work is also informed by ‘Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020’ (BOBF). Published by the DCYA in 2014, this sets out a national strategic priority for a whole-of-government, multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for children and young people. Tusla has also committed to delivering a number of actions in First 5, a whole-of-government strategy for babies, young children and their families (2019–2028).

Tusla has responsibilities for a range of services, including:

- ⦿ Child protection and welfare services, including family support services.
- ⦿ Family Resource Centres (FRCs) and associated national programmes.
- ⦿ Children’s Services Regulation (CSR), responsible for the regulation and inspection of early years services, alternative care services and alternative education.
- ⦿ Educational welfare including the School Completion Programme and Home School Community Liaison Scheme.
- ⦿ Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) services.
- ⦿ Services related to the psychological welfare of children.

Tusla is governed by a Board, which is responsible for establishing the Agency’s overall strategic direction, and ensuring the implementation of the appropriate financial controls, operational and compliance controls, and risk management procedures. The Chair of the Board reports to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on the measures taken to achieve the Agency’s priorities and performance targets. The CEO is responsible to the Board for the performance of the Agency’s functions.



1.1 Our Mission, Vision, Values and Behaviours

In March 2018, Tusla published its Corporate Plan 2018–2020, setting out the key priorities for the for the next three years, together with a renewed and revitalised Mission, Vision, Values and Behaviour statement to guide the Agency in its engagement with children, families and communities.

Our Vision

An Ireland that is committed to the safety and well being of children, young people and families.

Our Mission

Working together to provide good quality, supportive services to achieve better outcomes for children, young people, families and communities.

Our Values



TRUST



RESPECT



EMPATHY



WORKING TOGETHER



INTEGRITY

Behaviours

Empower children, young people, families and communities to participate in decisions that affect their lives and build resilience.

Reliable and committed.

Open, transparent, and clear about the “how” and “why” of our decisions.

Considerate to all children, young people, family members and colleagues.

Recognise that all families have competencies and strengths.

Speak directly to service users.

Active listening and ensuring that we take account of different perspectives.

Understanding of service users’ needs and wants.

Responsive to colleagues and service users.

Act with kindness.

Gather as much information as possible to inform decision-making.

Use plain and straightforward language.

Commitment to communicating consistently with internal and external stakeholders.

Co-created innovative and creative solutions that seek to keep children safe.

Proactive engagement, collaboration, learning and alignment with all relevant stakeholders.

Shared understanding of desired service user outcomes.

Strive for continuous improvement and excellence.

Honest, ethical and fair.

Risk-sensible approach to practice.

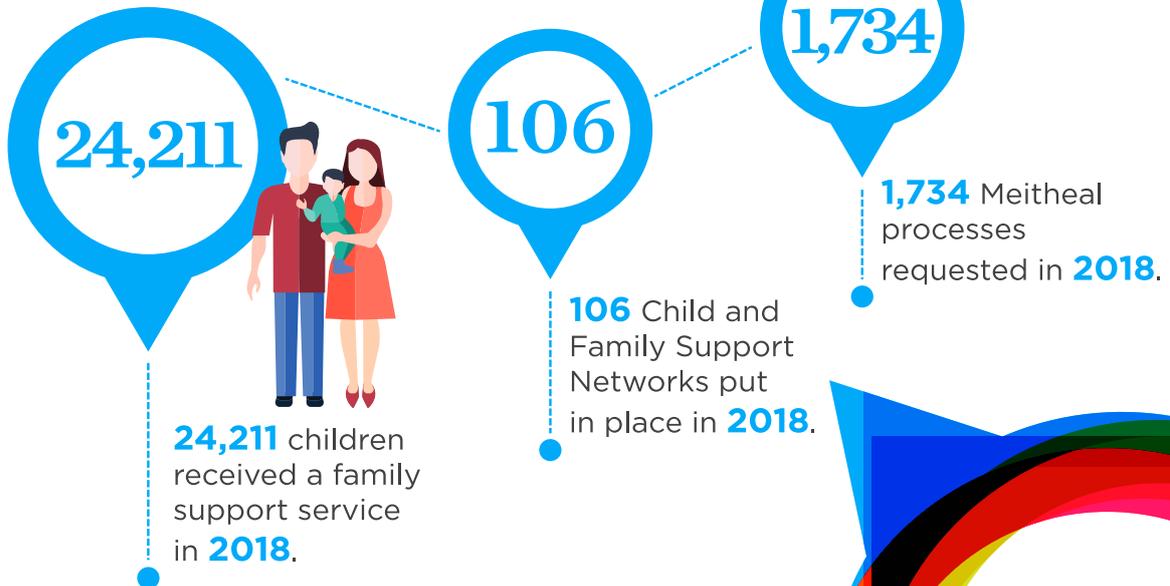
Professional at all times.

Consistent service and supports.

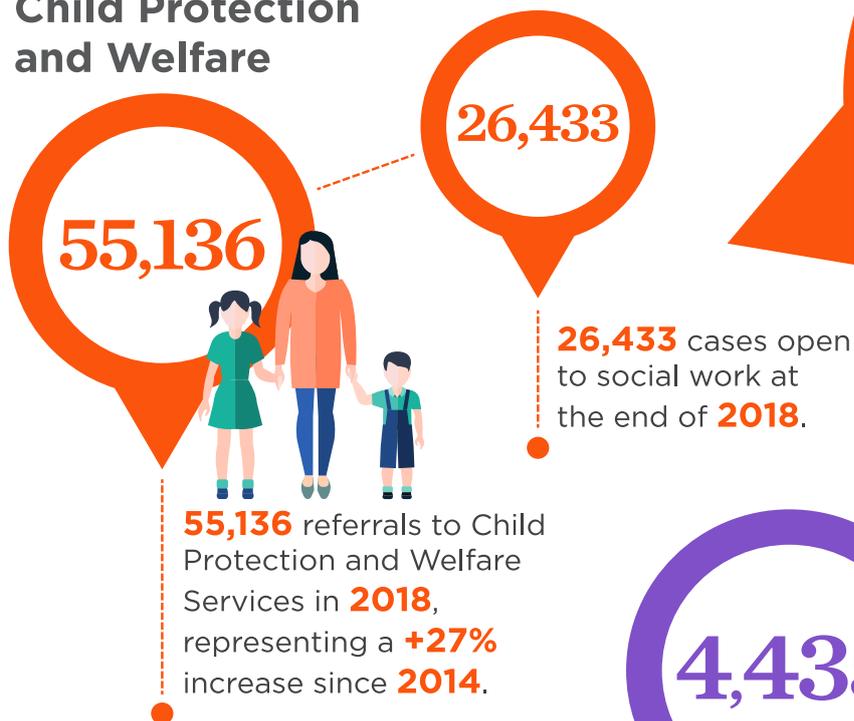
Accountable and transparent practices.

1.2 2018 Our Year In Numbers

Family Support Services



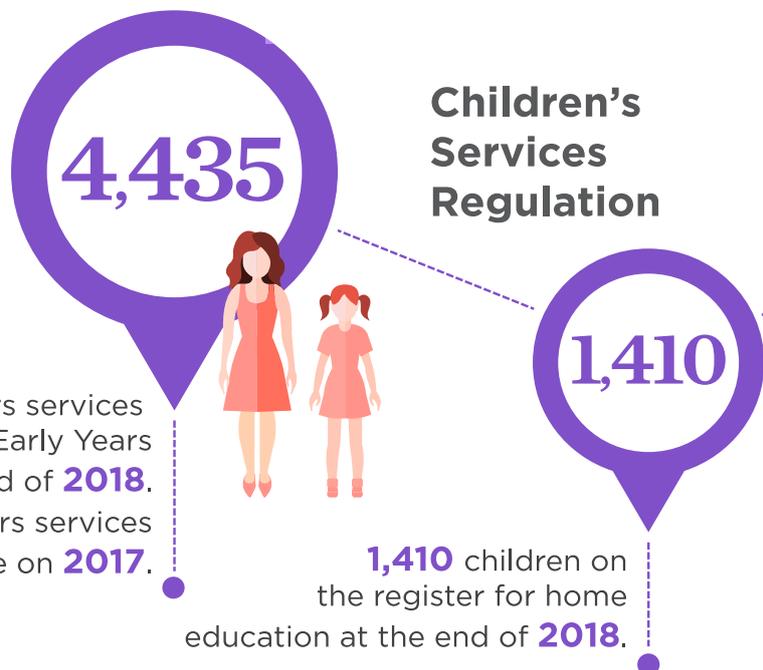
Child Protection and Welfare



55,136 referrals to Child Protection and Welfare Services in **2018**, representing a **+27%** increase since **2014**.

4,435 early years services registered with the Early Years Inspectorate at the end of **2018**.
2,513 inspections of early years services which is a **+24%** increase on **2017**.

Children's Services Regulation



1,410 children on the register for home education at the end of **2018**.

Alternative Care Services



6,029

92%

92% of children in care in 2018 were in foster care.

6,029 children in the care of the Agency at the end of 2018, which is a -2.5% decrease on 2017.

Educational Welfare Service

6,134



Educational Welfare Services worked with 6,134 children in the 2017/18 academic year.

1,190,502

Children living in Ireland



1,218,370

families living in Ireland



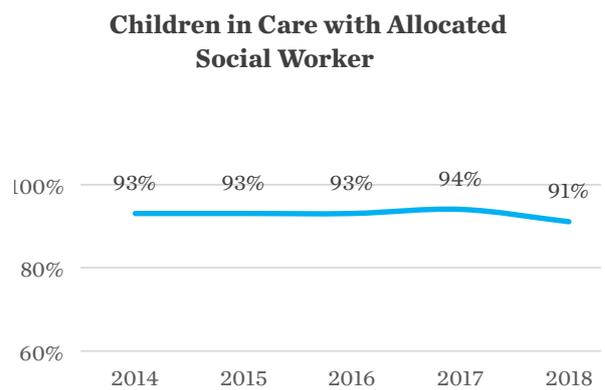
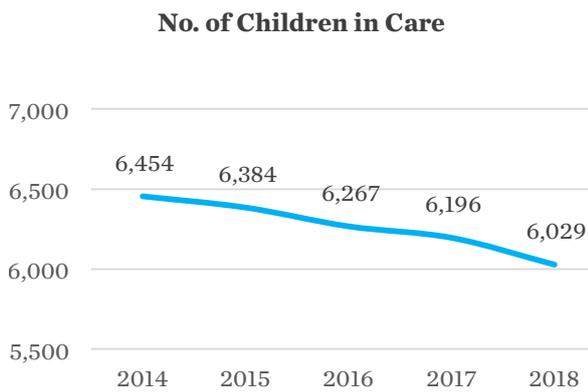
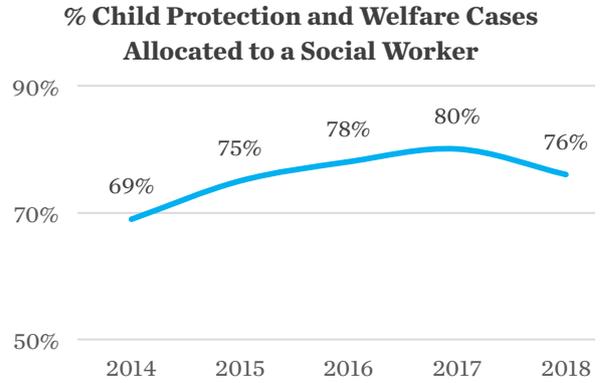
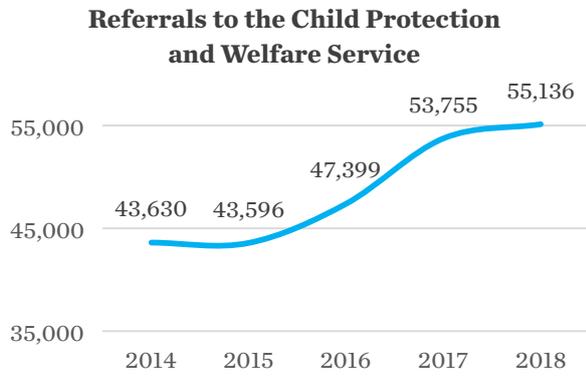
134

134 inspections carried out on non-statutory residential centres in 2018.

TÚSLA

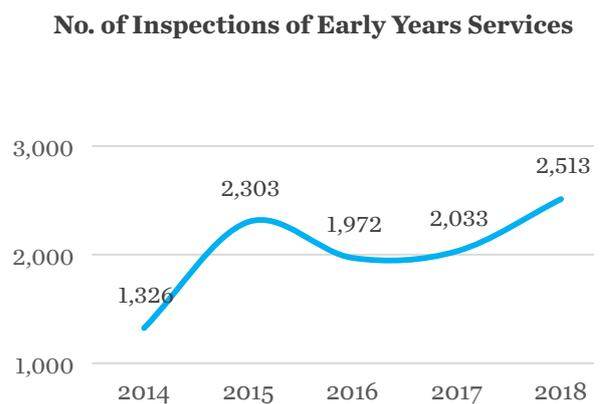
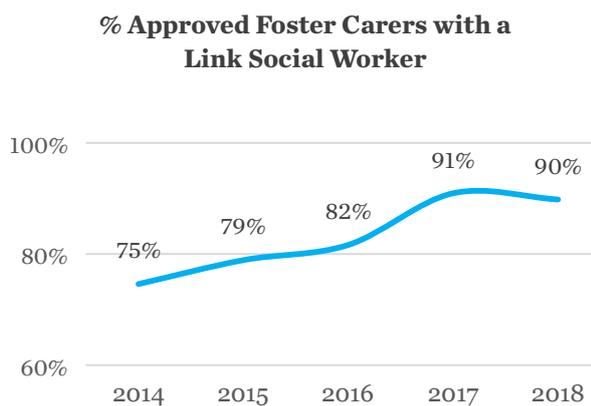
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

1.3 Key Trends 2014-2018



Note: Figures for 2017 and 2018 include children in care under the Social Work Team for Separated Children Seeking Asylum. Figures for 2014 include children in respite care.

Note: Figures for 2017 and 2018 include children in care under the Social Work Team for Separated Children Seeking Asylum. Figures for 2014 include children in respite care.



1.4 Our Key Achievements in 2018

The establishment of Tusla in 2014 and its development over the last number of years has shown the importance of having a dedicated, high quality organisation for children, families and communities. Previously, the system of services in Ireland for children and families was fragmented, disjointed and characterised by a lack of long-term, evidence-informed planning. Nevertheless, the Agency, in its formative years, faced a number of significant and complex challenges. Tusla was inaugurated during a time of austerity, where financial constraints stretched already strained resources during a period of increased demand for services. Within this context, one of the first tasks for Tusla was to develop its own unique culture and identity by blending together the best of the former service elements into one cohesive organisation, while at the same time putting in place the necessary governance structures to ensure accountability and transparency. Most significantly, the Agency was also faced with the challenging tasks of addressing legacy issues, while simultaneously developing and implementing a new, fully integrated approach to the demanding and complex work of protecting children and supporting families.

Tusla's first Corporate Plan, covering the early stages of the Agency's development, acknowledged these challenges, with its focus on consolidating and sustaining the emergent organisation, while at the same time developing its internal capacity to achieve its mission. During this period the Agency managed the consolidation of the key services of Child Protection and Welfare, Family Support and Educational Welfare and achieved a number of important successes, including:

- ⦿ The development of a service delivery framework to screen and assess all referrals, including Section 12 placements.
- ⦿ A reduction in the number of unallocated cases, ensuring that every child at risk received an immediate response.
- ⦿ The implementation of the Meitheal approach across the country in 2015 as part of the PPFs programme.
- ⦿ The establishment of Tusla Recruit in 2016.
- ⦿ The publication of the Child Protection and Welfare Strategy 2017–2022, which included the launch of a new, internationally recognised, national approach to practice for child welfare and protection – ‘Signs of Safety’ (SOS).
- ⦿ The expansion of the EWS and DSGVB services.
- ⦿ The launch of Tusla's Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) Strategy 2017–2019 and the implementation of the Child Protection Notification System (CPNS).
- ⦿ The enhancement of Tusla's strategic approach to quality assurance with the introduction of the Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) in 2016.
- ⦿ The roll-out of improved reporting mechanisms and publication of performance data.

Building on these foundations, Tusla's new three-year Corporate Plan 2018–2020 reflects the breadth of ambition within the Agency to fundamentally change and improve the relationship between the State and children, young people, families and communities. The launch of this plan was a significant milestone, covering an important period for Tusla as it seeks to foster and embed change through an Agency-wide consistent approach to practice, and the strengthening of relationships with stakeholders.

Key Achievements in 2018

2018 – the first year in this planned three-year cycle – saw a number of key achievements which are critical to underpinning the future successes and aspirations of the Agency. These include:

- ◎ ***The implementation of the Child Protection and Welfare Strategy 2017–2022*** – This robust, integrated and well-governed programme of work is aimed at empowering staff to implement the SOS national approach to practice. This has been supported by the deployment of significant training resources for staff, ensuring that all Tusla interventions are based on the best informed evidence-based approaches to working collaboratively with children, families and communities to achieve effective safety for children. Ireland hosted its first national SOS ‘Gathering’ in September 2018 and co-hosted an international SOS ‘Gathering’ in November 2018, which was attended by over 3,000 international SOS practitioners, managers and leaders.
- ◎ ***The national roll-out of NCCIS*** – For the first time in the history of the State all 17 social work areas have access to a single integrated information system to manage child protection and welfare cases. The NCCIS is already improving the responsiveness of child protection services by supporting practice around the country. It captures critical data on children who are the subject of a child protection or welfare referral. The NCCIS was shortlisted for the Public Sector Project of the Year at the 2018 Project Management Institute Awards.
- ◎ ***The Expansion of the FRC Programme*** – The number of Family Resource Centres in Ireland increased from 109 to 120 with the addition of 11 new centres in March 2018. This was facilitated through a 21% increase in funding for the programme by Tusla in 2018 compared to 2017. This was a key achievement for the Agency, which sees 11 more communities supported through a range of community services, such as family support work, counselling, education and training courses and youth groups.
- ◎ ***The expansion of early intervention work through the PPFS Programme*** – Supporting families in their local communities with initiatives such as parenting 24/7, and the implementation of the Meitheal model, PPFS has established itself as the go-to programme for early intervention assistance for children, young people and families in their local communities.
- ◎ ***The development of the EWS*** – The EWS piloted a new national Intake Framework for the School Completion Programme across ten sites, pending national roll-out in 2019, and launched a new ICT portal to accept school returns from the 3,950 schools across the country.
- ◎ ***The implementation of Tusla’s new Commissioning Strategy*** – Spearheaded by the Commissioning Unit, this strategy has allowed the Agency to better identify gaps or overlaps in services across the country, providing a clear framework for Tusla to work with its partners to ensure the best quality services for children, young people and families.
- ◎ ***The developing work of the National Research Office*** – The National Research Office continued to build the research and information capacity of the Agency’s workforce. This included the development of a new Electronic Research Centre, providing access to a wide range of electronic information resources, and which is intended, in time, to become a home for all facets of Tusla’s research activities.
- ◎ ***A new Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit (CSSCU)*** – Set up in March 2018, this is a dedicated unit to manage the requirement for service providers to have a Child Safeguarding Statement in line with the requirements of the Children First Act, 2015. This unit maintains a register of non-compliance and has also published detailed guidance on the Tusla website to support providers in meeting this requirement.

- ⦿ ***The establishment of Children's Services Regulation (CSR)*** – The appointment of a new CSR National Service Director in June 2018 signalled the establishment of a new nationally integrated governance structure for Tusla's four regulatory functions. Bringing together the Early Years Inspectorate (EYI), the Regulation of Non-Statutory Alternative Care and Commissioned Services Unit, the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service and the CSSCU, this new structure will yield a new, fully integrated, nationally co-ordinated approach across all of the Agency's regulatory functions. In 2018 the Agency oversaw significant increases in regulatory oversight, with a 26% increase in the EYI, a 19% increase in the Non-Statutory Alternative Care and Commissioned Services Unit, and a 200% increase in the Alternative Education, Registration and Assessment Service.
- ⦿ ***Publication of a Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF) for early years services, September 2018*** – Informed by international best practice and a comprehensive evidence base, the Early Years QRF is an important resource for early years services in achieving compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. By setting out Tusla's interpretation of these regulations, the QRF serves as an important resource for registered providers and parents, promoting continuous improvement of the quality and safety of services provided to children in early years settings.
- ⦿ ***The launch of Tusla's new National Out-of-Hours Social Work Service in December 2018*** – Staffed by an on-call rota of Tusla Principal Social Workers, this is a new single point of contact for out-of-hours child protection and welfare referrals to Tusla, as well as emergency care and residential placements.
- ⦿ ***Tusla Strategic Workforce Plan 2018–2020*** – Draft plan developed by Human Resources (HR) in partnership with the Agency's Operations, Finance and Workforce Learning and Development (WLD) departments. This plan is the first step in the introduction of a more strategic approach to workforce planning for the Agency. By transitioning from an operational short-term approach to workforce planning, the aim of this plan is to deliver a more mature approach designed to ensure that the Agency has the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.
- ⦿ ***The Implementation of the Tusla ICT Strategy 2017–2019*** – The continued roll-out of the Tusla ICT strategy in 2018 contributed to the improved use of ICT to support service delivery across the Agency. A new ICT function was set up in 2018, with 28 staff working across six units, each responsible for the implementation of one of the core pillars of the Strategy. Eleven significant digital solutions were implemented in 2018, replacing previous administrative-intensive paper processes, such as the launch of the secure online Tusla Portal that provides a 'Digital Front Door' to Tusla services such as child protection and welfare reporting. The ICT National Help desk launched in June and handled on average 700 support calls a week in 2018. A mobile enablement programme provided 1,200 laptops, smart phones and MiFi connectivity devices to staff in 2018, enabling a more connected, secure and mobile workforce, better suited to meet the evolving needs of the Agency and its service users. Other key initiatives delivered in 2018 in the areas of ICT infrastructure, data management and service have all contributed to progressing the vision of the ICT strategy to maximise the use of technology in supporting all Tusla stakeholders in delivering better outcomes for children and families.
- ⦿ ***The Development of the National Policy Oversight Committee*** – This Committee continued its development and implementation planning of National Policies, Procedures, Protocols and Guidelines (PPPGs) in 2018. The Committee considered 44 PPPGs at various stages of development, and approved 13, including, the Child Protection Conference (CPC) Case Conference Guidelines, Aftercare Performance Metrics, the National Policy Toolkit for Social Work Caseload Management and the Code of Conduct and Integrity.

Challenges

Despite these successes, the Agency remains mindful of the on-going challenges it faces. Establishing a cohesive organisation, culture and service delivery model from three distinct organisations, particularly in the early stages of development, has been a substantial undertaking. Following a period of consolidation, Tusla continues to make progress in this area, due in no small part to the hard work and dedication of its staff and partners. The Agency also continues to manage a number of legacy issues which were inherited upon its establishment. The nature and sensitivity of the work undertaken by Tusla also means that the organisation is often the focus of media attention. Although the Agency has adopted a more proactive approach with the expansion of its Communications Team in 2018, the complex nature of Tusla's work means that the Agency is likely to continue to be at the forefront of media interest in the future.

As the statutory body with responsibility for child protection and welfare in Ireland, Tusla operates within an extensive domestic and international legislative context, which bestows comprehensive responsibilities on the Agency. Such legislation includes:

- The Child Care Act, 1991.
- The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.
- The Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.
- The Children First Act, 2015.
- The Adoption (Amendment) Act, 2017.
- The Adoption Information and Tracing Bill, 2016.
- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Balancing these various legislative obligations has at times proved challenging for the Agency's organisational capabilities. The legislative landscape continues to evolve, placing additional obligations upon the Agency. Some key changes from recently enacted legislation include:

- The commencement of the mandatory reporting provisions of the Children First Act in December 2017.
- The enactment of the Childcare Support Act, 2018, which extends Tusla's inspection remit.
- The proposed reform of Guardian Ad Litem arrangements under the Childcare Amendment Bill, 2018.

Tusla is steadfast in its commitment to meeting all of its statutory responsibilities, which have been incorporated into Corporate Plan 2018–2020 to ensure that these requirements are recognised and fully embedded in all ways of working across the Agency.

Recruitment continues to be particularly problematic, due to a shortage of appropriately qualified social workers in Ireland. Coupled with retention issues associated with the nature of child protection work, this has led to difficulties in achieving target staffing levels. While this remains a challenge, the Agency is implementing a range of initiatives, outlined in the current Corporate Plan, designed to assist with these recruitment and retention issues.

Tusla is also subject to various financial cost pressures which require careful management. In 2018, an increase in the number of children in care requiring private residential and foster care services and an increase in the private residential placement charge had a significant impact on financial resources. Despite achieving significant

savings in relation to the Agency's contracted legal firms, overall the Agency faced increased costs due to additional legal expenditure related to Guardian Ad Litem. As Guardian Ad Litem services are commissioned by the courts, this is outside the Agency's control.

In addition, Tusla operates in a complex and evolving external environment. The Agency responds to the needs of children, young people and adults who experience some of society's worst crimes, such as sexual abuse and violence. The demand for Tusla services is constantly growing, driven by an expanding remit combined with a range of socio-economic factors, including:

- ⦿ An increasing population – the Irish population grew by close to 372,000 between 2008 and 2018, of which the 0–19 year cohort (Tusla's core service users) grew by almost 116,000. Ireland's population is expected to grow over the coming years due to an above-average birth rate, one of the lowest mortality rates in Europe, and net inward migration.¹
- ⦿ An above EU average (24.9%) of 'children at risk of poverty or social exclusion' at 25.2%.²
- ⦿ An on-going homelessness crisis in Ireland – figures from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government showed that there were 9,753 people homeless in December 2018, of which 3,559 were children. The number of homeless children in Ireland increased by 297% between January 2015 and December 2018.³
- ⦿ Increased immigration - net inward migration for Ireland in 2018 was 34,000, the highest rate experienced since 2008, which could result in additional service demand for Tusla.

Mindful of these challenges, and building on the successes achieved in 2018, Tusla looks forward to 2019 through the ambitious lens of Corporate Plan 2018–2020, and remains committed to the delivery of high-quality, safe and effective services and the delivery of high-quality, safe strengthening of governance and accountability within the Agency, while remaining focused on its core mission – to achieve better outcomes for children, families and communities.

¹ CSO 2018 population estimates.

² Eurostats 'Children at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion' 2017 dataset.

³ Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government homeless data, December 2018.

1.5 Our Corporate Plan 2018–2020

Developed in accordance with Section 42 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, Tusla’s Corporate Plan 2018–2020 reflects the Agency’s strategic priorities for the forthcoming three-year period. With implementation supported by an annual series of business plans, many of the priorities identified in Corporate Plan 2018–2020 directly address areas for improvement identified by Tusla’s stakeholders and reflect the organisation’s commitment to continuous improvement and its desire to develop a culture that is focused on quality, learning and responsiveness. The Corporate Plan 2018–2020 is ambitious in its scope, identifying seven high-level strategic objectives:



Performance Framework

These seven strategic objectives are underpinned by the DCYA Performance Framework 2018–2020, which outlines both the principles and priorities that Tusla is required to focus on. While the first Performance Framework, 2015–2017, was developed with a strong focus on Tusla's establishment over its first three years, the current Performance Framework has a greater focus on the strategic priorities required to take the Agency forward in its development. The Performance Framework 2018–2020 outlines six priorities and eight principles. The six priorities are:

1. Operation of a fully functioning and performing Child Protection and Welfare Service (CPWS).
2. Supporting the care, welfare, learning and development of children and young people at risk.
3. Cultivating integrated communities, systems and supports centred on children, young people and their families.
4. Delivery of all relevant policy, regulatory and legislative requirements and ensuring optimum operations, governance and resource effectiveness.
5. Ensuring the Agency's policy and provision is accessible, quality-based and outcomes-focused for children, young people and families.
6. Ensuring collaboration and communication with the DCYA and other key interests working with, and for, children and young people, and the provision of quality and timely information.
3. Effective management and governance – That Tusla, in all areas and at all levels, provides services that are effectively and efficiently planned, delivered, managed and assessed.
4. Transparency, accountability and consistency – That Tusla operates in a transparent, accountable and consistent manner in all aspects of operations, governance, management, delivery and performance.
5. Proactive, proportionate and progressive – That Tusla is proactive, proportionate and progressive in terms of promoting and protecting the welfare and well-being of children and their families through the delivery of best-practice services and supports.
6. Co-ordinated and collaborative – That Tusla provides optimum levels of coordination and collaboration internally across its service directorates, bilaterally with the Minister and the DCYA, and externally through interagency working, in particular with An Garda Síochána and the HSE.
7. Communication – That Tusla places particular focus on communications with public stakeholders and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.
8. Public Service and Professionalism – That Tusla is governed and managed according to the highest levels of public service values and professionalism and embodies such values and qualities in all aspects of operations.

Tusla's seven strategic objectives are aligned to the six Performance Framework priorities, while the eight associated principles are embedded throughout Corporate Plan 2018–2020 in order to underpin the delivery of key actions.

The eight principles are:

1. Child-centred – That Tusla and all its policies, procedures and provisions are clearly child-centred, accessible to, and accommodating of, the needs and best interests of children.
2. Quality and timely services – That Tusla sets and meets the highest standards in terms of its performance and provides timely access in its provision of services.

Benefits Statement

The successful implementation of Corporate Plan 2018–2020 will see Tusla deliver on its Mission Statement and its aspirational vision, with a number of clear benefits for the Agency, and the children, young people and families it serves. By 2020, Tusla expects to see the following outcomes, against all seven strategic objectives:

Strategic Objective	Outcome
1. Integrated Supports and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tusla delivers good-quality, consistent, timely and effective services to children, young people and families in Ireland, resulting in better outcomes for individuals and families. The Agency has the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.
2. Regulatory Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tusla's role in the provision of regulatory functions results in improved quality and availability of services together with greater levels of compliance.
3. Quality, Evidence-Informed and Measurable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tusla has access to good-quality data/information to assist in informing, planning and managing services and ensuring that Tusla services are achieving improved outcomes for service users.
4. Relationships, Collaboration and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved intra-agency/cross-sectoral collaboration, leading to a shared vision for children, young people and families, and shared intra-agency protocols. Enhanced communications with all stakeholders (internal and external).
5. Policy and Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with all relevant standards, national policies and legislation.
6. Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a corporate services model that supports and enhances the organisation's capability to deliver new or improved supports for all service users.
7. People, Culture and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tusla develops its own unique culture, focused on a shared vision for children, young people and families which is rooted in learning, quality, responsiveness and respect.

Delivering on Year One of Corporate Plan 2018–2020

The seven strategic objectives outlined in Corporate Plan 2018–2020 have been broken down into 69 accompanying Corporate Plan actions to be delivered across the lifetime of the plan. Each of these Corporate Plan actions is to be achieved through the accomplishment of a detailed series of business plan actions and associated key performance indicators clearly setting out the steps involved, the timeline for delivery and the expected outputs. These actions are then tracked through an annual series of business plans. Prepared in accordance with the provisions of Section 46 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, the purpose of these business plans is to set out an annual account of what the Agency must achieve in the year ahead to meet the overall strategic objectives of the Corporate Plan.

Business Plan 2018, which identifies 47 service delivery units for 178 actions, is the first of a three-year cycle in what is shaping up to be an exciting period for the Agency as it embarks on the task of implementing the ambitious vision of Corporate Plan 2018–2020. A more detailed update on all of the actions from Business Plan 2018 is provided under the section 'Our Business Plan 2018'. In summary, the Agency completed 48% (82) of its assigned business plan actions in 2018, one action was withdrawn, with the remaining 52% (95) to be carried over and completed in early 2019.

1.6 Our Business Plan 2018

Tusla's Business Plan 2018, prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, is underpinned by Corporate Plan 2018–2020 and the Agency's performance information, and also takes into account the direction provided by the Performance Framework and Performance Statement issued by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The purpose of the Business Plan is to clearly set out what is to be achieved in the year ahead to meet the overall objectives of Corporate Plan 2018–2020. Each of the 69 Corporate Plan actions is broken down into a corresponding series of Business Plan actions which are monitored and tracked across the Agency. These updates then form the basis of a series of detailed quarterly progress reports to both the Tusla Board and the DCYA.

Business Plan 2018 Key Achievements

In this section a summary of some of the key achievements from Business Plan 2018 is presented under the relevant Strategic Objectives from which they stem. A more detailed progress report is available in the Tusla Business Plan 2018 Quarter Four Update.

Strategic Objective 1 – Integrated Supports and Services: *To implement integrated Agency-wide approaches to all Tusla supports and services, with clear responsive pathways to achieve better outcomes.*

- ⦿ 11 new FRCs were established in March 2018.
- ⦿ Tusla's new National Out-of-Hours Social Work Service was launched in December 2018.
- ⦿ The SOS national approach to practice was embedded across Tusla, with all areas reporting on SOS implementation by the end of 2018, and the roll-out of the second phase of SOS case-load management. This was supported by the delivery of 14 workshops on the SOS Referral Prioritisation System. A two-day SOS training course was also delivered to 623 staff, and a five-day SOS practice leader training course was delivered to a further 216 staff.
- ⦿ The Champions Support Project was expanded and developed throughout 2018. This project is a national initiative to develop a system-wide approach to working with parents to support all children and young people in being safe and achieving their full potential. By the end of 2018, 105 Champions were recruited into the project, with over €85,000 in funding being provided to 17 Parenting and Learning Communities across the country. The third Annual Parenting Conference was also held in Dublin Castle on 3 May 2018, with presentations from keynote speakers Dr David Tobias, former Director of the Child Welfare Fund, and Dr Una Lynch, a leading academic and public health nurse.
- ⦿ An Unallocated Cases Project Group was established to advance a co-ordinated approach in each CPWS area to reduce the number of unallocated cases and to establish a maximum waiting time for allocation to a social worker.
- ⦿ A National Well-being Implementation Plan was developed to promote the retention and well-being of child protection welfare service staff, augmented by the roll-out of a Resilience Training Programme.
- ⦿ A Tusla Governance Group was set up to prepare for the commencement of the forthcoming Adoption Information and Tracing Bill, 2016. Although this Bill has not yet been enacted, Tusla has completed work on developing a Trace Register, resulting in a 10% reduction in information and Tracing Bill cases.
- ⦿ A new Homeless Liaison Officer was recruited in June 2018, with a remit to facilitate the planning, coordination and integration of services between Tusla, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, Focus Ireland and the HSE. Tusla teams were also assigned to visit all family hubs on a regular basis, in order to provide on-going supports and services

to children and families to transition from homelessness to permanent accommodation. Tusla also participates in the Homelessness Inter-Agency Group, established by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government under the 2016 Rebuilding Ireland action plan.

- Tusla secured the agreement of the DCYA and the Department of Justice and Equality to provide placements for 20 unaccompanied children in need of care from the Calais Special Project and the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.

Strategic Objective 2 – Regulatory

Functions: *To regulate services consistently and proportionately using Quality and Regulatory Frameworks to ensure compliance and drive improvement and services for children.*

- In June 2018, the EYI, the Regulation of Non-Statutory Alternative Care and Commissioned Services Unit, the Alternative Education Registration and Assessment Service and the CSSCU were integrated under a new CSR national governance structure.
- The EYI published its QRF for the early years sector in September 2018. This was complemented by a series of eight national briefings, attended by over 1,000 delegates throughout November and December 2018.
- The EYI published 4,855 Inspection Outcomes Reports on the Tusla website, managed a national recruitment process for nine new Early Years Inspectors from an expanded pool of professional backgrounds and set up an unsolicited information office, which managed 413 cases in 2018.

Strategic Objective 3 – Quality, Evidence-Informed and Measurable: *To ensure Tusla provided and commissioned services are safe, well-led, evidence-informed, outcomes focused and measurable.*

- Tusla continued the implementation of its Commissioning Strategy 2018 with the development of commissioning plans for all national areas. A National Commissioning Conference was also held in October 2018, and training on the commissioning process continues to be rolled out across the Agency.
- A new performance and accountability system was established to track and oversee actions arising from both Tusla internal quality assurance reviews and external oversight bodies (i.e. HIQA, DCYA, Ombudsman, etc.) with the procurement and implementation of a supporting software solution.
- Tusla's QIF, which aims to promote a culture of continuous quality improvement, has been rolled out across the Agency. Fourteen areas have completed self-assessment questionnaires using the QIF in 2018 and 12 verification audits have been completed by the Quality Assurance (QA) Directorate.
- A new national approach to the monitoring of children's residential services was developed in 2018, with services carrying out self-audit, using a customised version of the QIF, in advance of monitoring visits from the Tusla QA Directorate.

Strategic Objective 4 – Relationships, Collaboration and Communication: *To develop collaborative relationships, participative practices and effective communications with all key stakeholders to provide a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of services.*

- Throughout 2018 Tusla worked in partnership with the HSE to ensure the implementation of the Joint Interagency Disability Protocol 2017, for the provision of disability services for children and families. This included a number of joint workshops held in October 2018, and the establishment of a National Oversight Group to discuss any challenges that may arise in implementation.
- The EYI signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to cooperate on areas of common interest in quality assurance and improvement in early childhood education and care services.
- A new Outcomes for Children National Data Hub Project, with 11 Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSC), was commenced in collaboration with the DCYA in 2018. This project will deliver a statistical data repository for use across all CYPSC sites in 2019.
- Agreement was reached with the DCYA, the DES, the Department of Justice and Equality, and Traveller and Roma representative groups, on four sites to pilot a planned intervention programme to support Traveller and Roma school participation.
- A National Aftercare Project Plan was agreed in order to implement the National Aftercare Policy 2017. By the end of 2018 all areas were reporting that this plan was in an advanced stage of implementation into practice.

Strategic Objective 5 – Policy and Legislation: *To support and inform government policy and legislation through the development and coordination of Tusla policies, strategies, programmes and frameworks.*

- Tusla has established a National Implementation Group to lead on the operationalisation of key legislative requirements, including the management of mandated reporting, arising from the Children First Act, 2015. The CSSCU was also established in May 2018.
- The Tusla Portal was launched in January 2018 to allow for the safe and secure transmission of child protection and welfare reports into Tusla by professional reporters and members of the public.
- The Agency developed a new policy and set of procedures for Specified Information Reports to the Garda National Vetting Bureau (NVB) in line with the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, 2012.
- The Special Care Regulations were enacted in three Tusla Special Care Units (Ballydowd, Crannog Nua and Coovagh House) in 2018, leading to successful inspection and registration by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) in line with the requirements of the Health Care Act, 2007 (as amended by the Child Care (Amendment) Act, 2011).
- A new set of CPC Guidelines were finalised by the Agency, followed by the roll-out of a series of national briefings. These new guidelines will be implemented incrementally in 2019.
- As mandated by action 65 of the Ryan Report, a feasibility study for a longitudinal study of young people leaving care was completed and submitted to the DCYA for consideration.
- The Tusla National Legal Training Programme was expanded in 2018, with the delivery of 12 half-day briefing sessions and workshops to relevant staff.

Strategic Objective 6 – Corporate Services:

To ensure Corporate Services (Estates, Finance, Governance, HR, ICT, Legal) are effective in supporting the delivery of Tusla services.

- A new legal costing system was implemented across the Agency, which achieved a saving of €1.2 million in relation to Tusla's contracted legal firms in 2018.
- In line with Tusla's Strategic Workforce Plan, a suite of enhanced reporting and tracking mechanisms were introduced by Tusla HR to provide real-time reporting on recruitment activity to assist with recruitment planning. Recruitment panel management has been improved in order to support the on-going delivery of resourcing requirements. A new range of HR monthly and quarterly dashboards have also been developed in order to enhance and integrate HR data with Operations data.
- A new Employee Well-being Strategy was developed and approved for implementation in 2019. This includes a new range of supports for staff, including training in Critical Illness Stress Management and a Resilience Training Programme.
- The new NCCIS system was rolled out across all 17 social work areas. This was augmented by the appointment of a new dedicated support team for users, and the issue of approximately 1,200 laptops and MiFi devices to social work staff.
- The implementation of the Tusla ICT strategy contributed to the improved use of ICT, and the establishment of a new ICT function, with 28 staff, in 2018. Eleven significant digital solutions were implemented by this team, including the launch of a secure online Tusla Portal, providing a 'Digital Front Door' to services, such as child protection and welfare reporting.
- An extensive mobile enablement programme providing laptops, smart phones and MiFi devices to staff was also rolled out, enabling a more connected, secure and mobile workforce, better suited to meeting the evolving needs of the Agency and its service users. This was augmented by the launch of a new ICT national help desk in June, which handled on average 700 support calls a week.
- A new National Data and Information Oversight Committee was set up as a sub-group of the Agency's Senior Management Team (SMT) to continuously improve the governance, treatment and use of data by the Agency.
- Phase 1 of the General Data Protection Regulation+ (GDPR) Programme commenced to support the Agency's compliance with data protection and freedom of information legislation, and to deliver an enhanced Parliamentary Affairs service. A GDPR mandatory e-learning programme was launched in early 2018 together with a dedicated portal for the submission of subject access requests.
- Recruitment to the National Health and Safety Department continued in 2018, and a new National Health and Safety Management System is at an advanced stage of development. E-learning modules on general health and safety requirements for all staff have also been prepared for launch in early 2019.



Tusla - Naas

Strategic Objective 7 – People, Culture and Learning: *To empower our people to grow and develop a values-based culture and learning organisation.*

- Efforts to increase the range of learning and development opportunities for staff have progressed in 2018, including the piloting of a number of training programmes on leadership and first-time managers. Project work on a new Learning Management System has also progressed significantly.
- In 2018, the National Research Office co-ordinated all of Tusla’s research activity, engaging, on behalf of the Agency, in both internal studies and activities and those of the wider research community, including academic institutions, public and private research departments, and independent researchers.
- The National Research Office played a leading role in contributing to the Agency’s learning organisation objectives by strengthening the research capacity and skills of the workforce by providing guidance and support on integrating research into practice.

1.7 Update on the Strategic Action Plan in Response to the HIQA Investigation Report into the Management of Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse

Following the publication of the HIQA investigation report into the management of allegations of child sexual abuse against adults of concern by the Child and Family Agency in June 2018, Tusla developed a Strategic Action Plan to address the areas for improvement and the risks identified in this report. Based on an analysis of the report's findings, this Strategic Action Plan identified nine strategic improvement themes for the Agency:

- **Improvement Theme 1** Improve the management of child protection and welfare referrals in accordance with Children First to ensure harm is identified and responded to in a timely manner. This includes a reduction in cases awaiting allocation to a social worker.
 - **Improvement Theme 2** Define and implement a new process for safety planning across the Agency to support the management of risk for children and families.
 - **Improvement Theme 3** Improve the processes and structures for the management of retrospective cases of abuse to ensure a consistent and effective national approach.
 - **Improvement Theme 4** Develop robust systems and processes to support effective interagency working to strengthen the management of child protection and welfare referrals.
 - **Improvement Theme 5** Implement safe and effective data and information management systems to support case work and compliance with best practice.
 - **Improvement Theme 6** Ensure Tusla's workforce has the appropriate skill mix, administrative supports and structures to support frontline staff to deliver safe and effective service.
 - **Improvement Theme 7** Improve governance, management and oversight systems across the Agency to optimise performance, identify and manage risk, and ensure effective case supervision is in place.
 - **Improvement Theme 8** Strengthen the organisational risk management system to support effective and consistent risk management practices and service improvement.
 - **Improvement Theme 9** Develop and implement collaborative systems to embed and share learning to support quality improvements and risk management.
- Each of these themes was accompanied by an aligned set of actions designed to make measurable improvements in addressing the gaps and risks identified in the HIQA report. The implementation of this Strategic Action Plan is overseen as follows
- **Tusla Board** The Board monitors the progress of the Strategic Action Plan and holds the Tusla CEO and members of the Executive to account in relation to its implementation.
 - **SMT** The Tusla CEO is the sponsor of the Strategic Action Plan's implementation, and the SMT is the steering group. A sub-group of the SMT, chaired by the QA Director, governs and monitors the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan, and supports effective collaboration and the management of interdependencies.
 - **Operational/Service Delivery Lead** The Chief Operations Officer oversees and tracks progress via the National Operations Management Team.
 - **DCYA Expert Assurance Group** This group advises and supports on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan.

Strategic Action Plan Key Achievements in 2018

Improvement Theme 1

- ⦿ The continued implementation of the Child Protection and Welfare Strategy and the implementation of SOS as the national approach to practice represent significant milestones in improving the management of child protection and welfare referrals.
- ⦿ The launch of the Tusla Portal in January 2018 was also significant in providing the Agency with a 'Digital Front Door' for reporters to securely and instantly submit concerns using an easy-to-use online form, which are then forwarded to the relevant dedicated contact teams in each Tusla area. This portal has already delivered significant benefits in reducing the administrative overheads in processing reported concerns as well as improving data quality and data security. Approximately 10,000 reporters are registered on the portal, with up to 100 reports being submitted daily by this channel.

Improvement Theme 2

- ⦿ The Agency has implemented on-going learning support for staff in the use of SOS, which included a series of two-day introductory workshops and five-day practice leader training courses, as well as presentations from practitioners delivered at Ireland's first national SOS 'Gathering' in September 2018 and the international SOS 'Gathering', co-hosted by Tusla, in November 2018. This was augmented by the completion of a series of workshops in 15 out of the 17 social work areas on the use of SOS at the point of referral and consideration of immediate safety planning requirements.
- ⦿ Tusla also introduced a revised definition for safety planning and initiated a review of business processes to embed changes to the safety planning process.

Improvement Theme 3

- ⦿ The Agency has developed a National Service Improvement Plan to improve the processes and structures for the management of retrospective cases of abuse. This includes the establishment of a series of regional multidisciplinary teams, headed by a Principal Social Worker, whose role will have an initial focus on retrospective and adult abuse cases. A draft retrospective operating model is also in development. Recruitment for the Principal Social Worker posts is currently on-going.

Improvement Theme 4

- ⦿ Tusla and An Garda Síochána have been involved in exploring various proposals for the controlled and secure exchange of digital data. Approximately 500,000 records are exchanged between Tusla and An Garda Síochána during the notification process, as well as subsequent exchanges of information between the social worker and Garda such as receipt confirmation, contact details, meeting notes, action forms and status changes. Streamlining the exchange of this information is therefore critical in realising tangible efficiencies which will yield improved outcomes for children.

Improvement Theme 5

- ⦿ Tusla completed an 18-month mobile enablement programme to equip all social workers with MiFi connectivity devices, laptops and mobile phones. Social workers have reported significant benefits and time savings by no longer being desk bound, such as having the capacity to complete case notes directly with families in their homes, or being able to work remotely in situations such as waiting at court. This mobile enablement programme allowed Tusla ICT to progress an Apps Strategy that will provide social workers with mobile phone apps to further reduce the administration burden and inefficiencies of existing manual processes.

Improvement Theme 6

- A review of role profiles for administrative supports is informing staffing needs and optimising the use of frontline social work staff. The areas with the highest number of cases awaiting allocation have been identified and are the focus of recruitment drives. A staff retention steering group was also established, as was a third-level liaison group, and an overarching workforce implementation plan developed to allow for multidisciplinary teams and other initiatives over a two-year period.

Improvement Theme 7

- The Tusla QA Directorate is leading a programme to design, develop and approve a framework to underpin a new Service Performance and Improvement System. It is planned that this project will be completed in 2019. To date, a project team has been convened, comprising senior members from each of the Agency's directorates to provide input on the proposed project plan, the case for development and design principles for the future system.
- The Practice Assurance and Service Monitoring Team have developed an audit plan for 2019, which has been circulated and communicated to all service directors and the Chief Operations Manager. This audit plan is supported by an Audit Charter, which clearly outlines the role, function and purpose of the Practice Assurance and Service Monitoring Team, and the independence of their role within the Agency. These planned audits will include an examination of safety-planning and risk-management procedures, the handling of allegations against foster carers, care planning, the management of unallocated cases and the variances in the list of children on the CPNS.

- The Health, Well-being and EAP Department have developed the Tusla Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (TEDI) Programme to drive initiatives which demonstrate the Agency's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. The goal of the TEDI Programme is to promote cultural change and encourage a supportive and accepting working environment across the Agency to the benefit of all staff.

Improvement Theme 8

- Risk registers have been reviewed, and an electronic system to support risk management and the risk register is being piloted. Quality Risk and Service Improvement Officers are being recruited to implement and maintain risk incident, audit and quality systems at a local level. A National Operations Risk Management and Service Improvement Committee was also established in 2018.

Improvement Theme 9

- A cross-directorate National Quality Improvement Collaborative Forum was established in 2018 to embed and support on-going strategic approaches to learning and improvement in Tusla services arising from QA Directorate reports, HIQA, the National Review Panel and the Ombudsman. The forum also supports and links national, regional and local services. An electronic system for tracking actions from internal and external oversight bodies was also established to support good governance and accountability.

1.8 Feedback from our Service Users

All aspects of feedback and complaints received from Tusla's service users are managed by the Service Experience and Feedback Team. In line with its obligations under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, and the HIQA National Standards, the Agency developed a national feedback and complaints policy called 'Tell Us'. The purpose of the Service Experience and Feedback Team, in implementing Tell Us, is to ensure that the perspectives of the people who experience Tusla services are listened to, so that the Agency can become more people-centred, responsive and effective. The Service Experience and Feedback Team also has oversight of the Tusla Complaints Module on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) hosted by the State Claims Agency (SCA).

Change and Development in 2018

'Taking Stock', launched in July 2017, was an investigation by the Ombudsman into complaint handling and issues identified in complaints made about Tusla. The Agency has made significant progress in implementing the recommendations of this report, expanding the capacity of the Service Experience and Feedback Team in 2018, with the recruitment of additional and replacement staff, including six staff at grade seven, one social work team leader and three administrative support staff. The Agency also commissioned an external audit of the Service Experience and Feedback Team, conducted by Clinical Leadership Solutions, resulting in the development of a quality improvement plan. The Service Experience and Feedback Team was reorganised to ensure that both the operational and developmental needs of the function are fully supported, and five regionally aligned complaints and feedback posts were successfully recruited and on-boarded in December 2018.

Key Achievements in 2018

The Agency is committed to engaging with children, young people, families and communities, and actively seeks out the views of all people receiving Tusla services. As part of this engagement, the Service Experience and Feedback Team launched a complaints and feedback poster in January 2018, completely designed by young people, which was distributed to all residential care units and social work departments nationally. The team also delivered briefings on Tell Us to approximately 1,400 staff nationally.

In November 2018, the team received an award from the SCA, at the National Enterprise Risk Network Recognition Awards Ceremony, for their work in adapting the NIMS complaints module to meet Tusla's needs. The internal process for handling and managing complaints was also modified to further improve the use of the NIMS system.

Other achievements in 2018 included:

- A Complaints Officer Training Programme was produced and rolled out between February and June 2018, and supports for staff managing complaints at a local and regional level were put in place.
- There was a consultation with young people regarding the planned development of a live feedback mechanism on young people's experience of living in alternative care.
- The team also undertook three national surveys of staff, to inform future service development.

Complaints

In 2018, the total number of complaints reported across the Agency in relation to Tusla services was 732. Of these, 395 were recorded on the NIMS Complaints Module. Using the data recorded on NIMS, the table below presents a comparative analysis of high-level trends in relation to complaints received between 2016 and 2018.

Complaint Issue	2016	2017	2018
Lack of response/no response to communications/poor communications	28.90%	18.93%	21.60%
Insufficient service	25.70%	22.72%	13.33%
Behaviour – staff attitude	10.90%	13.63%	11.66%
Breach of procedure/policy/standards	9.50%	4.04%	7.66%
Unfair treatment	9.50%	5.30%	6.00%
Tusla assessments and reports	5.20%	0.00%	3.66%
Lack of consultation with service user	5.00%	3.78%	2.33%
Delayed response/decision	4.50%	4.54%	4.66%
Discrimination	1.40%	0.00%	2.66%
Poor record keeping	0.50%	0.75%	0.66%
Poor condition of building	0.20%	0.00%	0.66%
Negligence	0.50%	3.03%	2.00%
Delivery of information	2.50%	5.30%	7.66%
Uncategorised	N/A	17.98%	15.30%

The data from these surveys was used to inform the development of work plans and systems for a planned further expansion of the team in 2019.

Report on Complaints and Reviews from Tusla-Funded Partners 2018

Under Section 70(2) of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, Tusla-funded and partner agencies are required to provide the Agency with a general report on complaints received during the previous year. As reported in the Tusla 2017 Annual Report, the Agency has not yet developed a fit-for-purpose means of systematically gathering and analysing this data. The Tusla Service Experience and User Team are collaborating with the Tusla Commissioning Unit on the development, in 2019, of an online portal to facilitate the submission of information and data (including complaints data) from Tusla-funded partners.

Positive Feedback

While NIMS allows for the recording of positive feedback, the Agency has not yet developed a process for systematically capturing and recording this type of feedback. However, in 2018, NIMS recorded 46 occurrences of positive feedback, some anonymised examples of which are outlined below:

Young Person: A young person expressed gratitude about being taken into care as he did so well in education and college. He was especially grateful to the Principal Social Worker.

Young Person: During a discussion with a young person in aftercare, the young person expressed how they felt that coming into care was the best thing that ever happened to them. He also described his social worker as a 'great social worker'.

Parent: A mother outlined how the EWS saved her daughter from being expelled, and helped turn her life around.

Garda: A Garda praised a social worker for their response to a Section 12 placement they were both involved with.

Parent: A father completed a feedback form to say that his experience of the service equipped him with the understanding of how to 'deal with things' that came up with his child.

Foster Carer: A foster carer complimented a child in care social worker on the good understanding which developed between them, as well as being treated with respect and concern.

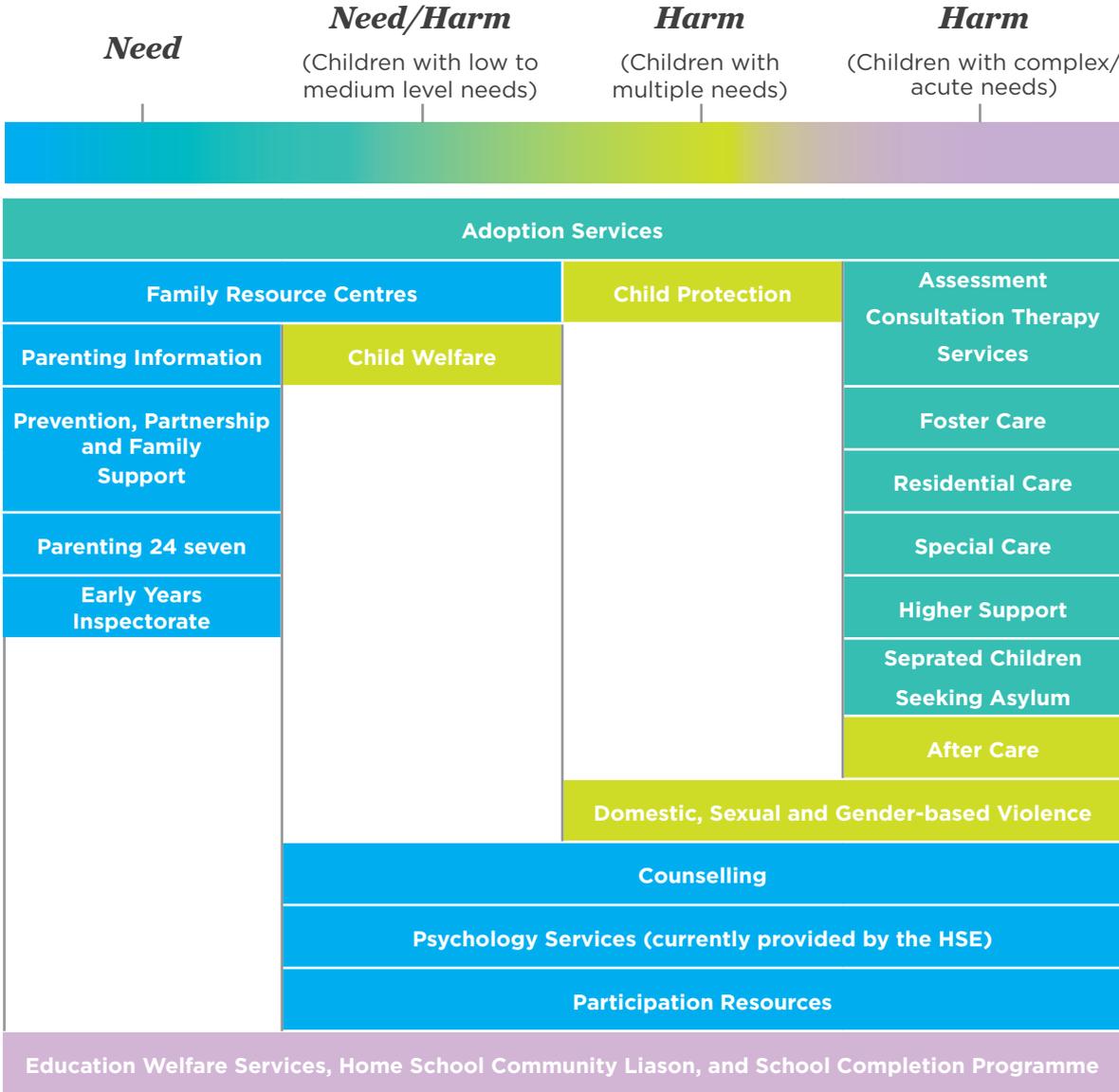
Judge: An aftercare worker was commended by a judge on his excellent report on, and work with, a young person leaving care.

Voluntary Organisation: A staff member of a voluntary organisation expressed gratitude towards a social worker for being so polite and helpful.

2.0 Service Delivery

Tusla provides a wide range of universal and targeted supports and services across the continuum of care, from early intervention and prevention to child protection and child welfare services, through to alternative care (e.g. foster care and residential care). In addition, the Agency has responsibility for a range of educational welfare services, with Educational Welfare Officers working with young people and families who are experiencing problems with school attendance. The EWS is also responsible for managing the Home School Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme under the DES Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. Tusla also commission a range of DSGBV services.

Continuum of help/support required



Tusla's Regulatory Functions

Tusla has responsibility for a number of important regulatory functions, each governed by its own legislative framework. These include:

- **The Early Years Inspectorate** The independent statutory regulator of early years services, with responsibility for registering and inspecting preschools, playgroups, crèches, day-care and similar services.
- **The Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service** Responsible for the regulation of educational provision in places other than recognised schools (e.g. home schooling, independent schools).
- **The Regulation of Non-Statutory Alternative Care and Commissioned Services Unit** Responsible for the regulation of alternative care settings for children, including Children's Residential Services and non-statutory foster care agencies.
- **Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit** Responsible for supporting and encouraging providers of services engaged in relevant activity with children to ensure that their measures for safeguarding children are implemented in compliance with the Children First Act, 2015.

In June 2018, these regulatory functions were brought together under a single nationally integrated governance structure, known as Children's Services Regulation.

2.1 Child Protection and Welfare Service

The purpose of the CPWS is to meet Tusla's statutory responsibilities in accordance with the Child Care Act, 1991 and the Children Act, 2001. These important pieces of legislation require the Agency to identify and promote the welfare of children at risk, or in need of protection, and to provide child protection services, including

applications to remove children into care, and family support services.

As part of its core service delivery in 2018, the CPWS managed 55,136 child protection and welfare referrals, with c. 25,500 cases open to social work at any one time. By the end of December 2018, 1,029 children were listed as 'active' on the CPNS, down 21% on 2017 and representing the lowest number since the CPNS was introduced in 2015.

In addition to managing its complex and, at times, challenging core work, the CPWS also recorded a number of significant additional achievements in 2018, including:

Implementation of the NCCIS

Following its national roll-out to all 17 Tusla areas, the new NCCIS was officially launched on 30 August, 2018. With the implementation of the NCCIS, social workers have, for the first time, a national database where they can share information when appropriate, regarding concerns for children who are at risk of abuse. The NCCIS represents a step-change in efforts to improve the quality, safety, responsiveness and delivery of child protection services by supporting practice around the country, and capturing critical data on children who are the subject of a child protection and welfare referral. The benefits of this new nationally integrated system include:

- The replacement of manual systems and ad hoc ICT systems which the Agency inherited on establishment.
- Improved quality and efficiency through the enhanced sharing of information between professionals.
- Increased accuracy and up-to-date activity recording facilitating better service planning and delivery.

During the roll-out phase, staff across the Agency demonstrated great commitment to engage and learn new skills in implementing the NCCIS for the improvement of child protection measures across the country. As the NCCIS becomes more



Ger Brophy, Chief Social Worker, Laura Quinn, Operations Business Support Manager, and Fergal Collins, Head of Programme Management Office, at the launch of the NCCIS – 30 August 2018

embedded in 2019, it is anticipated that the benefits arising from this new system will facilitate improved case management capacity, as well as the provision of improved information which can be used to review and plan service provision.

New National Toolkit for Social Work Caseload Management

The implementation of the NCCIS was augmented by the launch of a new National Policy and Toolkit for Social Work Caseload Management on 11 September, 2018. This new toolkit is designed to achieve consistency and balance in caseload management across Tusla and to ensure that social workers know there is a system in place to support them in achieving manageable caseloads. Training was delivered to all 17 social work areas on the application and use of the toolkit by the end of December 2018.

Child Protection and Welfare Strategy and Signs of Safety

The implementation of the Child Protection and Welfare Strategy 2017–2022 proceeded as planned in 2018, forming a central component of Tusla’s on-going programme of transformation. The most significant deliverable arising from the implementation of this strategy was the adoption of SOS as Tusla’s new national approach to practice, thereby ensuring that all staff engage with children and families using one consistent

approach. SOS reflects international best practice, underpinned by the principles of ‘Children First’, ensuring that children and families are at the centre of assessment and decision making and that the approach is strengths-based, evidence-based and outcomes-focused.

On-going Implementation of Children First

Following the publication of Tusla’s Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children in October 2017, the Agency has continued to implement and promote the embedding of the principles and requirements of Children First into all areas of its work. This was achieved by strengthening the various systems, structures and processes in place to ensure the risk of harm to children is identified and responded to in a timely manner. The Agency has also employed Children First Information and Advice Officers to assist and support both staff and stakeholders (including members of the public) in the implementation of Children First. A suite of training resources has been developed and the Children First e learning programme has been made universally available with over 170,000 people having availed of it to date. The launch of the Tusla Portal in January 2018 has also streamlined and simplified the process for mandated reporters and members of the general public to report child protection and welfare concerns to Tusla.

Launch of National Out-of-Hours Social Work Service

Tusla’s new National Out-of-Hours Social Work Service was launched on 3 December, 2018. This new service provides a single point of contact for An Garda Síochána and social work professionals who wish to make an out-of-hours child protection and welfare referral to Tusla. All out-of-hours child protection and welfare referrals are now triaged through this new service, which can also arrange an appropriate emergency foster care or residential placement if needed. In exceptional circumstances, the service can arrange the support of a local on-call social worker if required. A rota of on-call Principle Social Workers has also been set up to support the National Out-of-Hours Team.

Appropriate Persons

Following the designation of Appropriate Persons in 2018, in line with the provision of the Children and Vulnerable Persons Act, 2012, there is now a centralised channel through which Tusla can share child protection concerns with the NVB for the purposes of safeguarding children. The appointment of a set of dedicated contact points means there is a more efficient exchange of information for the purposes of protecting children. The appointment of Appropriate Persons has given the Agency the opportunity to enhance its relationship with An Garda Síochána and the NVB. Tusla-designated Appropriate Persons have also assisted the NVB by providing a clearer understanding of the Agency's business and assessment processes, with a view to increasing confidence in Tusla's recommendations of specified information. Appropriate Persons also provide guidance to social work teams, furthering their understanding of the importance of the Children and Vulnerable Persons Act, and the work of the NVB. This increased understanding of the role and function of the Act has increased the number of Persons of Concern identified to the NVB by Tusla in 2018.

2.2 Alternative Care Services

Tusla has a statutory responsibility to provide alternative care services under the provisions of the Child Care Act, 1991, the Children Act, 2001, and the Child Care (Amendment) Act, 2007. Children who require admission to care are accommodated through placement in foster care, placement with relatives or in residential care. The Agency also has responsibilities with regard to adoption processes and provides aftercare services, and services for children who are homeless or who are separated children seeking asylum. The Agency's main priority is to provide safer, more reliable and effective services for children in care, and to develop a range of placement options for children with additional needs.

Tusla is committed to the principle that the family affords the best environment for raising children, with the overriding objective of supporting families within the community. Where possible, the policy

is to place children in a family-based setting. By the end of 2018, 6,029 children were in the care of the Agency, with over 92% of these children placed either with foster carers or relative carers.

Tusla Alternative Care Services recorded a number of significant achievements in 2018, including:

Recruitment of Foster Carers

Significant investment and resources were made available in 2018 with regard to the recruitment of new foster carers for Tusla. This included engagement with numerous community groups, radio and social media campaigns and a review of recruitment activity to ensure it is evidence-based and effective. Foster carers were included in supporting this recruitment work to ensure their expertise and knowledge was supportive in helping people consider fostering. Each region also established a regional fostering forum to ensure greater opportunities for the sharing of learning and knowledge, and to support greater consistency with regard to the provision of fostering services.

Successful HIQA Registration of Tusla's Special Care Units

The legislation governing the registration of Special Care Units under the Health Act, 2007, was signed by the Minister for Health, Simon Harris, TD, in January 2018. This required all Special Care Units (SCU) to be registered by HIQA before the end of 2018 in order to continue providing special care services. The purpose of registration is to ensure the safety and quality of services for the benefit of the health and welfare of the public.

Tusla's Children's Residential Services embarked on an extensive training and implementation programme culminating in an application to HIQA, in April 2018, to register the Agency's three SCUs – Ballydowd SCU, South County Dublin, Coovagh House SCU, Limerick, and Crannog Nua SCU, North County Dublin. Following HIQA assessment and review (including site visits) registration was granted to all three SCUs in October 2018. This represents a significant achievement for the Agency, as these SCUs are the

first in Children's Residential Services within Tusla to achieve registration.

Development of Children's Residential Respite Services

Ash View Lodge Respite Service, Co. Clare, was officially opened in July 2018. This service works with young people who have been identified as benefiting from Tusla's Creative Community Alternatives initiative that aims to provide 'alternatives to care' for children and young people. Ash View Lodge and Extern are the primary partners in this initiative to lead an intervention-based approach to build on the strengths of young people and their families in order to sustain them in family and community life into the future.

Ash View Lodge provides a respite and support service for children and young people who are living at home or in foster care aged between eight and 17 years of age. These young people have been identified as requiring additional supports to ensure they have the best possible chance of remaining in family-style living. The service places a strong emphasis on providing a secure, stable and caring living space through positive parenting, and by promoting education and/or training and work placements. The service also equips children and young people with the skills to better cope with their emotions and to express themselves safely and appropriately, by encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle and provides opportunities to engage in activities, hobbies and interests to improve community integration, peer interaction and self-esteem. Central to the success of this service is young people's collaborative engagement – they do so in a voluntary capacity, encouraging their participation and responsibility.

Saoire Residential Respite Centre, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, was opened in December 2018. This building was previously a Children's Residential Centre, which closed in 2016. It underwent extensive renovation and refurbishment in preparation for reopening as a respite centre for young people from the region. Saoire now provides support for children and young people who are living at home or in foster care, who have

been identified as requiring additional supports to maintain their placement within a family environment. It can work with up to 15 young people at any one time.

This centre has excellent on-site facilities such as a sensory room, games room and living areas, which include provision for separate family work. There are also outdoor recreational areas and equipment, including horticultural raised beds, a greenhouse and a sensory garden. Some of the services provided by the centre include planned respite, family work, key working, individual work, outreach support, holistic and multidisciplinary work. These interventions aim to build on the strengths of young people and their families. Saoire is managed as part of Children's Residential Services Dublin North East but offers a service to the social work departments in the West Region.

Children's Residential Services Wins Two Investing in Children Membership Awards in 2018

The Investing in Children Membership Awards Scheme recognises and celebrates examples of imaginative and inclusive practice, and acclaims recipients for their active inclusion of children and young people and their commitment to continued dialogue with young people that leads to change. Two awards were presented in 2018 – one to Rosebrook Children's Residential Centre in February, and the second, in November, to Ohana House.

The young people living in Rosebrook were involved in the Youth Participation Strategy between 2017 and 2018. This strategy commits Tusla to involving children in decision making on matters that affect their lives, at the individual and collective levels. Following on from their Participation Strategy work, the young people led a project to design a chill-out/beauty therapy room in the centre. Funding was received to decorate the room and bring the young people's own creative design to fruition. Following this initiative, they also won an award from the Youth Participation Programme, which was presented to Rosebrook during the Annual Participation Conference in 2018.

The Ohana House team established a system where the allocated access worker would aim to meet with the young people to hear their views about access visits. As access is a part of care that involves a lot of adults (parents, social workers, social care staff), the child's voice can often be lost in trying to accommodate all of the wishes and needs of the adults. This is an area that the team looked to improve upon. The team stressed the importance of maintaining constant dialogue with the young people in order to demonstrate that they are interested in them and want to help and support them in access. To date, this system has worked well and positive feedback has been received from young people. Areas that were highlighted for attention have also been addressed.

Evidence Informed Practitioner Programme

The Evidence Informed Practitioner Programme was delivered twice in 2018 with over 120 participants. In the autumn of 2018, participation was extended to include not only social work but also staff from the EWS and residential and social care. Ninety literature reviews were submitted addressing a range of topics including female genital mutilation, social media and social work assessments, internet addiction disorder and DSGBV. A number of literature reviews looked specifically at exploring cultural responses to child sexual abuse, working with sex offenders using the SOS approach, working with non-offending mothers and how to support adult victims of retrospective child sexual abuse.

An accompanying Empowering Practitioners and Practice Initiative Toolkit was published on 16 July, 2018. This is an online resource for Tusla staff focusing on critical areas of practice. It includes the best available evidence for areas of work including child development, child abuse, separation and loss, along with practical tools and resources that social workers and other practitioners can apply to their practice. Training on the use of the toolkit, and its integration with SOS, commenced in July 2018.

This toolkit was officially launched at an event in the Mansion House, Dublin, in September

2018, and included input from Tusla senior management and participants on the programme. A learning event also took place on 20 November, 2018, with 120 attendees from Tusla, as well as external academics and staff from community and voluntary organisations and government. The event provided participants with the opportunity to showcase their research and share their learning from the programme. Workshops included presentations on foetal alcohol syndrome disorder, high frequency contact for infants in care, empathy in social work, and supporting the birth children of foster carers.

2.3 Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme

Tusla is committed to providing high-quality services to children and families at the earliest opportunity across all levels of need. Providing help to children and families in the early stage of a difficulty can prevent the situation getting worse. With this in mind, the purpose of the PPFS Programme is to support children, young people, parents and families in accessing preventative support services while enabling and empowering their participation in decisions which affect their lives.

In 2018, 24,211 children received family support services from Tusla, which included the initiation of 1,734 Meitheal processes. Meitheal is a Tusla-led early intervention practice model, aimed at bringing together a multidisciplinary support team around the child and family to work in collaboration to deliver planned supports to meet the child's developmental needs.

Key achievements in 2018 included:

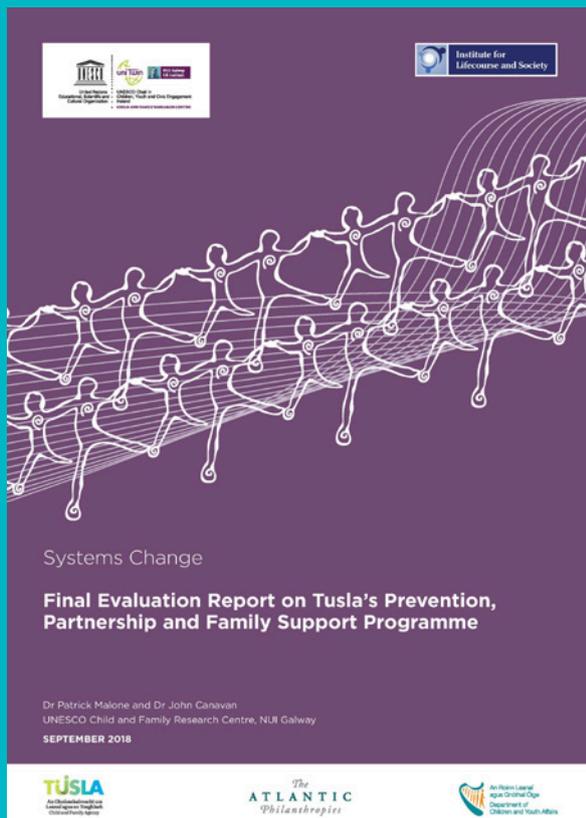
Launch of NUI Galway Study on the PPFS Programme

In September 2018, the UNESCO Child and Family Centre at NUI Galway launched the findings of a four-year study which found significant improvements in Tusla's prevention, early intervention and family support services.



Fred McBride, Tusla CEO, Dr John Canavan, NUI Galway, Dr Aisling Gillen, Tusla Family Support, National Policy Development Manager, and Dr Carmel Devaney, NUI Galway, at the Launch of the NUI Galway Study on the PPFS Programme – September 2018

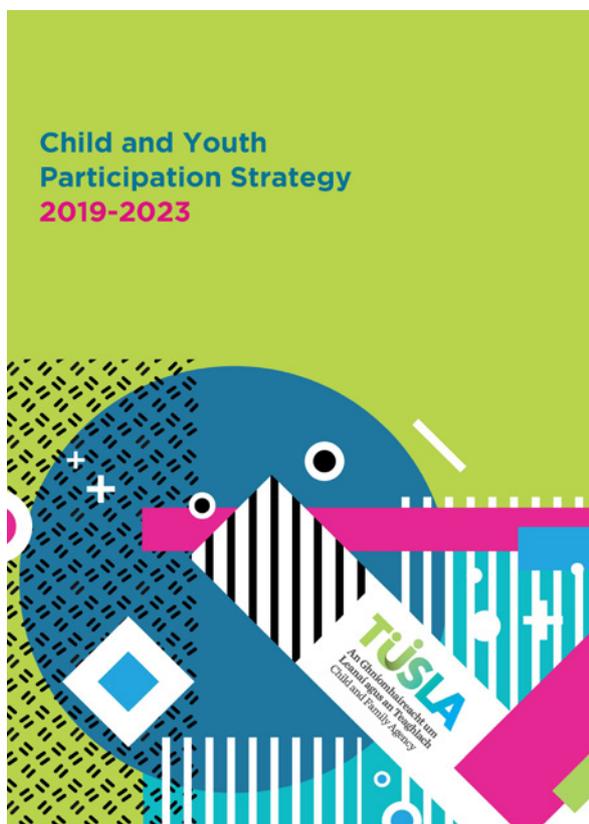
This study concluded that the culture of Tusla is changing and that it is becoming more preventative in focus and inclusive of parents and children, which is demonstrated across the work of the PPFS programme. Overall, the research showed that Tusla is getting better at providing early help for children, young people and their families. Significantly, the research also showed that the Meitheal national practice model is welcomed by families and is making a positive difference to their lives, and is improving outcomes for children and young people over time. The study also demonstrated good work by Tusla, benchmarked against international best practice, in listening to, and including, children in its policies and the capacity of front-line workers, with strong evidence of children and young people’s participation being embedded across Tusla. The research also indicated promising results from Tusla’s work in supporting parents through its innovative Parent Support Champions Programme. These results reflected very positively on the work of Tusla and the PPFS programme. As the Atlantic Philanthropies funding for the programme came to an end in December 2018, Tusla has committed to supporting the continuation and scaling of the PPFS programme as an essential component of service provision across the continuum of care.



NUI Galway Final Evaluation Report on Tusla’s PPFS Programme – September 2018

Completion of Child and Youth Participation Strategy

The new Child and Youth Participation Strategy, 2019–2023, developed by the PPFS programme in 2018, aims to further embed the voice of children and young people across Tusla. This strategy aims to support, nurture and celebrate the overall commitment to participation across the Agency. It is a central part of Tusla’s on-going commitment to the participation of children, young people and parents in the decisions that affect their lives. The development of this strategy included a consultation process involving over 300 Tusla staff, funded agencies and young people, to develop a better understanding of the challenges and requirements involved in further embedding participatory practices within the Agency. The outcome of this consultation informed the development of the strategy, which was formally launched at the National Child and Youth Participation Conference on 4 April, 2018.



Child Youth and Participation Strategy 2019–2023

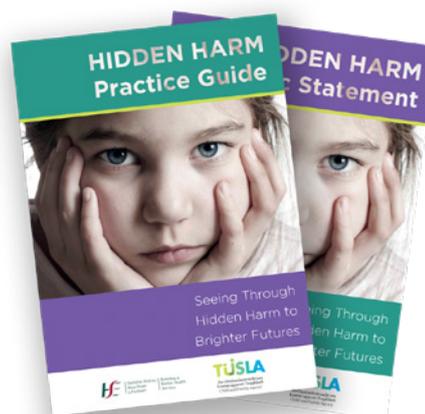
Publication of Hidden Harm Practice Guide and Strategic Statement

The PPFS programme, in collaboration with Tusla’s WLD Department, worked jointly with the HSE to complete the development of new training resources for health and social service staff to tackle the serious problems children face because of their parent’s/caregiver’s misuse of alcohol and other drugs. The adverse experience of children living with, and impacted by, parental substance misuse has been termed ‘Hidden Harm’, because these children are often unknown to services, and they suffer harm due to compromised parenting. The HSE and Tusla have committed to keeping the needs of children affected by parental problem alcohol, and other drug use, visible in the professional community, ensuring they are identified and supported. The development of the Tusla/HSE Seeing Through Hidden Harm to

Brighter Futures Practice Guide marked one of the first major national interagency collaborations between Tusla and the HSE. The accompanying Strategic Statement outlines how both State organisations will work together in addressing the needs of children affected by parental problem alcohol, and other drug use, in Ireland.



The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone, TD, at the publication of the Hidden Harm Practice Guide and Strategic Statement



Hidden Harm Practice Guide and Strategic Statement



Outcomes for Children, National Data and Information Hub

Build Completed on Outcomes for Children, National Data and Information Hub

The PPFs programme worked on a joint initiative with the DCYA to develop the Outcomes for Children, National Data and Information Hub. This hub offers a sustainable opportunity to provide a national standardised technical solution for mapping outcomes and indicators for children and young people. As part of Tusla’s mission to deliver optimal children’s services, the hub marks a positive step in understanding the strengths, needs and gaps existing in Ireland in children’s services at local, regional and national level. It is a nationally centralised platform hosting an agreed set of national outcome indicators sourced from relevant published reports, and will be accessible for use on an open platform and will underpin multi-agency service planning. The indicators have been developed in alignment with the Government’s BOBF National Policy Framework for Children and Young People. The hub was launched in 2018 with 11 pilot CYPSC areas and will be rolled out to remaining CYPSC areas in 2019. The hub can be accessed at:

<https://outcomes4children.tusla.ie/>.

2.4 Children’s Services Regulation

In June 2018, Tusla established a new, nationally integrated governance structure for the Early Years Inspectorate, the Alternative Education Registration and Assessment Service, the Regulation of Non-Statutory Alternative Care and

Commissioned Services Unit and the CSSCU, with the appointment of a new CSR National Service Director. Operating within their own respective statutory frameworks, each of these functions ensures regulatory oversight across a number of disparate areas. The role of CSR is to centrally co-ordinate the delivery of a targeted, consistent, transparent and proportionate approach to regulation and inspection across these areas, serving as an important quality assurance mechanism to the general public.

In 2018, there was a significant increase in regulatory oversight by Tusla across all of these regulatory functions compared to 2017, with a 26% increase in the EYI, a 19% increase in the Non-Statutory Alternative Care and Commissioned Services Unit and a 200% increase in the Alternative Education, Registration and Assessment Service.

The key achievements for each of these regulatory functions in 2018 are as follows:

The EYI Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF) was launched by Dr Fergal Lynch, Secretary-General of the DCYA, at an event in the Law Society of Ireland on 5 September, 2018. Developed following an extensive consultation involving registered providers, parents, sectoral stakeholder organisations, international peers and regulatory organisations, the aim of the QRF is to support the registered providers of early years services in achieving compliance with the early years regulations. Adopting an innovative approach, the QRF clearly sets out the inspectorate’s interpretation of the early years regulations and defines the parameters against which services are inspected. As such, the QRF is designed to be an important resource for providers and parents in promoting the continuous improvement of the quality and safety of services provided to children in early years settings. The launch of the framework was accompanied by the publication of an extensive suite of support documents, which are available to download on the Tusla website at: <https://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/>.



*Dr Fergal Lynch, Secretary-General DCYA, speaking at the launch of the Early Years Inspectorate QRF
– 5 September 2018*

To support the publication of the QRF, the EYI conducted a National Series of QRF Briefings at eight locations across the country throughout November and December 2018. Organised with the assistance of local County Childcare Committees, these briefings were attended by over 1,000 delegates, coming from a range of disciplines across the early years sector, including early years practitioners, management and staff, academics, quality mentors and policy makers.

In January 2018, the EYI introduced an unsolicited information office to process information, concerns and complaints received about early years services. This office managed 413 cases to year end. In addition, the EYI published 4,855 Inspection Outcomes Reports on the Tusla website (these reports were previously published by Pobal) and managed a national recruitment process for nine new Early Years Inspectors from an expanded pool of professional backgrounds. Previously, inspectors were required to be registered public health nurses, with a Master's level qualification. Changes to the Early Years Care and Education

sector in recent years, including the increasing professionalisation of that workforce, led to a broadening of the eligibility criteria to include, for the first time, graduates with a degree in Early Years Care and Education, as well as candidates with suitable qualifications in social care, social work, psychology and education.

Finally, the Regulation of Alternative Education Registration and Assessment Service set up a new National Registration Panel to streamline its registration process, while the Regulation of Non-Statutory Alternative and Commissioned Services Unit began a new monitoring programme with the introduction of self-audits for private foster care agencies. The CSSCU became operational in March 2018 to manage the requirement for relevant services to have a Child Safeguarding Statement in place in line with the requirements of the Children First Act, 2015. The CSSCU also maintains a register of non-compliance. In 2018, the CSSCU assessed 67 services, and published detailed guidance on developing Child Safeguarding Statements for service providers.

2.5 Educational Welfare Service

The EWS has statutory responsibility for ensuring that all children attend school or are otherwise in receipt of a certain minimum standard of education. The service is comprised of the statutory Education Welfare Services and the non-statutory Home School Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme, which is predominantly based in DEIS schools.

The EWS received 6,670 referrals for the academic year 2017/18, and worked with 6,134 individual children during the same period. In addition to managing this caseload, the EWS has undergone a period of expansion aimed at increasing its capacity to deliver on its core remit, with a number of important initiatives in 2018, including:

EWS Conference, May 2018

The EWS held a successful two-day conference for the entire service in Athlone in May 2018. This conference provided a useful opportunity to update staff on latest procedures, share best practice and hold a series of workshops. As EWS staff are distributed across the country, this conference also offered a useful forum to connect and exchange information, to build team spirit and to inform the EWS team about wider Tusla developments. Following the success of this event, it is intended to hold a second EWS conference in May 2019.

School Returns Portal

Working in conjunction with Tusla ICT, the EWS developed and piloted an online portal to accept school returns from the 3,950 schools across the country. This new portal has proven to be very beneficial for both the schools involved and the EWS administration team by streamlining the process of submitting school returns. It has also provided increased accuracy for the EWS in monitoring school attendance and analysing national figures.

Development of EWS Management Structure

The EWS management structure has undergone significant development in 2018, with the appointment of managers to fill all existing vacancies, as well as the recruitment of additional corporate administrative positions. The EWS now has the management capacity to deliver a more integrated national service in each of the five EWS operational areas, with the implementation of more integrated actions planned for 2019. Significant support for this process was provided by the Tusla Operations Directorate, in allocating the required resources, and the Tusla Project Management Office (PMO), in assisting in the development of a series of Area Plans.

Roll-Out of CPD for School Completion Programme

In 2018, the EWS rolled out its first ever integrated CPD for the intake framework for the School Completion Programme. This was the first time that all three strands of the EWS were trained together. Over 1,000 personnel have been trained including Tusla-employed EWS staff, all 416 Home School Liaison Coordinators and all School Completion Programme Coordinators and project staff.

2.6 Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services

Tusla has responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence. This responsibility extends to adult victims and survivors of these forms of violence, in addition to children and families. To achieve this, specialist service-provider organisations, in the community and voluntary sector, are commissioned by the Agency to deliver DSGBV services. In 2018, Tusla provided funding, oversight and support to 59 organisations delivering services to victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence throughout the country. Of these organisations:

- ⦿ 22 provided emergency refuge or safe home accommodation in addition to other community-based supports to women and children who were victims of domestic violence.
- ⦿ 21 provided community-based services to women, children and men who were victims of domestic violence.
- ⦿ 16 provided community-based services to women, men and older children who were victims of sexual violence.

The 22 emergency accommodation provider organisations provided a total of 155 family units of accommodation, of which 145 units were in emergency refuges and ten were emergency safe homes. Nine of these units in Rathmines Women's Refuge were temporarily closed throughout 2018 for necessary refurbishments. DSGBV Services worked on capacity building with domestic violence service providers, initiating a process with Safe Ireland to develop training around equality and human rights outcomes in their work

Funding for DSGBV services was increased by €1.5 million to €23.8 million in 2018, to help meet Ireland's obligations under the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which the government is preparing to ratify in 2019. Extensive external interest in the area of DSGBV service provision resulted in the handling of more than 80 external Parliamentary Questions, representations and media queries.

Commissioning

DSGBV Services continued to have a strong focus on strengthening commissioning processes towards achieving better outcomes for the adults and children who use these services. In 2018, implementation planning progressed for six area-based commissioning projects, for which needs analyses were undertaken in 2017. The focus in these areas was to identify gaps in services, local barriers to access, and stakeholder priorities and solutions around responses. Other commissioning projects included consideration of, and engagement with, groups with additional vulnerabilities, in particular Traveller and Roma and other minority ethnic communities. Two additional commissioning projects were initiated around sexual violence support services – respectively in the Border counties and Midlands. A National Commissioning Event was held in May 2018 with all DSGBV service providers.

Frontline Service Developments in 2018

- ⦿ Additional counselling supports were provided in Monaghan, Louth, Wexford, Galway, Sligo/Leitrim and Dublin to address waiting list pressures in sexual violence/rape crisis services.
- ⦿ Sexual violence outreach provision in Co. Leitrim and North Tipperary was put on a more sustainable footing.
- ⦿ There was additional domestic violence outreach provision in ten areas to improve access to specialist support and enhance community response to domestic violence, including dedicated ethnic minorities/new communities outreach in the Midlands.

- Two National Helpline services for domestic violence and sexual violence were commissioned by Tusla and provided by Women's Aid and Dublin Rape Crisis Centre respectively.
- Increased provision in 2018 resulted in access to a 24-hour, free-phone helpline service for victims of sexual violence and domestic violence in line with requirements under the Istanbul Convention.

Services for Children in 2018

- An Evaluation Report on the TLC Kidz programme for children/protective parent experiencing domestic violence, undertaken by Barnardos in the Mid-West, on behalf of Tusla, was completed.
- A National Coordinator role for childhood domestic violence programmes was established with Barnardos to support development of evidence-informed responses to children who experience domestic violence.
- A specialist sexual violence counsellor was provided for young people in Donegal.
- A Youth Therapeutic Research project was established and is due for completion in 2019.
- Increased supports were provided for all domestic violence refuges to have a dedicated response for children. This included additional dedicated childcare workers in three refuges, an extension of access to recognised healing programmes (e.g. TLC Kidz/Helping Hands) with ten new roll-outs of these programmes, and three additional pathways to play therapy.

Traveller and Roma Services, 2018

- DSGBV Services entered into a Service Level Agreement with Pavee Point, the Traveller and Roma support organisation, for a pilot initiative to base a Traveller Domestic Violence Worker with Traveller Primary Health Care teams in four areas (Carlow, Wicklow, Fingal, Cork).
- A Traveller Advisory Group was set up to support on-going learning and capacity building and to inform direction around domestic and sexual violence supports for Traveller and Roma communities.
- Funding was provided to Enniscorthy Roma Community to support a personal development programme for Roma women, fostering awareness of domestic violence and sexual violence. This collaborative process has the benefit of building local cross-community relations (e.g. with local refuges, An Garda Síochána and Tusla PPFS).

Manuela Project

- Tusla was the lead partner for the Manuela Project (funded through the European Commission), undertaken in partnership with the sexual violence/rape crisis services sector. This project involves the delivery of a sexual violence prevention programme on a pilot basis, focusing on issues of sexual consent, and is targeted at young people aged 14–17 in educational settings. This programme was delivered in approximately 24 schools with 700 young people participating, and 50 teachers also attending training workshops.

3.0 Supporting Service Delivery

Tusla corporate and internal support services provide a vital, and often unseen, behind-the-scenes role in enabling, facilitating and assisting the Agency in the delivery of its core services. These services consist of the following:

- ◉ The Programme Management Office is a centralised, coordinating PMO function within Tusla that provides a focal point for the field of programme and project management as well as monitoring, supporting and governing Tusla's Transformation Programme.
- ◉ Corporate Services is responsible for delivering a range of functions across the Agency to support the delivery of Tusla services. These include WLD, Health and Safety, Parliamentary Affairs, Data Protection and Freedom of Information.
- ◉ The Strategy and Business Planning Unit provides strategic planning support, systems and processes for the development and management of the three-yearly corporate and business planning cycles.
- ◉ The Commissioning Unit ensures that the total resources available to children and families are applied to improving quality and outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable, proportionate and sustainable way.
- ◉ The ICT Directorate is responsible for providing ICT applications, data management, infrastructure and service to support staff and stakeholders in delivering child and family services.
- ◉ The Legal Services Unit is Tusla's in-house legal service, providing specialist legal advice and support in all areas of child care law and corporate advices. The Legal Service also provides a Legal Training Programme to staff nationally in various areas of law that are relevant to their workload.
- ◉ Tusla Estates manages the delivery of Tusla's Annual Capital Programme, as well as strategic planning and management pertaining to Tusla's on-going accommodation requirements.
- ◉ The Communications Team oversees and ensures best practice in all internal and external communications activities for the Agency, including managing the Agency's press office, and all proactive and reactive media engagement.
- ◉ The Policy and Research Office provides a specialist advisory function to the Tusla SMT to inform long-term strategic planning and the development of key policy actions to achieve the Agency's strategic objectives. The office also manages and co-ordinates all research activity across Tusla.

3.1 Project Management Office

The PMO's stand-out achievement in 2018 was the completion of the national roll-out of the NCCIS, which was completed on 9 July, 2018. The programme was shortlisted for the 2018 PMI National Public Project of the Year Award. The new system, which was piloted and tested before being rolled out nationally, will improve the quality, safety, responsiveness and delivery of child protection services by supporting practice around the country, and capturing critical data on children who are the subject of a child protection or welfare referral to provide a timely, robust and effective service. The benefits of the new national integrated system include:

- ◉ Replacement of current manual systems and various ICT systems which the Agency inherited on establishment.
- ◉ Increase in quality and efficiency through improved sharing of information between relevant professionals.
- ◉ Future availability of appropriate management information to enable informed decisions at both strategic and operational levels.
- ◉ Accurate and up-to-date activity recording, thereby facilitating service planning and monitoring.

- ⦿ Enabling information to be grouped, sorted, manipulated, analysed and listed.
- ⦿ Simplification of caseload review mechanisms.
- ⦿ Enabling of controlled access to information and services being provided to children referred to Tusla.

Working in conjunction with various Tusla services, the PMO also delivered a number of other important strategic projects for the Agency in 2018, including:

- ⦿ Children First Act, 2015, implementation was completed on time and an online portal was launched on 11 December 2018.
- ⦿ The National Commissioning Unit was established and new staff recruited. Progress was made on senior PPFS managers assuming responsibility for monitoring and compliance in the FRC sector. A Commissioning ICT portal has also been developed for full roll-out in early 2019.
- ⦿ The Cork and Kerry Children in Care Database was migrated successfully into NCCIS.
- ⦿ HR Strategy – A Post-Strategic HR Programme evaluation exercise was completed and a summary document was drafted to conclude the 2015–2018 strategy.
- ⦿ National Emergency Out-of-Hours Service – The merging of Cork Out-of-Hours Service with Dublin was completed on 5 December, 2018, with a single national telephone number now in use. Principal Social Worker posts were created to support the National Emergency Out-of-Hours Service.
- ⦿ The PPFS Programme was successfully embedded in 2018 with Meitheal provision across all Tusla areas.
- ⦿ Social Work National Caseload Management – A National Policy and Toolkit for Social Work Caseload Management was launched on 11 September, 2018.

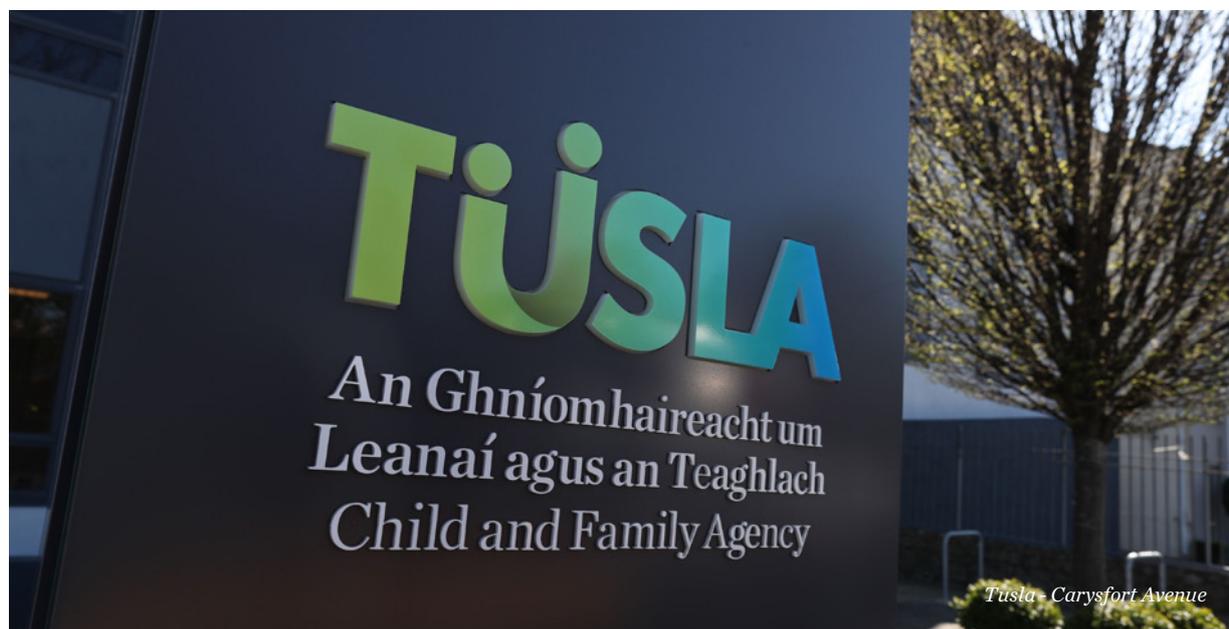
3.2 Corporate Services

Tusla Corporate Services serves a vital role in delivering a number of critical support functions, which are essential to the delivery of Tusla services. In 2018 Corporate Services delivered a range of initiatives across these functions, as follows:

Workforce Learning and Development

WLD is responsible for all learning and development activities within Tusla, enabling staff participation in a broad range of supports including formal training courses, conferences, practice development forums, e-learning programmes and evidence-informed learning activities. A full programme of learning and development activities is provided annually, which is informed by corporate priorities and learning and development needs identified through a training-needs analysis. As part of its learning and development activities in 2018, WLD rolled out the following:

- ⦿ 791 classroom training events, attended by 11,116 staff.
- ⦿ 21 two-day SOS introductory workshops and 11 five-day SOS practice leader-training courses.
- ⦿ Training to support children and young people's participation delivered nationally to Tusla and partner agency staff, with 867 staff attending the initial training course and 637 attending the subsequent 'call back' day. This was augmented by Tusla's third Child and Youth Participation Conference, which was held in Athlone on 26 April, 2018. Work also commenced on a joint HSE/Tusla training programme in Hidden Harm.
- ⦿ Six Legal Service briefings, attended by 221 staff nationwide.



WLD also carried out an extensive Tusla-wide training-needs analysis, with data submitted in relation to over 3,000 staff, as well as contributing to the Agency's three-year Strategic Workforce Plan. In addition, WLD facilitated consultation with Tusla stakeholders on existing and required student practice placement systems and processes, and established a working group to progress a co-ordinated system for implementing consistent student practice placements in social work and social care. Finally, a number of new methodologies were implemented, as part of the Child Protection and Welfare Strategy, to support on-the-job learning and the application of learning to practice

Health and Safety

The National Health and Safety Department provides advice and support on health and safety requirements across the Agency in accordance with the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, and associated regulations. Tusla's National Health and Safety Policy programme was established in 2018, setting out a road-map for the development of specific health and safety policies required within the Agency. Throughout the year the department undertook extensive work in developing a new National Health and Safety Management System, to ensure a streamlined and structured approach is applied – across the organisation – to all aspects

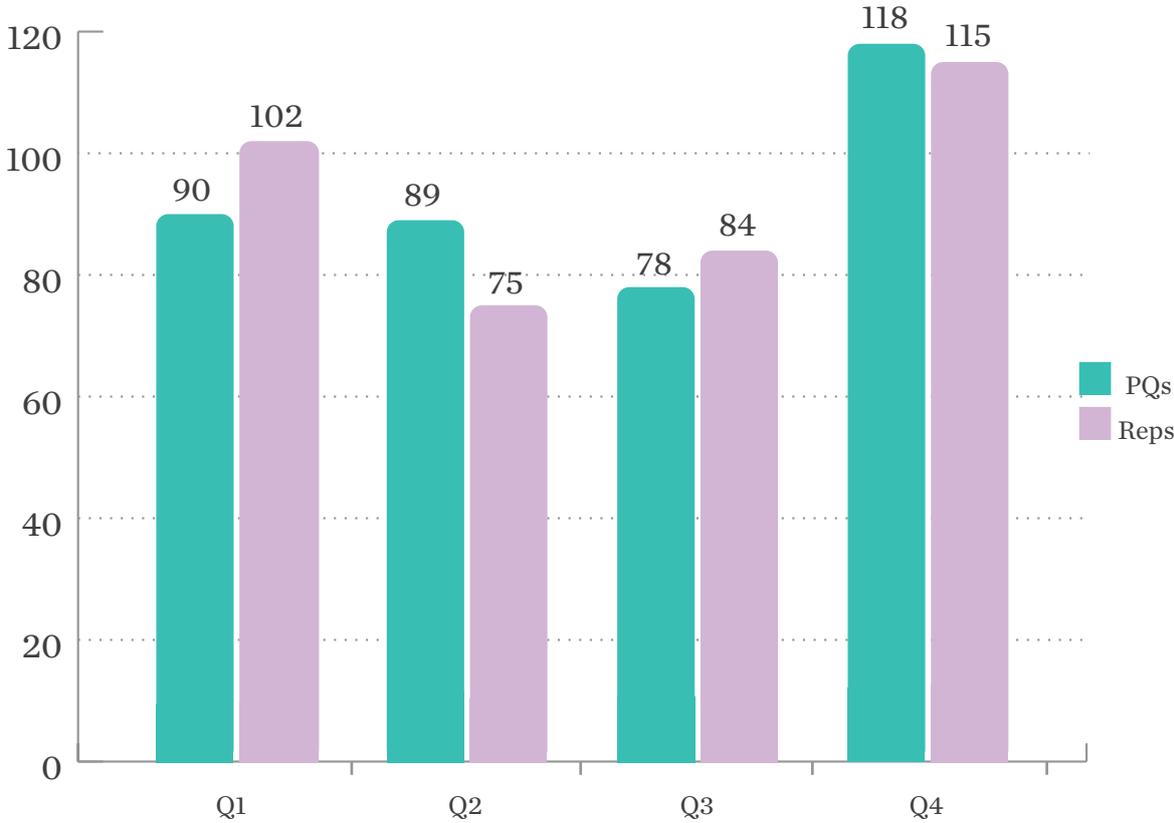
of health and safety management. The department also focused on ensuring that the statutory requirements for site-specific Safety Statements and Risk Assessments were in place across all Tusla workplaces nationally. Through continuing engagement with management and staff nationally, the Health and Safety Department has worked to increase awareness of the various health and safety requirements across all services and functions as well as providing advice and support in eliminating or reducing occupational risk where identified.

Parliamentary Affairs

The primary role of Tusla's Parliamentary Affairs Division (Tusla PAD) is to manage the Agency's interactions with DCYA and the Oireachtas, by organising, developing and monitoring the efficient conduct of Tusla's Parliamentary Affairs. This includes coordinating responses to Parliamentary Questions, representations, oral day questions, topical issue debates, joint committee and leader's questions, as well as maintaining records and preparing performance reports. The sub-committee on Dáil reform has made a number of changes to Dáil standing orders and advised on standards for the provision of information by State bodies operating under the aegis of government departments. Standards have been agreed for State bodies under the aegis of a Minister and Tusla must report annually on Parliamentary Affairs and compliance with these standards.

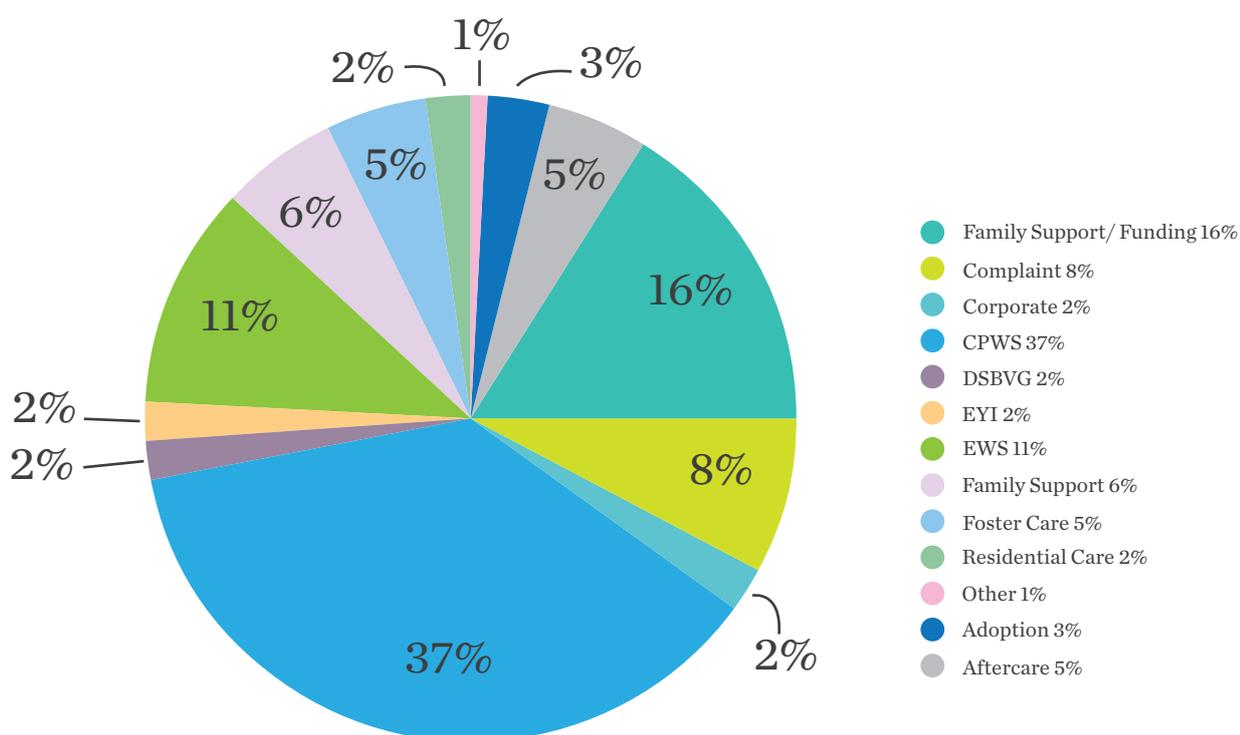
Tusla has established a dedicated email address with respect to Parliamentary Affairs: tuslapad@tusla.ie. As the work of Tusla PAD is deadline driven, all Parliamentary Questions and representations are acknowledged on receipt, with every effort made to issue responses within the required timeframes. In 2018, Tusla PAD issued 751 responses, with a full breakdown listed below:

PQs/ Representations in 2018



Tusla PAD placed an increased focus on representations in 2018, with a full breakdown of representations received across the Agency in 2018 as follows:

2018 Representations Across Services



Finally, a review of Tusla PAD is also in progress to consider the governance, structures, resources, systems and processes, with the objective of improving the Agency’s capacity to respond to the requirements of the Oireachtas in a timely and transparent manner.

Data Protection

Through the course of its work Tusla handles high volumes of sensitive data and personal information. On 25 May, 2018, the GDPR, which represents the biggest change to data regulation in recent history, came into effect. The aim of the GDPR is to harmonise data privacy laws across the EU and to protect and empower all EU citizens' data privacy, creating a strict legislative framework for the protection and management of this data, to which Tusla is obliged to adhere. To ensure and promote compliance with the GDPR, Tusla set up a new Data Protection Unit in 2018 tasked with the design and roll-out of data protection procedures, as well as monitoring adherence with such procedures. Key responsibilities of this new unit include:

- Overseeing data subject requests, including those relating to the GDPR right of access, right to rectification, right to erasure, right to restrict processing and right to object.
- Investigating reported data breaches across the Agency, and notifying the Data Protection Commission, where necessary.
- Responding to queries from internal stakeholders in relation to GDPR-related issues, as well as promoting Agency-wide awareness of the requirements for GDPR compliance.
- Developing toolkits and guidance materials for carrying out Data Protection Impact Assessments and implementing Data Sharing Agreements with third parties.
- Acting as the Agency's point of contact for the Data Protection Commission.
- Developing and rolling out GDPR-specific training across the organisation.

Following a procurement process in early 2018, a contract was awarded for a third party to provide strategic and limited operational support services to Tusla as it seeks to fully align with GDPR. This has facilitated the development and implementation of a GDPR+ Programme of Work to enable on-going privacy compliance and risk management. Additional achievements in 2018 include:

- Appointment of an interim Data Protection Officer.
- Completion of a Current State Assessment of Tusla's data protection practices and GDPR compliance.
- Identification of high-risk gaps to be addressed by the unit as part of the GDPR+ Programme of Work.
- Development of a future State resource plan and operating model for the unit and requests for resources.
- On-going engagement with the Data Protection Commissioner and demonstration of commitment to embed privacy principles throughout the Agency.
- Development of a GDPR e-learning programme.
- Establishment of a dedicated data protection helpdesk to support queries from Tusla staff relating to GDPR.
- Roll-out of additional data protection training and awareness initiatives, including outreach and masterclasses.
- The establishment of a central data breach assessment, notification and investigation process, with a number of further enhancements planned for 2019.
- Design of a privacy 'Service Support and Compliance' model to define the necessary resources to meet the compliance requirement of GDPR.

<p>Interim DPO appointed to lead the Data Protection Unit</p>	<p>Data Protection Training rolled out across the organisation, including a GDPR e-learn and Agency-wide email briefings</p>	<p>Data Protection Commission ongoing engagement to embed privacy principles across Tusla</p>
<p>Service Support and Compliance future state operating model developed for the Data Protection Unit</p>	<p>Current State Assessment carried out across the organisation to measure Tusla's GDPR maturity</p>	<p>Breach Reporting Process developed and matured to support effective notification within statutory timelines</p>
<p>GDPR+ Programme launched to address high risk gaps identified in the Current State Assessment</p>	<p>Dedicated Helpdesk established to address data protection queries</p>	

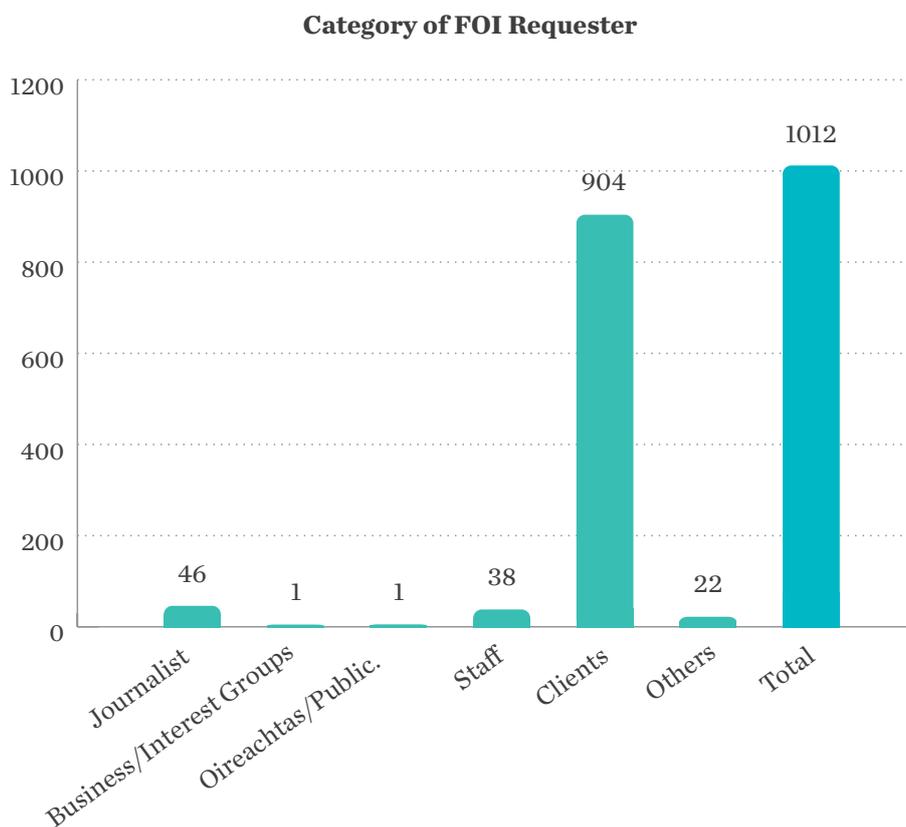
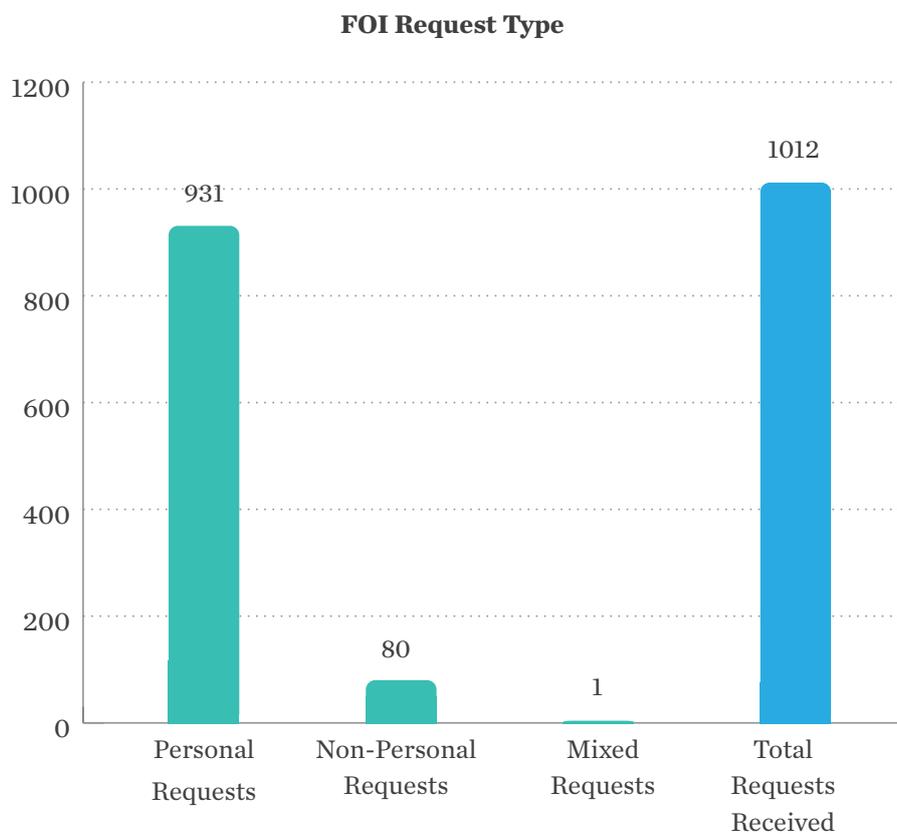
Freedom of Information

Tusla's Freedom of Information (FOI) Unit manages the Agency's responsibilities in line with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, 2014, which requires that FOI bodies prepare and publish as much information as possible in an open and accessible manner. The objective of this legislation is to enhance accountability and transparency within public bodies and government and enable members of the public to obtain access to information to the greatest extent possible. The FOI Act places a statutory obligation on the Agency to respond to FOI requests on the following basis:

- ⦿ **Personal access requests**
On the basis of actual records held, regardless of when records were created.
- ⦿ **Requests for access to non-personal records** On the basis of records which are held and are considered to post-date the implementation of the original FOI (i.e. after 21 April, 1998).

In light of the nature of its work, Tusla handles very complex FOI requests relating to extremely sensitive issues and records often contain entries relating to multiple third parties. This requires record retrieval and processing by highly skilled personnel. The table below provides an overview of the numbers of requests received by category in 2018. However, it must be noted that it does not address the full complexity of requests received or the large number of records which can be associated with each request.

Number of FOI requests received in 2018



At the time of the establishment of the Agency, processing support and guidance was available through a Memorandum of Understanding with the HSE. This historic arrangement is no longer available to a number of areas within Tusla and it is anticipated that the development and approval of an FOI Operational Model will enable the Agency to move to FOI governance and processing self-sufficiency in 2020.

3.3 Commissioning Unit

The Commissioning Unit continued work in 2018 on the implementation of the Tusla Commissioning Strategy. The aim of this strategy is to allow Tusla to identify gaps or overlaps in service provision by the Agency's partners across the country, and to ensure a clear commissioning framework for working with these partners to ensure the best quality services for children, young people and families. This framework was developed based on needs analysis, consultation and review, while also taking account of all the resources of the Agency, the various statutory duties assigned under legislation, as well as the resources provided by partner agencies and statutory organisations to support the continuum of care at local and national level.

As part of this work the Commissioning Unit has developed commissioning plans for all national areas. A Commissioning Conference – 'Working in Partnership towards Better Outcomes for Children' – was also held in October 2018. The aims of this conference were to share knowledge of international best practice in commissioning, stimulate dialogue and reflection towards a better understanding of commissioning, and to highlight the Agency's commitment to implementing the strategic objectives of commissioning.

The Commissioning Unit also established a series of focus groups to incorporate learning and feedback from Tusla staff on their experience of using Section 56 and 59 contract templates for

Service Level Agreements. Four workshops were held, which resulted in a number of amendments to these templates, which have been well received by staff. This was augmented by the launch of a new Commissioning Portal at the end of 2018, to facilitate the online submission of Service Level Agreements for 2019.

Finally, funding was approved for the expansion of the FRC programme in 2018, facilitating 11 new FRCs nationally, and a new procurement officer was recruited to support the development of a national standardised approach to commissioning. The Commissioning Unit also worked closely with PPFs and the DCYA to facilitate the transition of the Area Based Childhood Programme to Tusla.

3.4 ICT Directorate

In 2018, the key focus of the ICT Directorate was implementing the Tusla ICT Strategy 2017–2019 which sets out a vision to 'provide ICT services which are secure, integrated, innovative and consistent in a manner that puts children first and serves the needs of all Tusla stakeholders in delivering better outcomes for children and families'. A key aim of the strategy was to establish a full ICT function within Tusla and set out a road-map under six core themes that are focused on maximising the use of technology and innovation in supporting the work of the Agency. Prior to 2018, ICT services were primarily provided by the HSE to Tusla. In 2018, Tusla's ICT team increased from six to 28 staff across six units, with each unit responsible for the implementation of one of the core themes of the ICT strategy. This new internal dedicated ICT capacity is providing the Agency with the singularity of purpose required to ensure that ICT systems and services are closely targeted at, and aligned with, Tusla's strategic and business needs and to the needs of all staff. This increase in internal ICT capacity resulted in the delivery of a number of key projects in 2018, including:

- ◎ **The Tusla Portal** The Agency's 'Digital Front Door' was launched in 2018, and allows stakeholders to securely and instantly make online submissions to Tusla, such as reporters submitting child protection and welfare reports and schools submitting absence returns. The portal received over 20,000 online submissions in 2018.
- ◎ **The mobility enablement of social work staff** saw approximately 1,200 staff provided with a smart phone, laptop and MiFi connectivity devices as part of an 18-month programme delivered under the ICT strategy.
- ◎ Working in conjunction with Operations, the Chief Social Worker's Office and the Tusla PMO, the ICT Directorate supported the implementation of the new **NCCIS**.
- ◎ **The Tusla ICT service desk** was launched in June 2018, and provides application, device ordering and other help desk services to all users. In 2018, the service desk handled and resolved approximately 700 calls from users per week.

3.5 Legal Services Unit

The Tusla Legal Services Unit works closely with the Agency's 11 Member Firms nationwide, Agency staff and the DCYA in order to ensure a consistent and legally compliant approach to cases and the implementation of laws, policies and practices in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Comprised of 13 staff, the unit deals with the following legal areas:

- ◎ **Child Care Cases/District and Circuit Court Care Applications** Advice on taking emergency care orders, interim care orders, full care orders and supervision orders, as well as fostering, adoption and guardianship issues.
- ◎ **Non-Child Care Cases** Dealing with all new non-child care proceedings issued against Tusla such as Judicial Review proceedings, plenary actions including employment law, summary proceedings, contract disputes matters, constitutional law challenges and adoptions proceedings.

- ◎ **Corporate Legal Advice** The Unit also provides an informal legal help service to all Tusla staff. This service is accessed via a dedicated email address, with responses issued within 48 hours.

The key achievements of the Legal Services Unit in 2018 were:

- ◎ Delivery of **legal training nationwide** to approximately 1,000 staff, including discrete workshops on specific areas of law relative to the Agency
- ◎ **Recruitment of a Knowledge Management Officer** who established a knowledge management system to assist the Legal Unit in providing faster times for legal advice, as well as allowing for more detailed and comprehensive advices where required.
- ◎ Successfully undertaking the **first prosecution in the area of Early Years Inspection**.
- ◎ **Securing savings** in relation to Tusla's own contracted legal firms with a saving in 2018 of €1.2 million in year one of the new contract which ran from 1 May, 2017 to 30 April, 2018.
- ◎ The unit has also made considerable progress in seeking to obtain **citizenship rights for children in care**.

3.6 Tusla Estates

Tusla Estates relies heavily on Health Business Services Estates for the day-to-day delivery of its services, acting primarily in a strategic management and commissioning function. In this capacity, the key purposes of Tusla Estates are as follows:

- ◎ Strategic planning and management pertaining to Tusla's on-going accommodation requirements.
- ◎ Management and delivery of Tusla's Annual Capital Programme.

- Management of property acquisitions and disposals in accordance with Tusla's Property Plan.
- Management of risk matters relating to infrastructure, principally fire safety, water quality, electrical safety and asbestos.

Key achievements of Tusla Estates in 2018 include the following:

- Completion of a major capital project at Ballydowd SCU** which involved a major upgrade of mechanical and electrical services to three residential units, a school and a gymnasium, as well as ancillary works. This facility provides accommodation for ten residents, and the total project cost was €4.3 million.
- Completion of a major capital project at Portrane** which involved a comprehensive refurbishment of three existing residential units, a school and a gymnasium, and the construction of an additional new residential unit within the existing grounds. The facility provides accommodation for 16 residents, and the total project cost was €16 million.
- On-going progress with two proposed major capital projects in Limerick and Portlaoise**, with estimated costs of €6.3 million and €7.4 million respectively. Design work was substantially completed and all statutory approvals were received. It is intended that both projects will progress to tender in 2019.
- Delivery of an enlarged Minor Capital Programme, costing €4.5 million** encompassing a vast range of projects across the country, primarily addressing infrastructural risk issues in existing Tusla facilities.
- Delivery of a major equipping programme, costing €2 million**, aimed at addressing the equipment needs of new facilities, typically acquired through leasing, as well as providing replacement equipment in newly refurbished facilities.
- Completion of a major vehicle replacement programme** which commenced in 2016, resulting in Tusla now enjoying a vehicle fleet which is modern, energy-efficient and cost-effective.
- Development of a formal Estates Strategy** which sets out detailed Capital and Property Plans for the Agency, as well as a proposed delivery model.
- On-going acquisition of new leasehold accommodation** in various parts of the country which will facilitate the transition to better quality, fit-for-purpose accommodation for the provision of Tusla's services.

3.7 Communications

Throughout 2018, the Communications Team continued to oversee and ensure best practice in all communications activities for the Agency. This included:

- Providing strategic support to the CEO and SMT.
- Managing the Agency's press office, which responds to over 500 media queries a year.
- Management of all proactive and reactive media engagement.
- Working with directorates and project teams to advise on and manage communications and public awareness campaigns and activities.
- Ensuring a consistent approach to internal and external communications throughout the Agency.

During 2018, the Communications Team expanded resources, which allowed for a focus on positive, proactive communications.

Other key achievements during 2018 include:

- The development of a regional communications procedure.
- The management of the first Child and Family Support Week.
- The launch of Tusla's fifth birthday celebration and public awareness campaign.
- The development and management of various stakeholder briefings.
- Supporting the SMT in preparation for Joint Oireachtas Committee appearances.
- Preparing communications responses for HIQA inspection reports and issues.
- Working with Residential Care Services on the launch of new residential centres.
- Supporting PPFS events and conferences.
- Supporting the international SOS Gathering.
- Supporting the launch of NCCIS.
- Supporting the 2017 Annual Report launch and publication.
- Hosting the World Social Work Conference.
- Supporting the launch of Corporate Plan 2018–2020.
- Leading the on-going rebrand of the EWS.

3.8 Policy and Research Office

The Policy and Research Office plays a specialised central advisory role in informing the Agency's long-term strategic planning. This includes:

- Translating legislative requirements and government policy into organisational strategy and policy.
- Providing specialist professional advice on key policy and practice areas affecting the delivery of services to children and families.
- Research and identification of best practice, both nationally and internationally, to ensure evidence-informed policy and practice.
- Supporting effective decision making within Tusla in the use of resources to achieve best outcomes for children.
- Supporting the development of a learning organisation through inclusive policy development and review.
- Enabling the implementation of policy into practice and ensuring fidelity to national practice and policy development across the Agency.

In 2018, the Policy and Research Office supported the Alternative Care Policy Manager to work in partnership with EPIC (Empowering People in Care) in establishing 15 Children and Young People's Fora across the country. These fora provide children in care, and in foster care, with an opportunity to share their experiences and to provide feedback on areas which require development in alternative care services. This was done through the production of information leaflets (designed by young people), the production of DVDs to support staff training and foster care training, the development of a Children-in-Care Directory and a poster providing positive messages to social workers from children. All of this material was approved for national use by Tusla's National Policy Oversight Committee in December 2018.

Work also commenced in 2018 on the development of a national suite of policies for special care and residential care, as well as the launch of a new set of metrics for aftercare to reflect the new requirements of the Child Care (Amendment) Act, 2015.

Research Activities 2018

The Policy and Research Office commenced work on the implementation of Tusla's Research and Information Mentors Strategy. The aim of this strategy is to promote a research culture within the Agency, while at the same time enabling research into practice. As part of this strategy, 26 Research and Information Mentors were trained in 2018 and a dedicated governance group was established to track progress and develop a work plan for 2019. The Policy and Research Office has also focused on developing an Electronic Research Centre (www.tusla.ie/research) to provide staff with access to a wide range of information and research-related resources and to act as a central repository of all aspects of Tusla's research activities.

In 2018, the Policy and Research Office also engaged with and facilitated six research studies, two of which are co-funded by the Irish Research Council:

- **SEALS – The Social and Economic Analysis of Legal Services** Dr Carmel Halton, UCC, is the principal investigator. This study examines the interface of professional practice with the court system, from the perspective of social work and educational welfare staff. This study has reported and the report has been widely disseminated.
- **Feasibility Study on Longitudinal Study of Young People in Care/Leaving Care** Dr Carmel Devaney, NUIG, is the principal investigator. The study was commissioned in support of Action 65 of the Ryan Report. This study has reported and the report has been widely disseminated.
- **Review of the Availability and Comparability of Statistics on Child Protection and Welfare including Children in Care Collated by Tusla with Statistics Published in Other Jurisdictions** Dr John Canavan, NUIG, is the principal investigator. The study objectives are:

 - To establish internationally, based on published statistics, what data is collected on child protection and welfare services including children in care.
 - To identify differences in definitions, legislation and methodologies in data collection practices and systems in other jurisdictions.
 - Taking one full year of data, to be identified by the researchers, to establish valid comparability, if any, of the data identified with what Tusla collects.
 - To make recommendations for Tusla data-collection systems, policy and practice.

The study is complete and will be tabled for discussion by the Tusla SMT in 2019.
- **Exploring Ethnic Data Collection for the Child and Family Agency** John Canavan, NUIG, is the principal investigator. Objectives include:

 - To identify the legislative and policy context within which Tusla can develop an ethnic data-collection system.
 - To establish best-practice guidelines for Tusla in ethnic data-collection methods and systems.
 - To ensure that Tusla's information systems can apply best practice to inform service improvement.

The study is complete and will be tabled for discussion by the Tusla SMT in 2019.



Tusla - Carysfort Avenue

- ◎ **Research on Tusla’s Significant Event Notification (SEN) Database** The National Research Office worked collaboratively with the National SEN Team to anonymise the 2016 SEN Database for research purposes. The database has been reviewed by NUIG, to inform a set of policy questions for Tusla. A draft report has been produced, with a stakeholder consultation planned early in 2019.
- ◎ **An Investigation into Tusla’s Subsequent Actions and Decision-making Processes in Response to An Garda Síochána’s Application of Section 12 of the Child Care Act, 1991 (between 1 July 2016 and 30 July 2017)** This was commissioned on the request of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, following the publication of Dr Geoffrey Shannon’s Audit of the Exercise by An Garda Síochána of the Provisions of Section 12 of the Child Care Act, 1991, in January 2017. The project is led by a steering committee of senior

Tusla staff and representatives from An Garda Síochána and DCYA. Each of the 17 social work areas made available their Section 12 files for the period covered by the research. Dr Carmel Devaney, NUIG, undertook the second phase of research, analysing the anonymised data, conducting primary interviews with social workers, social work team leaders, and Out-of-Hours Service social workers, and undertook a literature review. The second draft of the research has been produced and is under review.

4.0 Tusla Board, Executive and Corporate Governance

4.1 Tusla Board

The Board is the governing body of the Agency and is collectively responsible for establishing the Agency's overall strategic direction within the limits of its statutory authority. The Board operates within a framework of prudent and effective control as set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016. Tusla is accountable to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs via the Board. The Minister provides the Agency with policy guidance, direction and prioritisation parameters for the preparation of its corporate and annual business plans. The Board is responsible for ensuring good governance. It performs this task by setting corporate objectives and monitoring the implementation of corporate performance. The responsibilities and duties of the Board are set out in the Agency's Code of Governance and Standards of Integrity and Code of Conduct.

The Board is also responsible for ensuring the integrity of the Agency's accounting and financial reporting system and ensuring that effective systems of internal control are instituted and implemented within the Agency, including financial, risk management, operational and compliance controls. The system of internal control is reviewed by the Board. Risk registers are in place at key levels in the Agency and identify the risks facing the Agency. Risks on these registers are evaluated and rated according to their significance. Where risks identified have significant potential to impact on the overall objectives of Tusla, they are recorded on the Agency's Corporate Risk Register (CRR). The CRR is a mechanism to provide assurance and evidence to the Board that risk is being identified, assessed and managed, and that a range of control measures and action plans are in place to mitigate the risks identified. The CRR is subject to monitoring and updating on a quarterly basis.

The Board has a formal schedule of matters specifically reserved for its decision and includes the approval of:

- ⦿ Annual Budgets and Corporate Plans.
- ⦿ Annual Reports and Financial Statements.
- ⦿ Contracts and capital projects of a specific value.
- ⦿ All acquisitions and disposals of assets.

Standing items considered by the Board include:

- ⦿ Declarations of Interest.
- ⦿ Reports from Board sub-committees.
- ⦿ Financial Reports/management accounts.
- ⦿ Performance Reports.
- ⦿ Reviews of the Risk Management Framework.
- ⦿ New and Revised Policies.
- ⦿ Reserved matters.
- ⦿ CEO's report on operational matters.
- ⦿ Project updates.

The CEO is accountable to the Board for the proper management of the Agency. The Board delegates the day-to-day management, control and direction of the Agency to the CEO except for the specific functions it reserves to itself.

Board Membership

The Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, makes provision for the appointment of a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and seven Ordinary Board members. Board members are appointed by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, for a period of three to five years. The list of members of the Tusla Board in 2018 is as follows:

Board Member	Role	Appointment Period
Norah Gibbons	Chair	1 Jan 2014 – 31 Dec 2018
Gary Joyce	Deputy Chairperson Chair of the Organisational Development, Remuneration and Succession Committee	1 Jan 2014 – 31 May 2018
Rory O’Ferrall	Ordinary Member Chair of Audit Committee	1 Jan 2014 – 31 Dec 2019
Paul White	Ordinary Member Pro-tem Chair of the Quality Assurance and Risk Committee until April 2018	3 Feb 2016 – 2 Feb 2021
Áine Hyland	Ordinary Member	1 Jan 2017 – 8 Jan 2018
Deirdre Kiely	Ordinary Member	1 Jan 2017 – 31 Dec 2021
Pat McLoughlin	Ordinary Member	1 Jan 2017 – 28 Feb 2018
Sean Holland	Ordinary Member Chair of Quality Assurance and Risk Committee	16 Apr 2018 – 15 Apr 2023
Liam Irwin	Ordinary Member	16 Apr 2018 – 15 Apr 2023
Teresa Kilmartin	Ordinary Member Chair of the Organisational Development, Remuneration and Succession Committee as of April 2018	16 Apr 2018 – 15 Apr 2023
Avril McDermott	Ordinary Member	13 June 2018 – 12 June 2023
Anne O’Gara	Ordinary Member	25 Sept 2018 – 24 Sept 2023

Changes to the Board in 2018

The Board would like to thank Norah Gibbons (Chair), Mr Gary Joyce (Deputy Chair) and Mr Pat McLoughlin (Ordinary Member), outgoing members in 2018, for their valued contribution and commitment to the work of the Board and the Agency. Following the process undertaken under the Guidelines for Appointments to State Boards the Minister approved the following Board appointments in 2018:

Board Member	Role	Appointment Period
Sean Holland	Ordinary Member	16 Apr 2018 – 15 Apr 2023
Liam Irwin	Ordinary Member	16 Apr 2018 – 15 Apr 2023
Teresa Kilmartin	Ordinary Member	16 Apr 2018 – 15 Apr 2023
Avril McDermott	Ordinary Member	13 June 2018 – 12 June 2023
Anne O’Gara	Ordinary Member	25 Sept 2018 – 24 Sept 2023

Committees

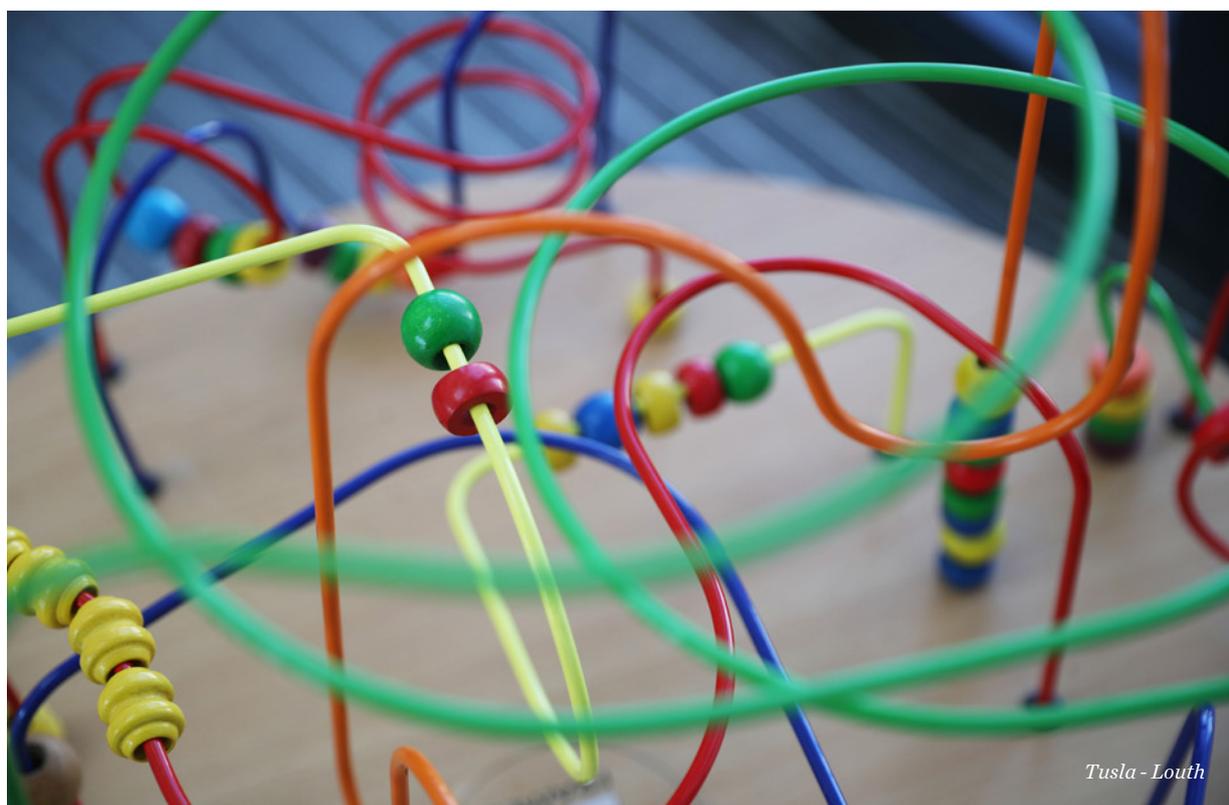
The Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, provides that the Board may establish committees to assist and advise it on matters relating to its functions and may determine the membership and terms of reference of each committee. The Board established four committees with specific responsibilities to support the activities of the Board in governing the Agency. The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016, recommends that some State bodies have a combined ‘Audit and Risk Committee’. Due to the nature of the services provided and the need to focus on practice/operational risk as well as financial risk, the Agency decided to establish both an Audit Committee and a Quality Assurance and Risk Committee. The two committees convene a joint meeting at least once a year. In certain circumstances where specialist functions are required the Board will establish a special committee with its own scope and terms of reference. The four committees are:

- ⦿ **Audit Committee** comprises three Board members and one independent member with no fewer than two committee members with the relevant skills and experience to perform the functions of the committee. The role of the Audit Committee is to report on the effectiveness of internal financial controls and on the progress made in implementing recommendations from internal audit and other finance-related matters. The committee receives regular reports from the Director of Finance and the National Director of Internal Audit, both of whom attend committee meetings along with senior members of their teams.

- Quality Assurance and Risk Committee** comprises three Board members and one independent member with no fewer than two committee members with the relevant skills and experience to perform the functions of the committee. The committee reports on the design and operation of the risk management system and focuses principally on quality assurance and service delivery. The committee receives regular reports from the Director of Quality Assurance and the Chief Operations Officer, both of whom attend committee meetings along with senior members of their teams.
- Organisational Development, Remuneration and Succession Committee** comprises three Board members with no fewer than two committee members with the relevant skills and experience to perform the functions of the committee. The committee focuses principally on assisting the Board in fulfilling its duties by providing an independent and objective review to ensure the Agency's adherence to government policy in relation to pay and reward, succession planning for the CEO and to support the CEO with senior management succession planning.
- Governance Committee** comprises two Board members with no fewer than one committee member with the relevant skills and experience to perform the functions of the committee. The committee's primary focus is to assure the Board of the Agency's compliance with all legal and statutory requirements.

Board Meeting and Committee Attendance, 2018

In accordance with the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, the Agency is required to hold no fewer than ten meetings a year. In 2018, the Board met on 16 occasions, holding 14 regular Board meetings and two additional meetings. The attendance at Board meetings and sub-committee meetings in 2018 is outlined in the table overleaf.



Tusla - Louth

	Board 14 meetings	Audit Committee 6 meetings	Quality Assurance and Risk Committee 3 meetings	Organisational Development, Remuneration and Succession Committee 3 meetings	Governance Committee 3 meetings	Total
Norah Gibbons <i>Until 31/12/18</i>	12 (14)		1 (3)	1 (3)		14
Gary Joyce <i>Until 31/05/18</i>	6 (6)			2 (2)		8
Rory O’Ferrall	14 (14)	6 (6)				20
Áine Hyland <i>Until 08/01/18</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0
Paul White	14 (14)		2 (3)		3 (3)	19
Deirdre Kiely	14 (14)	5 (6)				19
Pat McLoughlin <i>Until 28/02/18</i>	1 (2)			1 (1)		2
Liam Irwin <i>Appointed 16/04/18</i>	7 (10)			1 (1)		8
Teresa Kilmartin <i>Appointed 16/04/28</i>	9 (10)			2 (2)		11
Sean Holland <i>Appointed 16/04/18</i>	8 (10)		2 (3)			10
Avril McDermott <i>Appointed 13/06/2018</i>	7 (8)	3 (3)			3 (3)	13
Anne O’Gara <i>Appointed 25/09/18</i>	3 (3)					3
Bernadette Costello (Independent member)			3 (3)			3
Richard George (Independent Chair)		6 (6)				6

() Eligible to Attend

4.2 Tusla Executive

The CEO, together with the SMT, manages the implementation of strategy in line with the Agency's statutory responsibilities and Corporate Plan.

Senior Management Team, 2018

Fred McBride, CEO (until 30 September, 2018)

Pat Smyth, Director of Finance (appointed Interim CEO on 1 October, 2018)

Jim Gibson, Chief Operations Officer

Pamela Benson, Head of Legal Services

Brian Lee, Director of QA

Fergus Ó Cuanacháin, Director of ICT

Cormac Quinlan, Director of Policy and Strategy

Laura Slevin, Director of Corporate Services

Colette Walsh, Director of Human Resources

4.3 Corporate Governance

Tusla is committed to a high standard of governance by ensuring compliance with all statutory requirements and relevant codes of practice. The Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, outlines the purpose, functions, regulations, procedures and powers of the Agency. The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016, sets out the standards of good practice in relation to Board leadership and effectiveness, remuneration, accountability and takes account of governance developments, public sector reform and stakeholder consultations.

Compliance with Legal Obligations and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016

The Agency monitors Tusla's compliance with the legal and governance obligations as set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016, with the assistance of compliance checklists, bi-annual Governance meetings with the DCYA and the Board's Governance Committee. The Agency is

compliant with all aspects of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, and has put in place appropriate measures to implement the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016.

In accordance with the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, the Board is required each year to prepare and adopt an Annual Report in relation to the performance of the Agency's functions and approve the Annual Financial Statements (AFS). The Board considers the 2018 Annual Financial Statements to be a true and fair view of the Agency's financial performance and its financial position at the end of 2018.

The 2018 AFS and 2018 Annual Report have been drafted in compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016. The 2018 Annual Report is the fifth annual report published by the Agency and the first published under the Corporate Plan 2018–2020.

Tusla's Code of Governance

The Agency is required under Section 50 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, to prepare and submit a Code of Governance to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs for approval. A revised Code of Governance was approved by the Minister on 30 April, 2018. The Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, forms the basis of the Agency's Code of Governance. The work and responsibilities of the Board, Chairperson and CEO are set out in Tusla's Code of Governance, which also contains matters specifically reserved by the Board for decision. The Board adheres to its Code of Governance through ensuring clear lines of responsibility, compliance with Board standing orders and reporting requirements. The Board reviews the terms of reference of each of the Board sub-committees on an annual basis, approves the Agency's Standard of Behaviour and Code of Conduct and reviews its guiding principles having regard to its statutory functions when developing Tusla's Corporate Plan. This Code of Governance is reviewed on an annual basis and amended as required. The Code of Governance will be amended in 2019 to incorporate changes to the Board's sub-committee structure and to reflect the Agency's revised

vision, mission, values and behaviours as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2018–2020. The Code of Governance is available to all Tusla staff on the Tusla website.

External Assessment of Board Effectiveness

In accordance with good practice and in line with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016, the Board commissioned an external evaluation of its effectiveness in 2018. The assessment of the effectiveness of the Board included benchmarking against best practice with particular focus on Board member induction and succession planning. The Board, as part of its effectiveness review, engaged in a detailed evaluation of the operation and responsibilities of its standing committees. As a result of this evaluation the Board decided to reconfigure its standing committees as follows:

- Audit and Risk Committee.
- Organisational Development Committee.
- Service and Quality Committee.

Board Evaluation of Performance against 2018 Business Plan

The Corporate Plan 2018–2020 sets out seven strategic objectives and associated business plan actions in order for the Agency to achieve its vision that all children are safe and achieving their full potential. The 2018 Business Plan was prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 46 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, and in response to the Performance Statement, 2018, issued by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to the Chair of the Board. The Business Plan 2018 sets out an account of what was to be achieved in the year to meet the overall strategic objectives of the Corporate Plan. An update on the implementation of the Business Plan 2018 was provided to the Board on a quarterly basis. At the end of 2018, there were 95 actions that were delayed in their completion, which will be monitored through the tracking of the Business Plan 2019.

Statement on Internal Control

The Board acknowledges its responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated. As required by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016, the Chair of the Board makes a statement on behalf of the Board to demonstrate the arrangements for implementing a system of governance and financial control. A copy of the Chair's Statement on Internal Control for 2018 is included in Appendix One.

4.4 Tusla Quality and Risk Systems

Ensuring good governance is critical to the effective operation of Tusla in the delivery of high-quality services to families and children. As such, the Agency is committed to adopting a robust and systematic approach to quality assurance, information management and risk management that supports robust oversight and internal governance measures across the organisation. This is achieved through the work of the QA Directorate, which is responsible for promoting continuous improvement and effective risk management in services for children and families by:

- Objectively assessing, monitoring and reporting on the quality and safety of services.
- Tracking and driving the reduction of identified risks.
- Providing systems, information and tools that support service improvement.

In 2018, the QA Directorate made progress in developing and enhancing the Agency's quality and risk systems as follows:

Performance Reporting and Information – The Performance Reporting and Information Team is responsible for the collation, analysis and reporting of data and information that is required to support accountability and transparency, inform policy development and legislative reform,

demonstrate where standards and targets are being met, identify risk and support decision making across the Agency.

In 2018, the Performance Reporting and Information Team produced 12 monthly National Performance and Activity Dashboards (and accompanying datasets) and four quarterly Service Performance and Activity Reports. These were augmented by the production of monthly CPWS Social Work Activity Reports, as well as area specifics for each of the 17 social work areas.

Protected Disclosures and Oversight – The Protected Disclosures and Oversight Team manages all aspects of protected disclosures, including receipt, preliminary evaluation, investigation, reporting, management of witnesses, terms of reference and maintenance of relevant policies, procedures and practices. The team is also responsible for tracking reporting recommendations from external bodies, such as HIQA, the DCYA and the Ombudsman, who are responsible for providing oversight of Tusla.

In 2018, the team completed five detailed preliminary evaluations of protected disclosures and launched one major investigation. In addition, the team undertook a major review of tracker policy and completed the pre-procurement, scoping, tender and contract award process for a new performance and accountability system. This new system, using a supporting software solution, has been successfully embedded and has facilitated the tracking and progress oversight of actions arising from both Tusla's own internal quality assurance overviews and external oversight bodies.

Risk and Incident Management – The purpose of the Risk and Incident Team is to implement and maintain risk and incident management systems, to ensure that the Agency is aware of the nature of its risks, their status and how they are being managed.

In 2018, the Risk and Incident Team conducted a major national review of Social Work Risk Registers, further strengthening the governance and oversight of risk management across Tusla. In addition to this, the team monitored and reported on 114 actions arising from a serious case review of 46 Child Death Reports and three Serious Incident Reports, submitted between 2011 and 2018. The Child Deaths Learning Group was also launched, producing a report on key learnings on information sharing, governance, risk management and service collaboration in this area.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring – The aim of the Quality Assurance and Monitoring Team is to provide assurance to Tusla that the services it provides meet statutory obligations and are delivered in accordance with best practice. Using an integrated approach, the team is responsible for ensuring that services are delivered in line with the requisite standards, regulations and legislative requirements, and that service improvements are achieved in accordance with the recommendations from the Agency's oversight bodies.

Eight new staff were inducted into the Quality Assurance and Monitoring Team in 2018, increasing its capacity to support and promote quality assurance across the Agency. The Team also completed 96 practice and verification audits, including monitoring visits to residential and special care services, as well as a national quantitative baseline audit of SOS across all 17 social work areas, in line with the Child Protection and Welfare Strategy.

4.5 Financial Summary

Tusla spends public funds on the provision of services to children and families. The duties relating to expenditure incurred by the Agency are stringent in terms of accountability and transparency in order to fulfil the Agency's responsibility for funding received from the DCYA. These duties are set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, and in the Public Financial Procedures of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

In accordance with Section 51 of the Child and Family Act, 2013, the Agency's 2018 AFS have been prepared and audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The AFS contain the following reports:

- Governance Statement and Board Members' Report for 2018.
- Statement on Internal Control.
- Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- Financial Statements for 2018.
- Accounting policies.
- Notes and appendices to the financial statements.

As required by the Department of Finance, the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016, under the aegis of the DCYA, and Section 13(2)(d) of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, the Chairperson of the Agency made a statement to demonstrate the Agency's arrangements for implementing a system of governance and financial control that includes the following:

- The guiding principles applicable to the Agency as a public body, having regard to its functions as defined in Section 8 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.
- The structure of the Agency, including the roles and responsibilities of the Board and CEO.
- The processes and guidelines to be followed to ensure compliance with the reporting requirements imposed on Tusla by or under the Act.
- The Agency's internal controls, including its procedures relating to internal audits, risk management, public procurement and financial reporting.
- The nature and quality of service that persons being provided with or seeking services provided by the Agency can expect.

This statement on internal control sets out how these duties have been carried out and includes an assessment of the corporate governance and risk management systems in place within the Agency that have ensured these responsibilities have been met.

The AFS and financial position is summarised below. The full AFS is published as a separate document.

Statement of Income Revenue and Income Expenditure for Year ended 31 December, 2018	2018	2017
	€	€
	'000	'000
Revenue Income	752,110	704,217
Expenditure – Pay and Pensions	280,254	259,043
Expenditure – Non-Pay	477,048	444,510
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	-5,192	664

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December, 2018	2018	2017
	€	€
	'000	'000
Total Non-Current Assets	73,974	73,215
Total Current Assets	19,074	18,376
Total Current Liabilities	-59,062	-53,801
Restricted Contributions (Deferred Income)	-590	-694
Capital and Reserves	33,396	37,096

Appendix One – Statement on Internal Control

Responsibility for the System of Internal Control

As Chairperson of the Child and Family Agency I make this statement to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on behalf of the Board that we acknowledge our responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated. Through this system the achievement of the Child and Family Agency's policies, aims and objectives are supported whilst safeguarding public funds and the Agency's assets.

This responsibility takes account of the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016. The Board has acted in accordance with the responsibilities assigned by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). This Statement on Internal Control represents the position for the year ended 31 December, 2018.

Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The CEO, Senior Management Team and the management structure at all levels of the Child and Family Agency are responsible to the Board for the implementation and maintenance of internal controls over their respective functions. This embedding of the system of internal control is designed to ensure that the Child and Family Agency is capable of responding to operational risks and that significant control issues, should they arise, are escalated promptly to an appropriate level of management. The system of internal control is designed to mitigate and identify risk rather than eliminate risk. The Agency's system can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions are properly authorised and recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected in a timely manner.

As required by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's (DPER) Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, under the aegis of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Section 13(2)(d) of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, I make this statement as Chairperson of the Child and Family Agency on behalf of the Board to demonstrate the Child and Family Agency's arrangements for implementing a system of governance and financial control that includes the following:

- a) The guiding principles applicable to the Agency as a public body having regard to its functions as defined in Section 8 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013;
- b) The structure of the Child and Family Agency, including the roles and responsibilities of the Board and Chief Executive Officer (CEO);
- c) The processes and guidelines to be followed to ensure compliance with the reporting requirements mandated on the Child and Family Agency by or under the Act;
- d) The Child and Family Agency's internal controls, including its procedures relating to internal audits, risk management, public procurement and financial reporting; and
- e) The nature and quality of service that persons being provided with or seeking services provided by the Child and Family Agency can expect.

This Statement on Internal Control sets out how these duties have been carried out and includes an assessment of the corporate governance and risk management systems in place within the Child and Family Agency that have ensured these responsibilities have been met.

The Child and Family Agency continues to progress with key transformational programmes. The scale and complexity of these reforms will require a sustained investment of time and resources to deliver on the objectives of the Agency as set out in the Corporate Plan. The scope of the reform encompasses an organisation-wide transformation of existing services and business processes as well as the creation of new innovative methods of service delivery and the discontinuance of inherited processes which do not support the Agency's objectives.

Since establishment, the Agency has been undergoing continuous improvements, which have been outlined in our Corporate Plan and subsequent Business Plans produced annually at the start of each year, resulting in improvements across our services including our procedures with respect to internal and external governance and controls. In 2018, the Agency continued to invest in additional resources to provide business support and improve the capacity of the Agency across a number of transformational programmes. The progress on the programmes in 2018 is as follows:

- The National Child Care Information System (NCCIS) has been rolled out nationally. This marks a significant milestone in child protection for the Agency and for the State. All 17 social work areas can now access one integrated and up-to-date information system on child protection and welfare cases. The NCCIS has replaced numerous paper-based and legacy ICT systems across the country. The new system supports practice and will improve on the quality, safety, responsiveness and delivery of vital child protection services. The NCCIS will hold vast quantities of information which will be controlled and organised to improve caseload management.
- Commissioning is the approach being adopted by the Agency to ensure that funding is distributed in a transparent, outcomes-focused, evidenced-informed and participatory way. The Agency is committed to using the total resources available for children and families in the most efficient, equitable, proportionate and sustainable way in order to improve outcomes for children and families. The Agency has increased staffing levels in the Commissioning Unit and Financial Compliance Unit in 2018. The Agency implemented a new contract applicable to all community, voluntary and charitable organisations in 2018 with a supporting new governance framework. A Commissioning ICT portal has been developed in 2018 to enable online contracting and data gathering. This is being rolled out for the 2019 contracting cycle.
- The Agency continued to progress the Human Resources (HR) Strategy. A Finance Strategy commenced in 2018 for finalisation in 2019.
- The Agency's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy 2017–2019 has progressed significantly in 2018 with key deliverables met. Online portals have been developed, infrastructure has been improved to support the mobile workforce, a service mapping system has been developed, data governance has been improved and the ICT helpdesk was launched to support all staff. 2019 will see more improvements in relation to digital forms, mobile apps, data analytics, cloud services and electronic document management, among other targeted deliverables.
- The Children First implementation was completed in 2018 and an online reporting portal was developed and launched.
- During 2018, the Agency continued to implement the Child Protection and Welfare Strategy (CPWS) 2017–2022. The strategy is underpinned by the principles of Children First and is informed by research, findings from HIQA, the National Review Panel, as well as the Agency's own quality reviews. The Signs of Safety approach to practice has been adopted and this continued to be embedded throughout the Agency in 2018.

- ⦿ A National Emergency Out-of-Hours Service was established in 2018 which saw the merging of the existing Cork and Dublin services. Staffing levels have increased in this service. An Out-of-Hours Fostering Support Service is in the design phase and stakeholder engagement was undertaken in 2018.
- ⦿ A National Caseload Management Policy and Toolkit was launched in 2018.
- ⦿ The Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme is a comprehensive programme of early intervention and preventative work which has been undertaken by Tusla, with the support of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway. The PPFS Programme is embedding early intervention and prevention within the Agency in 2018. The aim of the programme is to prevent risks to children and young people arising or escalating through building sustainable intellectual capacity and manpower within Tusla and partner organisations to perform early intervention work.
- ⦿ In conjunction with Health Business Service (HBS) Procurement and the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), 16 Procurement contracts to the value of €3.5 million were awarded in 2018 from a number of categories: Consultancy, Communications, ICT, Workforce Development, Adoption and Residential Commissioning.

Accountability

During 2018, the Board commenced the implementation of the Corporate Plan (2018–2020) which was approved by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The plan sets out the Board's objectives over a three-year period with appropriate targets and key performance measures identified.

The Corporate Plan is formulated following a consultation process which takes into account the views of Board members, management, staff and service users, and understanding external factors such as government policy and stakeholder needs. Each service area undertakes a number of operational activities that fulfil the Child and Family Agency's strategic objectives designed to satisfy the corporate aims. The Senior Management Team reviews performance against objectives and key performance measures on a quarterly basis and this is reported to the Board and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Performance against the Corporate Plan is also reported in the Annual Report at the end of each financial year.

The Child and Family Agency spends public funds on the provision of child and family services to the population of Ireland. The duties relating to expenditure incurred by the Child and Family Agency are stringent in terms of accountability and transparency in order to fulfil our responsibility for funding received from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. These duties are set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, the Public Spending Code, and in the Public Financial Procedures of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Agency is reliant on the Health Service Executive (HSE), who provide services in the areas of payroll, human resources, pensions, estate management, ICT, procurement, internal audit, general ledger, invoice processing and payments on behalf of the Agency, governed through a Memorandum of Understanding and relevant Service Level Agreements between the organisations.

The control system for these services was inherited on establishment of the Agency. The Agency is continually reviewing the operation of these controls internally with the Health Service

Executive, Health Business Service and with the assistance of Internal Audit. The Agency places reliance on these established and internally audited HSE-managed processes and regulations to underpin its internal controls across these areas. The system of internal control, which by its nature is dynamic, is continually developed, maintained and monitored in response to the emerging requirements of the organisation. The following is a description of the key processes and procedures, designed to provide effective internal controls, which are in place across the Child and Family Agency:

- There is a regular management reporting process and a framework of administrative procedures which includes segregation of duties, a system of delegation and accountability, and a system for the authorisation of expenditure;
- The Agency adopted the HSE National Financial Regulations on establishment, which are currently being re-drafted to better suit the needs of the Agency. The Financial Regulations form an integral part of the system of internal control and have been prepared to reflect current best practice. Compliance with Financial Regulations is mandatory for all staff throughout the Child and Family Agency.
- The Agency has put in place procedures designed to strengthen compliance with all pay and travel circulars issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Any exceptions identified are addressed and are reported on an annual basis to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies; and
- As part of the Child and Family Agency's annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal controls, a survey was carried out for staff at Grade VIII (or equivalent) and above to complete a Controls Assurance Statement, confirming their compliance with policies and procedures and attesting to the existence and operation of

controls which are in place in their area of responsibility, or identifying where exceptions or weaknesses exist. Where weaknesses are identified, they are addressed within the risk-management process.

Capacity to Handle Risk

Risk management is the process by which risks are systematically identified, analysed, managed, recorded, monitored and reported upon. It is a fully integrated business activity comprising two key components of a) Proactive Risk Management and b) Responsive Risk Management. The Agency recognises that risk management is inextricably linked to good governance and the delivery of safe and high-quality services. The Agency has developed risk-management processes, its risk appetite, and is currently defining a risk profile model to enhance risk communication and reporting to the Board.

Maintaining and achieving the safety and wellbeing of children and families is the primary consideration in decision making for the Agency. Decisions often need to be made in conditions of uncertainty. Making decisions in conditions of uncertainty involves judgement, values and balance in appraising the different options available. The Agency recognises that it operates in a sensitive and challenging area. Risk and uncertainty are an unavoidable part of child protection.

The Child and Family Agency's Organisational Risk Management Policy and Procedure was published in July 2016 and sets out our commitment to ensuring that risk management principles and practices form an integral part of our:

- Culture
- Governance and accountability arrangements
- Decision-making processes
- Strategic and operational planning
- Reporting, review, evaluation and improvement processes

Under the policy, staff and managers at all levels across the Agency have an individual and collective responsibility for identifying and managing risk in day-to-day decision making and planning. In order for risk management to become part of everyday practices each staff member is required to recognise and accept this responsibility. The Child and Family Agency is committed to establishing and providing the necessary structures, processes, training and other supports required to implement this policy and procedure.

Where risks are identified that have significant potential to impact on the overall objectives of the Child and Family Agency they are recorded on the Agency's Corporate Risk Register. The register identifies the strategic risks impacting on the Agency's ability to deliver on its objectives and the mitigations in place to manage these. It is also a mechanism to provide assurance and evidence to the Board that risk is being identified, assessed and managed and that a range of control measures and action plans are in place to mitigate the risks identified. Regular reports on the status of the corporate risks are submitted to the Quality Assurance and Risk Committee, which are comprehensive, forward-looking and focus on the risks warranting the most attention from the Board's risk oversight process.

Risk and the Corporate Risk Register are reviewed by the Board on a regular basis. In summary, the Risk Register, which identifies risk owners, includes the following risk outputs:

- Child protection capacity/processes and systems to respond in a timely manner to children at risk;
- Processes and systems underpinning children and family policy and services that are all evidence-informed and fit for purpose;
- Safe systems of work to support the safety, health and welfare of staff, service users and members of the public that are in place and operational;

- A fit-for-purpose and responsive workforce to meet service demand; and
- A fit-for-purpose organisation to deliver our strategic intent.

On-going Monitoring and Review

The monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is performed by the work of:

- The Audit Committee
- The Senior Managers of the Child and Family Agency
- The National Internal Audit Division.

Senior Management of the Agency have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the management control framework. The Senior Management Team reviews the comments and recommendations contained within reports and management letters issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Public Accounts Committee and Internal Audit. Actions are taken to implement audit recommendations, and are then reviewed by the Audit Committee.

Internal Audit operates in accordance with the terms of reference approved by the Audit Committee. The annual Internal Audit Plan for 2018 was approved by the Audit Committee and focused upon areas identified from an analysis of the financial risks which are inherent to the Child and Family Agency. The 2018 Internal Audit reports were submitted to senior management, providing objective and independent assessment of the systems of internal control in operation across the Agency together with prioritised recommendations to strengthen controls and implement further improvements. Procedures are in place to ensure that the recommendations of

Internal Audit are actioned. The National Director of Internal Audit reports to the Chairperson of the Audit Committee. Any instances of fraud or other irregularities, identified through management review or audit, are addressed by management and where appropriate An Garda Síochána are notified. The Child and Family Agency's Annual Financial Statements are also subject to statutory audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Annual Report and Financial Statements

The Child and Family Agency Annual Report and Annual Financial Statements are produced and published each year to give an overview to stakeholders of performance for the preceding year. It is a comprehensive report on the organisation's activity, achievements, challenges and financial performance, as set out in its 2018 Business Plan. Through these audited financial statements, the Child and Family Agency accounts for the use of resources allocated from government. The Child and Family Agency Annual Report is a legal requirement under Section 13 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

Capital Investment and Appraisal

In the decision-making process regarding the expenditure of capital funds, €13.2 million in 2018 (€13.9 million in 2017), the Child and Family Agency Senior Management Team followed the requirements of the Public Spending Code.

Travel

All payments for travel and subsistence to the Child and Family Agency Board members, CEO and staff have been made in line with the Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circulars governing travel and subsistence. In 2018, the Agency introduced a new Tusla Financial Regulation, TFR-02, which applies to payment of travel, subsistence and all other expenses. The financial regulations form part of the overall system of corporate governance and internal control within the Agency.

State Assets

During 2018, the Child and Family Agency did not dispose of State assets of a material value.

The Agency commenced a fixed asset revaluation programme in 2016 with the Valuation Office and the first phase of this process selected the highest-valued buildings and the land portfolio. The Agency has continued with this revaluation programme and has selected properties each year for inspection and revaluation. In 2018 seven assets were revalued and the revalued amounts have been reflected within the financial statements.

Fraud and Irregularities

The Agency has established a reporting process for notification of any alleged fraudulent incidents or irregularities. The parties which are notified of material fraudulent incidents as standard are:

- The Audit Committee
- The Comptroller and Auditor General
- The National Director of Internal Audit
- An Garda Síochána
- Other agencies (as required).

There are continuous updates provided to the Audit Committee on all reported matters as they are investigated. The Agency maintains a register of those reported matters and all alleged fraudulent incidents are thoroughly investigated. When the Agency uncovers an alleged fraud the relevant controls and processes are reviewed and, where necessary, are revised to mitigate the risk of reoccurrence.

Tax Compliance

During 2018, the Child and Family Agency discharged all tax and PRSI liabilities on or before the dates prescribed by Revenue. The Agency is committed to full compliance with taxation laws.

Guardian Ad Litem

Guardians Ad Litem are appointed by the court under Section 26 of the Child Care Act, 1991. Most Guardians Ad Litem engage their own solicitors and counsel to represent them in court. However, the fees for both the Guardian Ad Litem and their legal team fall to be discharged by the Child and Family Agency, in compliance with Section 26.2 of the Child Care Act, 1991.

As the Guardians Ad Litem are appointed by the court, the Agency can only implement limited financial controls and cannot apply a value for money control over these payments. While the Child and Family Agency has agreed a rate for professional hours with Guardians Ad Litem, the service is demand-led with the level of costs being dependent upon the number of professional hours billed for each case. This limits the Agency's control over the quantum of these payments.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has commenced a process of reform of Guardian Ad Litem services which includes a proposed amendment to the legislation currently underpinning the service. In December 2017, government approved the establishment of a new Guardian Ad Litem Service within an executive office of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The Agency is committed to working closely with the department as this new office is established.

Inquiries and Investigations

A number of inquiries and investigations have been established to which the Agency has been named as a party. The Agency is fully committed to engaging with and supporting all investigations into matters of public importance. The Agency, including its Board, CEO, Senior Management Team and staff, has complied, and will continue to comply in full with all requests for information or evidence.

Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control

The annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control in the Child and Family Agency is a process that supports me, as the Chairperson, in ascertaining that there is appropriate effective control within the Agency. Having made this determination, I am then in a position to advise the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the Oireachtas that there is effective control within the Agency.

In doing so, I have placed reliance on the procedures as outlined within this document and on the procedures outlined below:

- ⦿ Annual Budget management process;
- ⦿ Monthly Management Accounts and Performance Activity Reports;
- ⦿ Annual Report and Annual Financial Statements;
- ⦿ Internal Audit function to review, audit and report;
- ⦿ The Comptroller and Auditor General's audit of the Child and Family Agency's Annual Financial Statements;
- ⦿ Terms of reference for the Child and Family Agency Board and its four committees;
- ⦿ Protected Disclosures Policy;
- ⦿ Corporate Plan for 2018–2020, setting the strategic direction of the Agency;
- ⦿ Business Plan for 2018 submitted to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs;
- ⦿ Separation of roles of Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer;
- ⦿ Annual review of Board composition;
- ⦿ Advice to Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on the competency of Board members;

- ⦿ Terms of reference for Board members' responsibilities and obligations;
- ⦿ Adequate support and briefings to Board members on the Child and Family Agency affairs;
- ⦿ Code of Governance for the Child and Family Agency;
- ⦿ Standards of Integrity and Codes of Conduct incorporated within the Code of Governance;
- ⦿ Compliance by Agency Board members and staff at Grade VIII (or equivalent) and above with the Ethics Acts;
- ⦿ A register of Board members' interests (maintained by the Board secretary); and
- ⦿ Procedures designed to report to the Minister to ensure the Child and Family Agency complies with all Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regulations on fees paid to the Chairperson and members, and pay and travel expenditure for CEO and all other Child and Family Agency staff.

Control Weaknesses Identified During 2018

Procurement 2018

In procuring for business requirements, the Agency is a customer of the Health Service Executive and avails of shared services from the Health Business Service, which provides an integrated approach to goods and services requirements on all non-pay procurement categories of expenditure and cooperates with the Office of Government Procurement's strategy to help deliver this.

HBS Procurement supports the Agency in defining the Agency's business requirements and assists in the management of procurement processes. They focus on achieving efficiency, effectiveness and best value for money in terms of overall life-cycle and operate in a fair, open, transparent and non-discriminatory manner in the marketplace.

The Agency has a very significant reliance on HBS Procurement in providing information and in assessing whether legacy and other contracts are compliant with procurement rules and regulations. Due to the complexity of some legacy contract arrangements it was not always possible to identify if the procurement of those contracts was operating within approved procurement rules and regulations.

Contracts with a threshold greater than €25,000 (excluding VAT), and where no procurement competition was undertaken, have been identified and have been reviewed by the Audit Committee for 2018.

Since 2014, procurement exercises for contracts totalling €266 million (excluding VAT) have been completed which include Residential Services, Legal, Consulting and Agency Healthcare. Contracts awarded during 2018 totalled €3.5 million. A new procurement process commenced during 2018 for private residential placements with an annual outlay of over €80 million, which is due to be completed in 2019. A procurement competition concluded in late 2018 for private foster care placements with a notice of no-award being issued on eTenders. The Agency has commenced another competition in 2019.

Procurable Expenditure in 2018

The Agency spent €477 million in 2018 on non-pay expenditure as set out on the Statement of Revenue Income and Expenditure. €333 million of this expenditure relates to services that fall outside of competitive procurement requirements. In 2018, the expenditure which fell inside of competitive procurement requirements was €154 million, inclusive of agency fee which is included in pay expenditure.

Non-compliant contracts of €5.4 million (3.5% of procurable requirements) have been identified by the Agency in 2018 as exceptions to procurement regulations and are set out in the table below. These contracts are split between Social, Health and Cultural Services and Business Support Services and the table shows the comparative position for amounts reported in 2017.

The Agency also incurred €28.1 million on contracts in relation to the provision of residential services to children, which expired on 31 August 2018 and were extended by way of extension letter until the conclusion of a new tender process. A procurement process for the provision of these services is currently underway.

Category of Non-Compliant Expenditure	2018		2017 Reclassification		2017 As Reported	
	€'m	Number of Suppliers	€'m	Number of Suppliers	€'m	Number of Suppliers
- Business Support Services	4.7	49	2.5	41	2.5	41
- Social, Health and Cultural Services	0.7	11	0.8	16	2.2	28
Total	€5.4m	60	€3.3m	57	€4.7m	69

Further analysis of 2018 information identified contracts that are child and family specific, addressing individual needs and requirements which do not fall under the normal scope of procurement, thereby allowing the Agency flexibility to use a procurement process tailored to its needs once the procedure is fair and impartial and complies with the general principles of EU law including transparency and equal treatment. These have been reclassified as exceptions to procurement regulations as non-competitive contracts in this period and are shown in the table above.

The following factors were identified as contributing to the known areas of exceptions to procurement compliance:

- ⦿ Individual services sourced at local areas which, when aggregated at a national level, exceed €25,000 in value;
- ⦿ Due to a historical underinvestment in ICT systems, the procurement system remains heavily dependent on self-reporting, leading to gaps in information resulting in delays and difficulty identifying expenditures that require procurement, and it has not been possible to manage procurement on a single platform in the Agency; and
- ⦿ There is no facility to implement real-time controls and the Agency will continue to rely heavily on manual review processes to ensure compliance with procurement guidelines. This limits the capacity to monitor, on a timely basis, expenditure against value limited contracts, as well as ensuring that only approved contracts are used. In the absence of a real-time control process, responsibility for adherence to procurement rules falls to the budget holder at the relevant level in the organisation.

The following actions will regularise contracts and address the known areas of non-compliance for 2019:

- ⦿ The Agency established a small central-led procurement function in 2016 to support the management of all aspects of procurement administration in the delivery of the Agency's overall procurement processes. In addition to this procurement function, the Agency has set up a Commissioning Unit to support identifying business requirements for procurement services. The Agency prioritises its limited resources to those parts of the procurement process that have the greatest risk from a compliance and value-for-money perspective until a fully resourced procurement function can be put in place. The

Agency has set out a plan for the development of the procurement function as part of the Finance Strategy 2019–2021;

- ⦿ The Agency first developed a rolling three-year Corporate Procurement Plan (CPP) in 2017 which continues to be implemented. A new plan is being developed for 2019 to 2021. This is done in conjunction with HBS Procurement to identify key procurement requirements of the Agency, which will assist with proper planning and evaluation of requirements and will facilitate timely and appropriate procurement exercises to be carried out. This plan will put in place actions for non-compliant contracts to ensure service users put contracts in place;
- ⦿ There continues to be a strong reliance on HBS Procurement, as there has been since the establishment of the Agency. The Agency will not be able to meet its requirements on an on-going basis due to resource limitations which will require additional resources for the procurement function;
- ⦿ A procurement training and education programme is being implemented for staff who have responsibility for non-pay expenditure. In 2019, a legal procurement training programme will be delivered and local area training will be provided throughout the year;
- ⦿ All relevant staff have access to procurement information on the Procurement section of the Agency's Finance Hub and communication updates are issued on a regular basis;
- ⦿ The Agency has prioritised the procurement actions to address the areas of highest risk to date and will continue to do this. The procurement activity has focused on Legal and Consultancy and high-expenditure activity including private residential and private foster care services;
- ⦿ The HSE is developing and will implement a new Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS) which the Agency will be able to avail of, one part of which relates to contract management. However, it will take

a number of years for this new system to be implemented and, in the interim, Tusla ICT will seek to develop an online contract-management system until the above has been implemented. The monitoring and management of contracts within the Agency will continue to be manual; and

- There are 86 procurement projects identified to be undertaken in 2019 with a focus on priority categories of expenditure. Of these, 21 procurement projects with a combined value of €117 million are currently being tendered for and are at various stages of completion.

The Agency acknowledges that there are issues with procurement processes and continues to monitor compliance and disclose information. The Agency's business requirements are complex and will continue to take time to be addressed. There is a challenge in not being able to address all gaps until visibility, capacity and capabilities are in place to focus on those non-compliance items in order to demonstrate that value for money is being obtained and sustainable savings are directed into the most appropriate areas of the Agency.

It is not always possible to identify whether the procurement of some legacy contract arrangements is operating within approved rules. These arrangements existed prior to the establishment of the Agency and remain to be fully addressed; they are difficult to cease without adverse service impacts.

The Agency did not have a dedicated internal procurement resource until mid-2016 and has had challenges in recruiting resources to this area. Despite this lack of capacity, the Agency has

embarked on a number of procurement processes during this period to establish good governance around procurement regulations.

Payroll Overpayments

On the establishment of the Agency in 2014, the existing receivable balance relating to payroll overpayments for former HSE Children and Family Services staff was €224,000. This was transferred to the Agency and recognised as the opening balance for 2014 and has incrementally increased each year from 2014 onwards.

The Agency has identified weaknesses in the payroll process which contributed to the increase in the value of overpayments. This is due mainly to the process being manual and resource-intensive. The Agency has continued to implement changes to the manual processes to enhance controls and improve on the accuracy of payroll payments. These are interim solutions to address this matter whilst the Agency pursues an IT solution which will incorporate a Time and Attendance system and will further enhance the controls for sign-off on time returns which are required to process each employee's payroll.

The year-end 2018 payroll overpayment value is €1.145 million (2017: €1.024 million), of which a small number (17 overpayment occurrences) represents 31% of the overpayment value. These large overpayments are attributed to inherited weak controls in situ prior to establishment of the Agency and were discovered post establishment of the Agency. Measures have been put in place to ensure these types of errors do not reoccur. The Agency continues to focus on mitigating against overpayments and ensuring repayment plans are in place where they do occur.

Governance and Oversight on Funding to Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations

The Agency incurred expenditure of €163.3 million in relation to the funding of 760 individual community, voluntary and charitable organisations in 2018. Details are set out below:

Programme	Recipient	Value €m	Purpose
Child Welfare and Protection	Services provided under S56-S59 of the Act	€115.4	<p>Child and family services</p> <p>Alternative care</p> <p>Care and protection for victims of domestic, sexual or gender based violence</p> <p>To introduce innovative high prevention initiatives that are aimed at those children who are either on the edge of alternative care or currently in alternative care due to complex factors that may include neglect, parental separation, attachment issues, alcohol and/or drug misuse, mental health and economic disadvantage with a view to keeping these children in their community.</p> <p>To enhance interagency co-operation and to realise the national outcomes set out in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the national policy framework for children and young people 2014–2020</p>
School Completion Programme	Local School Completion Projects	€23.9	To promote school attendance, participation and retention
Family and Community Support	Family Resource Centres	€17.6	To combat disadvantage and improve the functioning of the family unit
	Counselling and Support Services	€6.4	To provide counselling and support services including marriage and relationship counselling, child counselling, Rainbows peer support programme for children, bereavement counselling and support on the death of a family member

Control weaknesses relating to the monitoring and oversight of agencies in receipt of exchequer funding have been identified in previous years by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Internal Audit and the Commissioning Unit. These weaknesses included (i) the late signing and submission of Service Level Agreements from grantees, (ii) failure to review financial statements submitted by the grantees, and (iii) the non-submission of certificates of compliance by auditors for agencies funded through the Counselling grant streams stating that the funds had been applied for the purposes as intended.

Funding provided to agencies is governed by Service Level Agreements (SLAs) which set out the resources provided and the outputs to be delivered. SLAs are signed off at the local service area to ensure services are provided to meet local needs. The monitoring procedures for individual agencies are specified in the relevant SLA. The requirements to submit financial reports and staffing returns and to hold monitoring meetings depend on the size of the funded agency.

Due to a legacy lack of investment in a centralised system and manual processes at local service level, it was not always possible for the Agency to have full visibility on when SLAs were signed.

A Financial Compliance Unit was set up in 2017 within the Finance Department, which forms part of the governance and oversight of funded agencies. The Financial Compliance Unit provides additional assurance through independent support and guidance to managers who commission services from the funded agencies.

Throughout 2018 the Financial Compliance Unit carried out desktop reviews of 116 funded agencies' financial statements. The reviews identified the following common themes:

- ⦿ Non-compliance with disclosure requirements as per Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circular 13/2014;
- ⦿ Restricted/Unrestricted reserves not identified;
- ⦿ Segmented accounts information not provided; and
- ⦿ Abridged accounts only submitted.

To address the above, the Financial Compliance Unit produced desktop review reports which highlighted reporting deficiencies to the Tusla commissioners and the funded agencies to promote future compliance with reporting requirements. The unit delivered workshop and training days for Tusla commissioners on the findings from desktop review reports, which included measures to improve financial governance. Based on the findings, a risk-based approach was taken to planning the annual audit programme of work on grant-aided agencies.

All Counselling grantees are now required to return a compliance statement annually and quarterly reviews are performed by Tusla commissioners to ensure compliance. This control replaced the previous requirement for grantees' auditors to provide certificates of compliance.

Compliance statements were issued to all Tusla-funded agencies in 2018, of which 78% were returned and reviewed by the Financial Compliance Unit. All agencies in receipt of funding over €1 million and 98% of agencies in receipt of funding between €250k and €1 million returned the compliance statement.

The Financial Compliance Unit also undertook a bespoke project with Benefacts to develop an analytics tool to assist in the monitoring of compliance of all agencies funded by Tusla.

As part of the annual internal audit programme, the Agency conducts audits on a number of funded agencies to assess current governance and control arrangements. The Agency funded 760 agencies in 2018. Of the funded agencies 22 audits were commenced in 2018 (totalling €5.5 million). Since 2016 a total of 54 audits were completed on funded agencies by Internal Audit, with the focus of a risk-based approach.

The audit of funded agencies includes a review of internal controls, financial procedures, management structure and oversight. The audits identify strengths and weaknesses and common issues that need to be addressed. The results of these audits inform the overall risk management and financial governance approach for funded agencies. Further audits are planned in 2019 as part of the internal audit programme. These Internal Audit reports provide recommended actions to be implemented by the funded agencies to improve controls.

Commissioning, in the context of the Child and Family Agency, is the process to ensure that the total resources available to children and families are applied to improving outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable, proportionate and sustainable way.

To enhance governance and oversight of funded agencies, throughout 2018 the Agency's Commissioning Unit, in conjunction with the ICT Department, developed an online portal to manage contracting, approval of funding and interactions with funded agencies, which enables the upload of signed SLAs, published financial statements, tax clearance, insurance documents and any other required documentation.

The introduction of the online portal has led to enhanced oversight and monitoring of documents required by the Agency to approve funding for services provided by these bodies. The online portal will provide the Agency with a consolidated overview of compliant and non-compliant funded agencies regarding all outstanding document submissions and services commissioned in each local service area across the country.

From the establishment of the Agency in 2014 key progress has been made in the following:

- The introduction of a new service contract for all core funding applicable in 2018, placing emphasis on compliance with the requirements of DPER Circular 13/2014 – Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds;
- A new operating model for governance, compliance and reporting was finalised which can be applied to organisations proportionate to their size and level of funding. This is referred to as the 'Good Governance Framework';
- An expansion to the current audit plan to incorporate a higher number of community, voluntary and charitable organisations. All funded agencies receive a copy of audit findings and recommendations;
- Design and implementation of an online portal to manage contracting and interactions with funded agencies;
- Progression of Area Commissioning Plans which provides a clear map of the services required at local level and how these needs are addressed. Reviews of the services required in 2018 has resulted in decommissioning of certain services that no longer meets the needs of the area, the introduction of new services as well as re-orientating existing services to address the local need;

- The Agency has established the Financial Compliance Unit to provide additional assurance through a process of compliance statements, reviews of published financial statements, analytics, data gathering and the audit programme;
- The Agency established a Commissioning Unit. Commissioning, in the context of the Child and Family Agency, is the process to ensure that the total resources available to children and families are applied to improving outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable, proportionate and sustainable way;
- The Agency has a Commissioning Strategy which outlines a framework for commissioning priorities and intentions for a three-year period; and
- Through internal audit, compliance and commissioning voluntary agencies are now held to a higher standard in terms of compliance, governance and service quality.

Conclusion

The Agency recognises that there is a need for continued emphasis on and development of the control environment and a focus on the need to drive a single organisation-wide culture of compliance.

The Child and Family Agency control environment, risk management processes and assurance arrangements are improving and where there are outstanding recommendations by Internal Audit and the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, management action to meet these recommendations will be monitored by the Board and its committees and will be reassessed in the 2019 review of the system of internal controls.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues within the Child and Family Agency who helped us deliver a service which is accountable, consistent and transparent.



Pat Rabbitte
Chairperson
Date 20.06.2019

Appendix Two – Summary of Corporate Risks and Controls

Strategic Objective	Risk Category	Key Risk	Controls/Planned Actions
Strategic Action 1: Integrated Supports and Services	Physical and Psychological Harm	Insufficient capacity to meet existing levels of service demand for CPWS	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with immediate risk of harm are prioritised • New CPWS staff recruited • Regular performance monitoring at all levels • Additional budget allocation for staffing from DCYA • PPPGs in place to support practice • Engagement with universities re new graduates • Service improvement plan in place • Implementation of Child Protection and Welfare Strategy • Involvement in the National Strategic Framework for Workforce Planning for Health and Social Care and planning for future supply of social workers <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace planning • Liaison with third-level institutions re bursaries and engagement on increasing the supply of social work and social care graduates • Unallocated care project team to be established
	Service User Experience	Risk to the safety, welfare and well-being of children in foster care due to inadequate resources and systems to ensure compliance with national standards	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rolling foster carer campaigns running • Regular performance monitoring at all levels • PPPGs in place to support and guide practice • Foster care placements are subject to safeguards including on-going vetting for foster carers and adult family members; regular visits to the household and inspections of fostering services by HIQA <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Alternative Care Strategy • Enhancement of operational guidance for the management of serious concerns and allegations underway • Pre-approval model to be developed for private foster care providers • Expansion of Out-of-Hours Service to include 24-hour telephone support for foster carers

Strategic Objective	Risk Category	Key Risk	Controls/Planned Actions
	Physical and Psychological Harm	Risk to the safety and well-being of children due to the lack of access to psychological and psychiatric services	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTS specialised clinical service in place • Some psychology provision is sourced from private practitioners in some cases of high need • Joint working group established with the HSE to develop working protocol • Capacity and needs analysis being conducted • MoU with the HSE <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tusla therapeutic services to be developed • One House to be established • ACTS regional teams to be established
	Service User Experience	Risk to the continuity of service delivery for young people who require special care services due to the lack of availability of placements	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active engagement with the DYCA and HR in relation to qualification requirements and recruitment needs • On-going recruitment and rolling job advertisements to fill vacancies • CPL actively recruiting on behalf of Special Care Services • Engaging with National Operations regarding the provision and management of onward placements • Engagement with private providers to provide specialist step down placements <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The outcome of the Judicial Review will inform further actions • SCU plan in development for a step down unit from special care in early 2019

Strategic Objective	Risk Category	Key Risk	Controls/Planned Actions
Strategic Objective 4: Relationship, Collaboration and Communication	Compliance and Reputational	Reduced public confidence in the Agency due to adverse findings from statutory investigations, inspections and serious incident reviews	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt and effective communication with all stakeholders • Continuous monitoring of threats to reputation • Crisis Communications Strategy in place • Area and regional governance fora in place <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building organisational resilience through strengthening corporate culture, making adjustments to operations or strategy and strengthening the brand • The building in of consideration for potential reputational damage to major strategic and business-planning decisions • Building capacity within the Communications Team • CPW briefing session with key media stakeholders
Strategic Objective 5: Policy and Legislation	Compliance	Lack of consistency and quality of service in user experience due to inconsistent implementation and application of policies, procedures and protocols	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedure in place for the development of Tusla-specific policies • Policy and Procedure Catalogue in place • National Policy Oversight Committee operational • QA quality reviews and performance reports to identify risks and improvements • Child Protection and Welfare Programme initiated, PMO to support implementation • Continued on-going progress to address development of Tusla-specific policies <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full implementation of Child Protection and Welfare Strategy • Survey with parents and children as part of the development and implementation of CPWS • Revised Section 3 policy due in 2019, to be known as the Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure

Strategic Objective	Risk Category	Key Risk	Controls/Planned Actions
	Operational	Risk to the safe and effective delivery of front-line services due to the scale and complexity of the Agency's change management programme	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong culture, leadership, structures and motivation to support change management programme • PMO support for change management in place • QA processes in place to support change-management processes • Clear communication strategy in place <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating key consistent critical messages to staff on the implementation of projects regularly and how it will impact on their workload • Monitoring the impact of the extra workload on staff and making adjustments as required to ensure staff are not overburdened • Clear processes for addressing difficulties as they arise • SMT to review all projects in the change-management process and determine and prioritise which ones are critical for the change effort • Continually monitor requirement for extra resources to support the change-management programme
Strategic Priority 6: Corporate Services	Physical and Psychological Harm	Risk to the safety, health and welfare of staff, service users, members of the public and others impacted by the Agency's activities due to a lack of compliance with existing health and legal requirements and the provision of resources to address reported occupational risks at a national level	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System for tracking actions from external inspection established • Site-specific risk assessments conducted on a regular basis • Requirement for all sites nationally to have in place an up-to-date site-specific Safety Statement and associated Risk Assessment applicable to the workplace and associated work activities • Health and safety risks required to be documented and tracked through area and regional risk registers • National Health and Safety Department in place • Increased management and staff awareness of health and safety requirements by on-going engagement of Regional Health and Safety Advisors with all services nationally • National Health and Safety Steering Committee established <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a comprehensive National Health and Safety Management System • National Strategy to be developed for the provision of both mandatory and hazard-specific health and safety training for staff • Implementation of existing health and safety arrangements by functional and service areas

Strategic Objective	Risk Category	Key Risk	Controls/Planned Actions
	Compliance	Risk of failing to meet statutory obligations and codes of practice for governance	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative supports in place with third parties • Training and awareness • Independent reviews conducted with actionable recommendations • Tusla policies regularly reviewed to ensure continued adequacy of compliance • Limited Subject Matter Experts in place • Programme of work commenced to assist service and functional units with developing and implementing organisational and technical measures to support Data Protection, FOI and PAD compliance <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating models for Data Protection, FOI and PAD being developed to include resourcing requirements • Recruitment of Data Protection Officer at level compliant with GPDR • Risk-based phased implementation of Data Protection, FOI and PAD organisational and technical measures by service and functional units to support compliance
	Operational	Risk to service delivery due to social work attrition rates	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment plan in place for social work vacancies • Review of social work panel • National Transfer Policy • Continued implementation of Tusla's continuing professional development strategy <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of exit interview data to identify areas for improvement for social work retention • Collaboration with Operations to develop an identified skill set for multidisciplinary teams in social work • Developing a retention strategy liaison with third-level institutions re bursaries, etc. • Attendance at National Strategic Framework for Workforce Planning for Health and Social Care • On-going development in 2018 of a Strategic Workforce Planning Model – Phase 1 Multidisciplinary Teams and Strategic Workforce Implementation Plan 2019–2020

Strategic Objective	Risk Category	Key Risk	Controls/Planned Actions
	Operational	Risk to the operational delivery of services due to a lack of suitable and safe office space	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New rentals of office space in place • Minor capital works on-going • MoU with HSE in relation to fire safety <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting of funding each year for priority areas as funds become available • Development of Estates Strategy • Capital plan for development of new office space • New rentals of office space planned • New Head of Estates to be appointed
	Operational	Risk to the effective functioning of the Agency and the management of data/records due to the impact of ICT service and infrastructure	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Director of ICT in place • ICT strategy developed • MoU in place with HSE • Additional resources for critical business projects (NCCIS) • Recruitment Phase 1 of ICT team completed • Service delivery partner vendor now in place to augment the ICT Team • Tender for data partner completed <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued recruitment and development of an internal Tusla ICT team • Continuing to progress the implementation of the ICT strategy • Negotiations on-going with HSE ICT to support Tusla's ICT self-sufficiency programme
	Financial	Risk of loss of public funds and ineffective use of Tusla funding due to insufficient and insufficiently robust financial governance	<p>Existing Controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts with external agencies are being established • Commissioning Unit and Strategy developed • New governance systems developed for Section 56 and 59 organisations • Compliance statements sought from funded organisations • Tusla-specific financial regulations continue to be developed • Procurement training for staff • Continued reliance on MoU • Compliance Unit established <p>Planned Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refining financial regulation and processes for all services • Developing/procuring fit-for-purpose ICT systems to support governance and control of financial activity



TUSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Saint John's Road West, Dublin 8. D08 X01F
Phone: 01 771 8500 | Email: info@tusla.ie

www.tusla.ie