



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs

Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Annual Report 2019



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FOREWORD BY THE MINISTER

I am delighted to welcome the publication of the eighth Annual Report of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The Report outlines the progress made in 2019 across all areas of the Department's responsibilities prior to the formation of the new Government in June of this year.

Since my appointment as Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the remit of the Department has been broadened with the inclusion of a number of very important policy areas. Both I and my colleague Anne Rabbitte, Minister of State, look forward to working with the Secretary General and the staff in the Department in setting out our new vision for the future work and direction of the Department. That vision will reflect a commitment to deliver on key commitments in the Programme for Government, and also the Department's new Statement of Strategy, which will be finalised over the coming months.

We will continue to set a challenging and ambitious agenda, with the objective of bringing real improvements in services and, in turn, in the quality of lives of those children, young people and marginalised groups who need our help and support.

Finally, I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the work done by my predecessor, Dr. Katherine Zappone, the staff of the Department and the sector in 2019. Through continued dedication and hard work, the Department will deliver on our existing and new commitments, and in doing so help to improve the quality of lives of the children, young people and marginalised groups in our society.

Roderic O'Gorman TD

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability Integration and Youth



INTRODUCTION BY SECRETARY GENERAL

I am pleased to introduce our Annual Report for 2019 which covers the eighth full year of work in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It is published in accordance with section 4 of the Public Service Management Act 1997.

It was another extremely busy year, in which we worked hard to implement the priorities set out in our *Statement of Strategy 2016-2019*. We were busy right across our brief, from child protection and welfare, to child care supports, to youth services, to prevention and early intervention and to the difficult legacy issues from the country's past. For example, we:

- launched the National Childcare Scheme. With its introduction, families have the first ever statutory entitlement to financial support towards the cost of childcare;
- published Regulations requiring the registration of school-age childcare services, which came into effect on 18th February 2019;
- published the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2019 in August, 2019. The Bill deals with the appointment of Guardians Ad litem (GALs) to children in court proceedings dealing with their welfare and protection;
- published an addendum to Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children on online safety;
- worked closely with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency on a range of measures designed to strengthen child welfare and protection services;
- set terms of reference and a timeline for an examination of legal options regarding DNA sampling in connection with the former Mother and Baby Home at Tuam;
- published the initial implementation plan for 'First 5' - Ireland's first ever strategy for early childhood;
- launched the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) *Shared Vision, Next Steps 2019 – 2024*;
- launched *What Works*, an initiative which aims to maximise the impact of prevention and early intervention to improve the lives of children and young people;

- published the Year 1 Report on Implementation of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, as well as the Mid-Term Review and Phase Two Action Plan of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 – 2020;
- received an *Excellence through Collaboration* award at the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards 2019, for the Bail Supervision Scheme, which was designed by the Department;
- continued the implementation of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme;
- analysed the potential implications of Brexit for our sector to ensure that all necessary steps are taken;
- laid a report on a review and consultation on the potential introduction of open or semi-open adoption in Ireland before the Houses of the Oireachtas; and
- worked to deal with the emergence of evidence of illegal registrations of births.

These are just some of the things we did in 2019. The Annual Report describes much more fully the many issues that we dealt with during the year. As always, I am proud to record my great appreciation of the staff of the Department for the work they do in so many ways to deliver on our mission and in turn to effect improvements in the lives of children and families. Thank you one and all. We also remember with great fondness those colleagues who sadly passed away during the year.

I also want to thank colleagues in other Government Departments, agencies and the wider children's sector for their continued co-operation and support. Cross-Government and inter-agency collaboration is a key feature of what we do and helps us to develop and deliver policies designed to support our children, young people and families.

With the formation of the new Government in June 2020, we will be taking on some very important and significant functions in the areas of disability, equality and integration. We welcome new colleagues who are joining us from the Department of Justice and Equality and from the Department of Health.

We extend our best wishes to the outgoing Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone, and we extend a warm welcome to our new Minister, Dr Roderic O'Gorman T.D., and Minister of State, Anne Rabbitte, T.D. We look forward to working with them as we implement a range of commitments in the Programme for a Partnership Government and in turn seek to achieve improved outcomes for our children, young people and marginalised groups in our society.

Fergal Lynch

Secretary General

Who We Are and What We Do

Mandate

The core function of our Department is to put in place a unified framework for policy, legislation and service provision across Government for children and young people.

In doing this, we focus on harmonising policy issues that affect children and young people in areas such as Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, youth justice, children in care, child welfare and protection, adoption, family support, children and young people's participation, research on children and young people, youth work and cross-cutting initiatives for children.

The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 – Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures – provides the context for our own work as well as the agenda for our leadership of effort to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Our Mission – Why we exist

To lead the effort to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland.

Our Vision – Where we want to get to

We want Ireland to be one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family. A place where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard; and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.

Strategic Objectives

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures is implemented	High quality Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare is accessible and affordable	Child welfare and protection systems are effective and responsive
Evidence-based policy is promoted and supported, and children and young people participate in decisions that affect their lives	High standards of compliance on governance and accountability are supported and enforced	Performance is improved through the effective alignment of resources

Our Values, Behaviours & Culture

We place children, young people and families at the heart of our work, aiming for better outcomes as the centre of policy development and service delivery	We value our staff and create an environment where they learn, develop and contribute to the goals of the organisation	We place outcomes for children and young people at the centre of policy and service delivery, informed by evidence
We support prevention and early intervention approaches	We seek to innovate and collaborate with other departments, agencies and sectors	We are accountable, open to change, customer-focused and respectful in our dealings with the public and work colleagues

We recognise the positive duty to ensure a human rights and equality approach to our work.

Part 1 - Overview

Strategic Objectives:

The work of the Department is underpinned by our Statement of Strategy 2016-2019, which includes six Strategic Objectives as follows:

- **Better Outcomes Brighter Futures is implemented**
 - *In 2019, the Department published the initial implementation plan for 'First 5'. Ireland's first ever strategy for early childhood, 'First 5', the Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children realises a key commitment in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and marked a major milestone in policy development for the youngest members of society.*
- **High quality early years care and education is accessible and affordable**
 - *The National Childcare Scheme was launched in 2019. With its introduction, families have the first ever statutory entitlement to financial support towards the cost of childcare. The Scheme is designed to provide a pathway to quality, accessible, affordable early learning and care and school age childcare.*
- **Child welfare and protection systems are effective and responsive**
 - *During 2019, the Department published an addendum to Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children on online safety. It made clear that all organisations and services working with young people must include online risks and safeguards in their legally required Child Safeguarding Statements.*
 - *The Department also published the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2019. This Bill seeks to address the significant inadequacies in existing Guardian ad litem (GAL) provisions under Section 26 of the Child Care Act 1991.*
- **Evidence-based policy is promoted and supported, and children and young people participate in decisions that affect their lives**
 - *During 2019 the Department published the Mid-Term Review and Phase Two Action Plan of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 – 2020.*
 - *The Department launched the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) Shared Vision, Next Steps 2019 – 2024.*
 - *The Department also continued to manage and progress Growing Up in Ireland: the National Longitudinal Study of Children.*
- **High standards of compliance on governance and accountability are supported and enforced**
 - *The Department revised its own Governance Framework in July 2019.*

- **Performance is improved through the effective alignment of resources**
 - *The Department recruited 47 new staff in 2019, accounting for around 16% of employees in the Department. 15 employees or 5% of employees were promoted through internal or external competitions. The Department held internal competitions at both PO and HEO level.*

2019 in Review

Some key highlights in 2019 include:

In **January**, Minister Zappone signed and published an addendum to Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children on online safety. It made clear that all organisations and services working with young people must include online risks and safeguards in their legally required Child Safeguarding Statements.

The Minister published the Fourth Interim Report from the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes. The Minister also published the Second Report on the implementation of Review Recommendation Action Plan for Oberstown Children Detention Campus.

In **February**, the Minister announced that the Terms of Reference and timeline had been set for an examination of legal options regarding DNA sampling in connection with the former Mother and Baby Home at Tuam.

The Minister also welcomed the publication of the Regulations requiring the registration of school-age childcare services, which came into effect on 18th February 2019. Minister Zappone also announced funding of €11.1m for national youth organisations in 2019.

In **March**, the Minister announced the launch of the National Childcare Scheme, the pathway to quality, accessible, affordable Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare in Ireland. The Minister also confirmed that up to 1,500 free training places were being made available to pre-school practitioners to ensure that their free pre-school services are inclusive and accessible to children with disabilities.

The Department also confirmed that there would be an increase in funding from €250,000 to €450,000 for children's play and recreation facilities across Ireland in 2019 for the refurbishment of existing play facilities.

In **April**, the Minister announced the details of the Programme Support Payment of over €19m due to be made available to all early learning and care providers in the

summer of 2019. The Fifth Interim Report from the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes was published on 17 April 2019.

An increase of €1.5 million per annum in funding was confirmed for Family Resource Centres for 2019. It was also confirmed that frontline services combating domestic, sexual and gender based violence would receive funding of €25.3m to support their services in 2019.

In **May**, the Minister launched a public and stakeholder consultation process on the potential introduction of open or semi-open adoption in Ireland.

The Minister unveiled the government's initial implementation plan for *First 5*, Ireland's first ever strategy for early childhood. A public and stakeholder consultation process on future regulations and a quality improvement framework for school-age childcare was also launched.

In **June**, the Minister announced a total of €6.25m in Capital funding to be awarded to providers of Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare. The funding will provide for the creation of new places for 0-3 year olds, new school age childcare places and essential fire safety improvements for community-owned services.

The Minister also launched *What Works*, an initiative which aims to maximise the impact of prevention and early intervention to improve the lives of children and young people.

In **July**, the Minister announced the continuation and extension of the successful Capacity Building Grant which provided funding to organisations working with young LGBTI+ people in services across the country in 2018.

The Minister also confirmed the appointment of a new Board of Management for the Oberstown Children Detention School.

The Minister announced €1.7 million in capital grant funding for 116 targeted staff-led youth projects/services and 20 national youth organisations across the country to fund small capital projects.

In **August**, the Minister published the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2019. This Bill seeks to address the significant inadequacies in existing Guardian ad litem (GAL) provisions under Section 26 of the Child Care Act 1991.

The Minister also launched the Draft Childminding Action Plan, for the purpose of public consultation. The Draft Action Plan outlines proposals for improving access to high quality and affordable early learning and care and school-age childcare through childminding.

In **September**, the Minister published Dr Geoffrey Shannon's Report on the Collection of Tuam Survivors' DNA.

The Minister announced the formal initiation of a project to develop a new Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare and the establishment of an Expert Group to lead this work.

The Minister also announced funding awards of over €300,000 to organisations that received funding under the 2018 Innovation Fund, in order to support existing projects by enabling them to finalise their innovative projects that support children, young people and their families.

Funding supports of €167,000 for youth services working with young LGBTI+ people were also announced in this month.

In **October**, Budget 2020, saw extra funding of over €94m announced for Tusla, childcare and youth services, bringing the total projected investment by the Department in these areas to €1.6 billion for 2020.

The Minister and Comhairle na nÓg National Executive launched the Social Media Campaign #TeachMeAsMe to promote individuality in schools.

The Minister also launched the Year 1 Report on Implementation of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, as well as the Mid-Term Review and Phase Two Action Plan of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 – 2020.

In **November**, the Minister launched the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) Shared Vision, Next Steps 2019 – 2024.

The Minister also laid a report on a review and consultation on the potential introduction of open or semi-open adoption in Ireland laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Bail Supervision Scheme, which was designed by the Department and is operated by Extern, was presented with the Excellence through Collaboration award at the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards 2019.

The Minister announced funding of €1,514,000 under the *What Works* initiative to support the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) responses that align with intended actions contained in the draft policy Blueprint for the development of educational services.

In **December**, the Minister marked the opening of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) for online applications with the Taoiseach. She also announced the details of the 2020 Early Learning and Care and School Age Capital programmes with funding of €8.1 million for childcare capital grants across 2020.

The Minister announced a number of arts bursaries to be delivered through four arts and cultural organisations working with Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare services.

The Minister also launched the *Our Voices Our Schools* online resource to improve participation of young people in decision-making in the school system.

A new targeted youth funding scheme entitled, *UBU - Your Place Your Space*, which provides over €38.5 million for youth services was launched by the Department.

The Department also published the General Scheme of the Certain Institutional Burials (Authorised Interventions) Bill 2019.

In summary, 2019 was a very busy and productive year for the Department. Numerous policy and legislative initiatives were advanced with the objective of improving the lives of children and young people. The work of the Department also required staff to

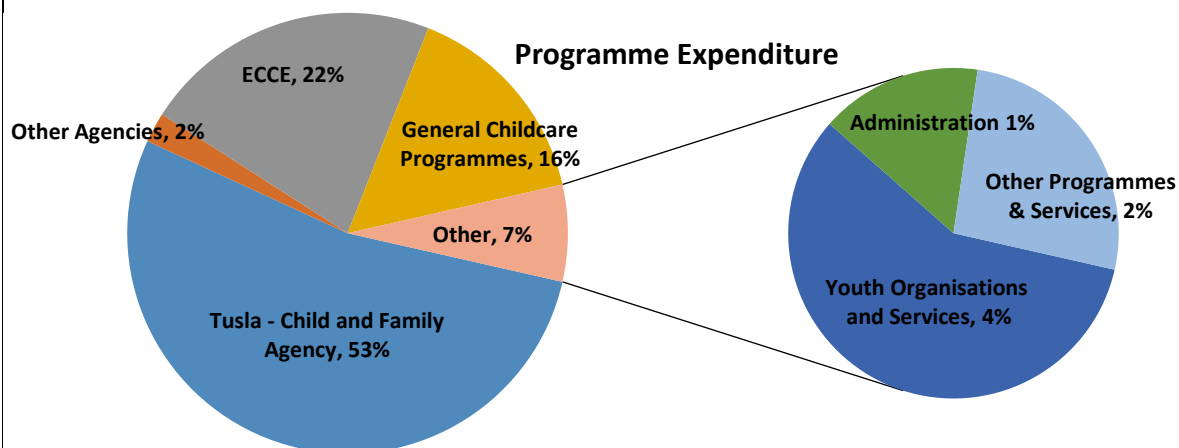
discharge the full range of responsibilities of a Government Department in supporting the work of the Minister and the Government, and in discharging financial and other accountability objectives to the Oireachtas.

Part 2 of our Annual Report summarises the progress achieved during 2019 in respect of each of the objectives as set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy. These objectives are reflected in the annual Business Plans of relevant Units in the Department.

Finance

The gross funding provision for the Department under Vote 40 in 2019 was €1.525 billion, which represented an increase of €122 million, or 9%, over 2018 funding levels. The actual expenditure incurred by the Department and its agencies was €1.518 billion*. The expenditure in 2019 enabled a significant level of services to be delivered across three programme areas as follows:

		Outturn
		€000
Programme Expenditure		
A	Children and Family Support Programme	835,876
B	Sectoral Programmes for Children and Young People	654,520
C	Policy and Legislation Programme	27,379
Gross expenditure		1,517,775
Deduct		
D	Appropriations-in-aid	(27,064)
Net expenditure		<u>1,490,711</u>



Details of initiatives taken in 2019 under each of the three Programme headings are set out in the sections below.

Part 2: Progress Achieved in 2019

Programme A: Children and Family Support

Introduction

Child Care Legislation and Children's Rights Policy

Guardian ad litem (GAL) reform

The Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2019 was published in August 2019 and completed Third (Committee) Stage in the Dáil in late October.

The Bill addresses significant inadequacies in the existing arrangements (Section 26 of the Child Care Act, 1991). It sets out the process whereby an individual GAL is assigned to a child care case and specifies the role of a GAL. It also provides the statutory basis for the establishment of a national GAL service within an executive office of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

The GAL Executive Office Project Team continued to lay the groundwork to allow for a smooth transition from the current system as soon as possible after the enactment of the legislation.

Review of the Child Care Act 1991

The Review of the Child Care Act (CCA) 1991 is being carried out as part of a Government commitment under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The purpose of the review is to ascertain what is working well in the current legislation, and to address any identified gaps, operational improvements, and new areas for development.

In 2019, the Department continued to consult with stakeholders to collect their views and experiences on how best to reform the Act, building on the findings from past consultations. This included a targeted stakeholder consultation on Part V of the Act that deals specifically with jurisdiction and procedure, and an Open Policy Debate on foster care, followed by a series of regional events on same.

Furthermore, the Department commissioned a thematic review into international approaches to child care proceedings with a view to informing the development of proposals in relation to reforming child care proceedings in Ireland. The Report was published in June. The Department was also engaged with the Department of Justice and Equality in relation to the proposed establishment of Family Court Divisions.

Research and consultations have informed the development of a number of proposals in 2019. It is intended that a consultation will be carried out in 2020 to seek stakeholder views on the various proposals.

Parenting Support Policy

The Department established a Parenting Support Policy Unit at the end of 2018 to co-ordinate policy direction and activity relating to parenting support. In 2019, the unit initiated collaboration and engagement with a wide range of departments, agencies and organisations, raising awareness of the role of the unit and gaining an understanding of development, funding and provision of parenting support services.

Work underway to advance the First 5 parenting support commitments included securing agreement on the approach for the development of a national model of parenting support services, and the development and commencement of an implementation plan for each action.

Child Welfare and Protection Policy

Children First Inter-Departmental Implementation Group (CFIDIG)

The CFIDIG includes representatives from every Government Department, the HSE, Tusla and An Garda Síochána. It met three times during 2019 and continued to focus on monitoring of the implementation of the Children First Act.

An addendum to the Children First guidance, which was reviewed by the group in 2018, was issued and published by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs under section 6 of the Children First Act, in January 2019. The addendum, which followed from a commitment in the Action Plan for Online Safety 2018-19, clarifies that organisations providing relevant services to children should consider the specific issue of online safety when carrying out their risk assessment and preparing their Child Safeguarding Statement.

The CFIDIG decided that an information campaign to build awareness about Children First and the requirement on organisations providing relevant services to children to prepare Child Safeguarding Statements was required. A subgroup of the CFIDIG was established to progress this matter, with the aim of launching a Children First Awareness Week in 2020.

Special Rapporteur on Child Protection

The 12th Report of the then Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, Dr Geoffrey Shannon, was presented to Government in December 2019 and subsequently published. It was circulated to all relevant Government Departments for appropriate action in relation to its recommendations. Dr Shannon served in the role of Special Rapporteur on Child Protection from July 2006 until July 2019. Dr Conor O'Mahony succeeded Dr Shannon in the role from July 2019. He was appointed by Government for a three year term following an open competition run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS).

ISPCC (Missing Children Hotline)

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) in relation to funding the *116,000 Missing Children Hotline* (operated by ISPCC) was agreed and signed in May 2019 and is now operational. The Hotline operates 24/7 and provides emotional support and advice to young people and adults in relation to missing children.

Child Protection Agenda of the Health Sector of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC)

The Department continued to participate in the Cross-Border Child Protection Officials Group.

This group, which is under the auspices of the Health sectoral area of the North South Ministerial Council, was established to cooperate on a range of child protection matters.

Tusla Governance and Performance Oversight

Strategic Objective 1: Better Outcomes Brighter Futures is implemented

Engaged with Tusla on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) services:

In 2019, €25.3 million was allocated by Tusla to Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) services to some 60 specialist organisations that support adult and child victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence. Total funding increased by €1.5 million compared to 2018. Some of the additional funding for DSGBV in 2019 provided for the recruitment of outreach workers to support people affected by domestic violence to get support and services. It also allowed for access to a 12 week healing programme for child victims of domestic violence in more areas around the country.

Throughout 2019, DCYA and Tusla worked to progress obligations under the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)* and the *Second National Strategy for Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services (2016 – 2021)*.

This included work begun by Tusla on a Strategic Accommodation Review. This review will examine the existing availability of crisis emergency accommodation across the country. It will help Tusla, the Department, and other government departments and state bodies identify the number of spaces and resources required to ensure that people leaving violent homes have a place of refuge.

Engaged with Tusla on Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme:

In 2019, the Department provided €18m to Tusla to support Family Resource Centres. This included an additional €1.5m that was used to:

- Increase core funding to each of the 110 FRCs which existed pre-2018 by 5%.
- Employ additional Family Support Workers in each of the 17 Tusla geographical areas.
- Fund the Family Resource Centre Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion Programme.

This funding directly supported services in the community aimed at keeping families strong. It is helping children and their families deal especially with difficult periods in their lives. In 2019, there were 121 Family Resource Centres supported by Tusla as part of the Family Resource Centre Programme. Funding to the Family Resource Centre Programme has increased from €13.5m in 2014, to €18m in 2019.

Strategic Objective 5: High standards on governance and accountability are supported and enforced

Implemented arrangements to oversee compliance by Tusla with statutory and other governance provisions in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

The Department continued to ensure compliance by the Agency with statutory and other governance provisions as set out in the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016). In 2019, the Department engaged closely with the Tusla Executive and the Tusla Board in relation to compliance with statutory and non-statutory instruments.

In 2019, the Department also secured Government approval to increase the Tusla Board complement by 2 ordinary Board members. An amendment to the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, will be made when either the Child Care Amendment Bill (Guardian Ad Litem Reform) or the Adoption Information and Tracing Bill are going through the Oireachtas. This will allow for the necessary legislative changes to increase Tusla's Board complement by two ordinary members.

A revised Oversight Agreement, setting out the formal oversight and governance engagements between DCYA and Tusla, was agreed in June 2019. Tusla provided monthly and quarterly performance reports to the Department throughout the year, tracking progress on deliverable Business Plan actions. The reports have been subject to detailed discussion and review. The Department met on a monthly basis with Tusla's senior management team. The Minister met with the Chairperson and the respective Chairpersons of the Tusla Board committees to review performance. The Department also held two governance meetings with the Secretary to the Tusla Board and relevant Tusla staff. In addition, the Secretary General met with Tusla's Chief Executive Officer on a monthly basis.

An internal audit of governance arrangements in respect of Tusla was carried out in 2019. The audit found that overall reasonable assurance can be placed on the sufficiency and

operation of internal controls to mitigate and/or manage inherent risks related to the governance of Tusla by the Department.

Supplementary Estimate

In 2019, Tusla was allocated funding of €784.6m under subhead A3, representing an increase of €31m (4.1%) in funding over 2018. This sum covers a range of items including quality measures, administration costs and demand led services.

In early 2019, Tusla identified a potential to overspend by the end of the year and actively sought to identify cost containment measures to mitigate against the requirement for a Supplementary Estimate. The Department brought this issue to the attention of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) in May 2019.

In previous years, Tusla managed to contain cost pressures by way of time related savings (TRS) across other areas of its expenditure. However, in 2019 this was no longer possible. Overspends primarily occurred in the areas of Private Residential and Foster Care along with third party legal fees, including Guardian ad Litem related costs.

Tusla's 2019 year end outturn totalled €809.2m, which included a supplementary estimate of €15m and redirected savings from other areas of the Vote amounting to €9.6m.

Child Care Performance and Social Work

Strategic Objective 3: Child welfare and protection systems are effective and responsive

Expert Advisory Group

The Expert Advisory Group (EAG), established in 2018 to monitor the implementation of the report of the recommendations in the HIQA investigation into the management of allegations of child sexual abuse against adults of concern, by the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), met 8 times in 2019. The final meeting was held in September 2019. The EAG has overseen progress in areas identified by HIQA as needing urgent action:

1. Screening and Preliminary Enquiry;
2. Safety Planning;
3. Management of Retrospective Cases.

The EAG published three quarterly reports in January, April and July 2019 and oversaw progress on all themes in Tusla's action plan. It determined that sufficient evidence of momentum had been provided for the process to conclude, and the EAG's final report was submitted to the Minister Tusla's Board in November, 2019.

In conjunction with a paper prepared by HIQA, a report reviewing international practice in the regulation of children's social services was compiled and submitted to EAG.

Trends in Tusla performance data

A detailed review of data trends regarding Tusla's first five years in operation was carried out. The findings were presented at a seminar held in early December 2019. Papers arising from the review are being prepared for publication.

Coordinated services for children who experience sexual abuse

A pilot project based on the Barnahus model of service delivery to children who have experienced sexual abuse was launched in September 2019. The Department chairs the inter-departmental working group established to explore cross agency centres to support children and the families of children who have suffered child sexual abuse, which oversaw the development of the pilot service. The service, which is based on the Icelandic 'Barnahus' model, brings together child protection, assessment, health, therapeutic and policing services in a child centred environment. The aim is to minimise, as far as possible, any additional trauma for the child and their family and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of child sexual abuse support services. In 2019, Tusla was provided with additional funding of €300,000 to establish the pilot centre. An external consultant was commissioned to capture relevant learning from the establishment of the pilot site, to guide the further development of the service on a national scale.

Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP)

The Department continued to engage closely with the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service (INIS), local authorities and Tusla on the relocation of unaccompanied minors, as part of its role within the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.

At the end of 2018, Tusla had received 51 unaccompanied children under IRPP. This number comprised 6 from Greece, 41 from Calais and 4 from Malta. While the high cost and low supply of housing has had an impact on satisfying commitments made in relation to IRPP, the Department continues to work towards fulfilling Ireland's obligations to refugees and, in particular, to refugee children separated from their families.

Strategic Objective 4: Evidence-based policy is promoted and supported, and children and young people participate in decisions that affect their lives

Direct Provision standards

The Department contributed to the Interdepartmental Working Group (IDG), chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality, developing standards for Direct Provision. The Department focussed on issues relating to children and assisted in the development of governance standards as well as contributing to the final report of the Group which was completed in December.

Working Group on the use of data and research

In line with a recommendation in the Ryan Report, work began in 2019 to establish a working group of officials from the DCYA and Tusla to develop recommendations on the use of data and research to improve understanding of the lives of children in care and leaving care. This will also include consideration of the feasibility of conducting longitudinal research on children in care or leaving care.

Social work expertise

The Department has professional Social Work advice available and has recruited additional staff with expertise to deepen the in-house knowledge that informs the development of policy and interdepartmental work. This has helped inform policy development and practice guidance in key areas such as foster care, governance and regulation, standards development, identification of performance indicators and data analysis. The Department continues to respond to issues raised by the public, the media and the Oireachtas about child welfare and protection.

Strategic Objective 5: High standards of compliance on governance and accountability are supported and enforced

Inspection reports

The Health Information and Quality Authority inspects Tusla child welfare and protection services, foster care services and Tusla-run residential centres for children. The Department received 39 reports in 2019, based on HIQA inspections of 14 children's residential centres and 4 regional residential care services; foster care in 10 areas and 2 private providers; 5 child protection and welfare service areas; 3 special care units; and 1 service area inspection (foster care and residential care). In addition, Tusla submitted inspection reports of 109 private and voluntary children's residential centre inspections. The National Review Panel and the Ombudsman for Children also published reports, which were reviewed and analysed to identify key learnings and emergent issues. This includes examples of good practice, areas for service improvement and input to policy development.

The Department has also contributed to the HIQA Expert Advisory Group on the development of a thematic inspection framework for all phases of child protection social work from referral to completion of initial assessment. The Department is also represented on a HIQA Advisory Group on the development of new National Standards for Children's Services.

The Department analyses the monthly and annual data on key performance indicators submitted by Tusla. This analysis monitors performance and identifies trends, informs budget allocations, allows for international comparisons and identifies service areas requiring improvement. It also supports the work of the Department, informing estimates discussions, workforce planning, and policy development. A collaborative effort between Tusla and the Department saw the development of four new metrics related to children in care. Reporting of these metrics will commence in 2020.

Strategic Objective 6: Performance is improved through the effective alignment of resources

To augment policy development and operational oversight capabilities, the Department draws on its reviews and analysis of the reports from Tusla, the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO), the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), the National Review Panel, NGOs and research in relation to children's services.

The Department engaged in collaborative work internally and with the Central Statistics Office and Tusla to begin exploring the feasibility of linking administrative data on children in care and educational attainment and attendance data.

Tusla Programme Development and Cross Government Framework

Tusla Education Support Service

The Department continued the development of policy blueprint for future direction of the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), including holding a number of Consultation events to ascertain the views of stakeholders in the blueprint.

An additional funding allocation of €400,000 for 2020 has been secured to support Tusla in discharging their statutory educational welfare functions. This funding is for the TESS and the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Services (AEARS) with an equal breakdown for each of the service strands. Further funding of €1.6m was secured under *What Works* for a range of measures focusing on TESS including for the School Completion Programme operational development.

The Department worked collaboratively with the Department of Education and Skills and TESS on the development of guidelines in relation to the use of reduced timetables in schools.

A range of Section 15 Reviews in relation to education outside of a recognised school have been completed, and continuous support has been offered to the National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy Education Subgroup including finalisation of baseline research and initiation of research into impact of the pilot supports.

Significant work was advanced in preparations for the adaptation of the *City Connects* model developed by Boston College to an Irish context. The piloting of this model of integrated student supports will take place in schools in North East Inner City Dublin.

Irish Youth Justice Service

Bail Supervision Scheme

The Bail Supervision Scheme (BSS) provides intensive support for young people's caregivers to facilitate sustainable change in young people's behaviour to adhere with bail conditions laid down by the courts, while reducing re-offending and promoting engagement in pro-social activities. In 2019, the Scheme received the Community Corrections Award 2019 at the International Corrections & Prisons Association (ICPA) Conference and the award for excellence through collaboration at the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards. The Scheme was evaluated in 2019 and the findings reflect the positive outcomes achieved in a number of areas including a reduction in offending behaviour; a greater compliance with bail conditions and a reduction in custodial sanctions. Funding was secured to support an expansion of the scheme in 2020.

Programme B: Sectoral Programmes for Children and Young People

Introduction

Tusla Programme Development and Cross Government Framework

Tusla PPFS Programme

The ABC Programme successfully transitioned to Tusla, with new guidance for the programme developed to support its future development as part of the wider Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme. DCYA continued to support the PPFS Programme as critical to Tusla's service offering of prevention and early intervention, in order to overcome or avert difficulties that may occur in the lives of children and young people.

What Works

What Works was launched in July 2019 with a [website](#) and the online [Outcomes for Children Data and Information Hub](#). *What Works* is an initiative led by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, with funding from Dormant Accounts, to support a move towards evidence informed prevention and early intervention services for children, young people and their families.

During the year, a series of Capacity Development initiatives were delivered, including two Executive Leadership Programmes in partnership with the University of Limerick, a national programme of action learning sets and a data seminar.

The Network Support Funding Measure continued in 2019, with €300,266 provided in funding to organisations across Ireland to share knowledge and improve the lives of children, young people and their families.

A co-ordinating organisation was also secured through a procurement process. This organisation is intended to support the work and administration of *What Works* to ensure that the initiative reaches its full potential of improving the data, evidence, capacity and quality of prevention and early intervention services for children, young people and families.

External HR

The Department developed and embedded the functional and cross-functional collaboration roles of its External Human Resources Unit to enable agreement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on a number of complex HR and pension matters in the Department's agencies and some external bodies, including:

- remuneration/superannuation arrangements for CEO posts at Tusla and the Adoption Authority of Ireland;
- approval for the continuation of exceptional incremental credit arrangements for Residential Social Care Workers at Oberstown Children Detention Campus to address recruitment challenges;
- an action plan and timeline for the regularisation of the superannuation scheme for pre-2013 staff at Oberstown Children Detention Campus;
- an interim solution to significant historical pension issues at the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children;
- continued support to internal policy units and associated Department agencies and sectoral bodies with regard to HR and IR matters arising.

Social Work Education Group (SWEG)

The Department established the *Social Work Education Group* in January 2019 to explore the supply of social work graduates with key stakeholders, higher education institutions and Tusla.

- The Group comprises of NUIG, University College Cork (UCC), University College Dublin (UCD), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Sligo Institute of Technology, and Maynooth University along with other key players such as Tusla, the HSE, the Probation Service, the Irish University Association (IUA), the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Solas, and the Department of Education and Skills.
- The inclusion in the Group of stakeholders from the HSE and funded services, Tusla and the Probation Service ensures that the three main public sector employers of social workers in Ireland are represented.
- The key issue for exploration in 2019 was the streamlining and formalising of the statutory placement process for social work students in order to support the provision of more training places.
- The Department commissioned research to identify ways and alternative approaches to streamline this process, working with stakeholders.
- The final report and possible next steps will be considered in 2020.

Tusla Strategic Workforce Planning Model

The Department provided ongoing support to Tusla in the development of the Agency's first *Strategic Workforce Planning Model* to identify the future composition of Tusla's workforce for 2019 and beyond.

- This change is essential to enable Tusla's response to findings of HIQA's 2018 *Report of Investigation into the management of allegations of child sexual abuse against adults of concern by the Child and Family Agency (Tusla)* which highlighted

the need for social workers to focus on their core responsibilities and to be supported by appropriate complementary staff.

- Department officials participate on Tusla Steering & Working Groups to oversee and drive the implementation of the Strategic Workforce Planning Model.

Adoption Policy

Post adoption support

Under Dormant Accounts funding, the Department, through Tusla, has continued to support Barnardos post-adoption therapy. This includes individual therapeutic services for adopted children and parents as well as group work with adopted children and teenagers.

In 2019, Barnardos expanded its post adoption services nationally, opening new post-adoption centres in Cork and Galway, as well as expanding the existing Dublin centre. This means that for the first time there is national coverage of the therapeutic post-adoption service available to children adopted domestically, internationally, or adopted from foster care.

Youth Reform, Strategy and Participation

Youth Reform Significant Achievements 2019:

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs formally launched the youth funding programme **UBU Your Place Your Space** on December 16th 2019 with a value of €38.5million.

The launch of the scheme marked the culmination of a substantial programme of reform of four separate targeted youth funding schemes. Key elements of the reform programme in 2019 included:

A series of stakeholder engagement and consultation events, including a consultation process with young people for the design and branding of the new scheme;

Design of required processes, tools and outputs including a Policy and Operating Rules document, Three User Guides, a suite of proposed KPIs, an implementation plan, a website for the new scheme, and,

A comprehensive service level agreement which was agreed between DCYA and each Education and Training Board (ETB) for a variety of youth funding programmes.

Youth Affairs

Youth Programmes

The overall budget for the youth sector in 2019 was €60.4 million. This funding supported the delivery of a range of youth work programmes and services by the voluntary youth work sector for all young people, including those from disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised communities.

The largest share of youth funding directly supported the delivery of targeted youth services, with €38.5 million provided to funded organisations through the Education and Training Boards (ETB).

National Youth Organisations benefitted from €11 million in universal funding for 2019 under the Youth Services Grant Scheme.

2019 also saw the continued funding of €1million for the Youth Employability Initiative that targets young people who are not in employment, education or training in order to assist them on their progression to employment.

Funding of €3.7 million was made available to the 16 ETBs around the country in relation to their governance work supporting youth services, and funding of €2 million was made available for the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme this year.

In 2019 a Capital Grant Scheme worth €1.7million was made available to national youth organisations and staff-led youth services to fund small capital projects.

Governance

UBU - Your Place, Your Space was launched in December 2019 with a formal starting date of 1st July 2020. *UBU - Your Place, Your Space* provides for services that support young people who are marginalised, disadvantaged, or vulnerable to develop the personal and social skills required to improve their life chances.

The Department meets bi-annually with the largest recipients of the Youth Service Grant Scheme (YSGS) with a specific focus on governance, compliance and financial issues. This is augmented by Pobal verification visits to a sample of organisations each year.

The Department continued its engagement with the 16 local Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and their national representative association, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI).

EU/International Engagement on Youth Affairs

The Department continued to represent Ireland at the Youth Working Party in Brussels, supporting the work of the EU Council of Ministers for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (EYCS) under the Romanian and Finnish presidencies in 2019.

Representatives from the Department attended Erasmus+ programme Committee meetings in Brussels with their colleagues from the Department of Education and Skills, and also represented Ireland on youth issues within the Council of Europe.

North-South Cooperation

As one of the accountable departments for the Children and Young People's component of the PEACE IV programme, the Department continued to work with officials from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland to support and improve the lives of young people in Northern Ireland and in the border region, on a cross community and cross border basis. The Department continued to fulfil its North-South Education and Training Standards (NSETS) Committee responsibilities.

Early Years Policy and Programmes: First 5

Strategic Objective 1

Publication of the First 5 Implementation Plan (2019-2021)

Following on from the launch of *First 5, A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028)* in November 2018, the First 5 Implementation Plan was published in May 2019. This covers the first phase of First 5 implementation and identifies key milestones for each action across 2019, 2020 and 2021 as well as the key output for the action by 2021.

During 2019, some of the essential building blocks for successful implementation of First 5 were also put in place. A First 5 Implementation Office was established and a Communications Plan and a Research and Evaluation Plan for the strategy were developed.

Development of a new Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare

An Expert Group to develop a new Funding Model for Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC), one of the actions contained in First 5, was established in September 2019. The Expert Group's inaugural meeting took place in October 2019 and the Group has met 5 times to date. The Expert Group is independently chaired and is composed of both national and international experts, as well as policy experts from the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs, Education and Skills and Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Expert Group is tasked with examining the current model of funding, its effectiveness in delivering high quality, affordable, accessible, ELC and SAC in a sustainable sector. It is also considering how additional resourcing can be delivered for the sector to achieve these objectives, drawing on international practice in this area.

A Research Partner, Frontier Economics, was appointed in late 2019 and is producing a number of working papers to support the work of the Expert Group.

A programme of nationwide consultation and engagement to hear the views of parents, staff, providers and the wider sectoral organisations is also planned to inform this work.

It is envisaged that the Expert Group will run to 2021 and the Group's recommendations will be submitted to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and ultimately the Government. The documentation relating to each Expert Group meeting is available at the project's website: www.first5fundingmodel.gov.ie

Independent Review of the Cost of Providing Quality Childcare

Crowe was commissioned by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to undertake an independent review on the cost of providing quality childcare in Ireland. The brief included:

- analysing the current costs of providing childcare and the factors that impact on these costs;
- the development and delivery of a model of the unit costs of providing childcare that allows analysis of policy changes and variation in cost-drivers, including the potential impact of professionalization; and,
- providing an objective, high-level market analysis of the childcare sector in Ireland, including analysis of fee levels charged to parents.

The project is intended to provide a robust evidence base for the further development of high quality Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare in Ireland. The outputs, including the costs calculator developed through this project, are also intended to form a key input into the setting of capitation and subvention rates for future funding schemes and will be considered by the Expert Group recently convened to develop a new funding model for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare. The draft final report, cost modelling tool and guidance were subject to peer review in 2019. Arising from the external peer review, an additional piece of work was undertaken and preparations have been made for a launch in 2020.

Annual Early Years Sector Profile (AEYSP)

The Annual Early Years Sector Profile Report 2018/2019 was launched in December, 2019. The seventeenth report in the series provides a detailed overview of the early learning and care and school age childcare sector in Ireland, including the numbers of children enrolled in early learning and care and school-age childcare settings and the numbers of children in receipt of State subsidies. It also includes up-to-date information on the number of places available to children, the fees charged to parents, and the qualifications and wages of staff working in the sector. The Report, which plays a central role in informing policy development and in assessing the impact of policy change, is based on survey and administrative data and is undertaken by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. 3,821 early learning and care and school-age childcare settings participated in the survey in May 2019, yielding a response rate of 85%.

International Affairs

The European Semester, which is the annual cycle of fiscal and economic coordination within the EU, sees Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) issued to countries on areas where the Commission feels significant progress needs to be made. In 2019, the Department had lead responsibility for addressing the part of the Country Specific Recommendation which requested Ireland to “increase access to affordable and quality childcare”.

Cross-Government Projects

In 2019, the Department has been actively involved in cross-government work related to Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, inputting into a number of national initiatives, strategies and projects across many Departments. Some of these notable inputs were provided for Pathways to Work, Future Jobs Ireland, and the Roadmap for Social Inclusion. This cross-government work takes account of the wide reaching policy areas for

the Department such as female labour market participation, early childhood poverty and disadvantage, and a professionalised Early Learning and Care workforce.

Early Years Scheme Oversight and Communications

Strategic Objective 2

- In 2019 all Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare schemes were administered successfully. Rules governing the schemes were revised to enhance governance and provide greater clarity for providers around compliance issues. The 2019 Budget allocation for the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), Community Childcare Subvention (CCS)/Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) and Training and Employment Childcare (TEC) Schemes was €455.3m
- The Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Capital Programme 2019 provided €6.1 million for the creation of 1,321 new places for 0-3 year olds; 3,123 new school age childcare places; and 31 essential maintenance and repair projects.
- €19.4 million in Programme Support Payments were provided to childcare services to contribute towards the administrative costs associated with the operation of Department funded programmes.
- Supports were made available to services in respect of their General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) obligations.
- The Department worked with the Department of Justice and Equality, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme and County Childcare Committees to develop Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare services for families living in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres.
- Funding of €11m and €2.5m was provided to 30 County Childcare Committees and 7 National Voluntary Childcare Organisations respectively to provide support and guidance to local service providers and parents in relation to the various childcare programmes, to provide professional development training and to support quality in accordance with national frameworks and the Department's policy objectives.

Communications

The Department held constructive consultations with stakeholder representatives, through a number of initiatives, including the Early Years Forum. The Forum is made up of stakeholders of the early years' sector with representatives from childcare providers, parents and children's organisations. The Forum met on 3 occasions in 2019. A subgroup of the Forum was also established to examine the issues that impact on the professionalization of the early learning and care workforce and to prepare proposals for consideration by the Early Years Forum. The subgroup met with the Department on one occasion in 2019.

- Over 900 representations were received by the Department on behalf of children, parents or providers were in 2019;
- 488 Parliamentary Questions were submitted on early years' issues in 2019;
- Over 2000 individual queries relating to early years were answered by the Department;
- 7 early years' newsletters were issued to all providers in 2019, to update them on issues in the sector. The newsletters were supplemented by emails alerting providers to important issues.
- A new website was launched to consolidate information on the County Childcare Committees,

Early Years Quality

Strategic Objective 2

Childminding Action Plan

In August 2019, the Department published a draft Childminding Action Plan, which set out short, medium, and long-term measures for the regulation and support of childminders on a phased basis over the next decade. An extensive consultation on the Action Plan took place in the last quarter of 2019. Following this, a report was commissioned by the Department to consider the findings of the consultation process. This was completed in December 2019. The conclusions of the report will guide the development of a Childminding Action Plan for approval by the Government. A National Childminding Co-ordinator and a team of regional Childminding Development Officers have also been appointed to support the implementation of the Action Plan.

Workforce Qualifications

The Department maintains a list of qualifications that meet regulatory and contractual requirements. Early learning and care practitioners, whose qualification is not on the list, must undergo a process of qualification recognition. In 2019, nearly 1,200 applications for recognition of qualifications were processed.

The Department worked with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) on the establishment of new criteria and guidelines for level 7 and 8 courses in early learning and care, beginning in 2021. These new criteria and guidelines were published by DES in April 2019. The Department also worked with Quality and Qualifications Ireland on a review of Level 5 and 6 qualifications.

Workforce Development Plan

A Steering Group was established in May 2019 to begin work on a Workforce Development Plan for the early years' sector. The Plan will aim to raise the profile of careers in the sector, including through the establishment of role profiles, career pathways, qualifications requirements and associated policy mechanisms along with leadership development

opportunities. The Plan will also look at how a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce can be attained in the sector.

The Workforce Development Plan involves close collaboration between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills. In order to ensure a strong consultation process, a Stakeholder Group comprising representatives from across the sector was formed to work in conjunction with the Steering Group. Both groups met a number of times in 2019, and supported planning for an extensive consultation with the workforce.

Learner Fund

The Department awarded 481 bursary awards to graduates of degree programmes on the DCYA's list of recognised qualifications under the Learner Fund in 2019. As part of the wider initiative to support quality in childminding, the Learner Fund was expanded to support registered childminders who met the regulatory requirements for qualifications. Take-up of childminding bursaries is expected to increase over time in line with reforms of the childminding sector.

In 2019, the Learner Fund continued to support Continuing Professional Development (CPD) initiatives including Hanen and Lámh training (as part of the Access and Inclusion Model). Funding was made available to support the rollout of First Aid Response (FAR) training accredited by the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) which is due to become a regulatory requirement in 2021.

Better Start

The Better Start Quality Development Service (a Department initiative hosted by Pobal) continued to deliver a mentoring programme for early learning and care services. In 2019, Better Start's quality development role was extended through the introduction of the Aistear and Play CPD programme, delivered by Better Start early years specialists and coordinated by the new Learning and Development Unit within Better Start.

Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)

AIM supports children with disabilities to access and meaningfully participate in the ECCE universal pre-school programme. AIM is a child-centred model that involves seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to targeted, based on the needs of the child and the early learning and care setting.

In the 2018/2019 programme year, 5,560 children received over 8,000 targeted AIM supports across 2,397 settings. In addition, universal AIM supports have reached much greater numbers of children and settings.

In October 2019, a further 877 pre-school practitioners graduated from the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) higher education programme, which trains Inclusion Coordinators in pre-school settings.

In August of 2019 AIM launched a new CPD course for the early learning and care sector. The Sensory Processing E-Learning (SPEL) course focuses on supports for children with sensory processing needs. In 2019 more than 400 practitioners completed the course.

In 2019 AIM supports included a pilot of nursing support and healthcare assistance for children with complex healthcare needs in mainstream preschool settings.

Demonstration Project 2019 - In Early Learning and Care Therapy Supports

The purpose of the demonstration project, led by the Department of Education and Skills, in collaboration with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Health, is to develop and test a tiered model for the delivery of in pre-school and in-school speech and language therapy and occupational therapy support. The project is a pilot in a defined regional area, with 75 pre-schools taking part, and is subject to evaluation. The project moved into a second full year as a pilot in September 2019.

Universal Design Guidelines

The Department led the development of Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings, which were launched in June 2019. The guidelines draw on a growing body of national and international evidence and case studies on the importance of universal design as a mechanism to include all children while recognising the diversity of ages, abilities, needs and preferences.

School-Age Childcare

The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School-Age Services) Regulations 2018 came into force in February 2019, allowing school-age childcare services to register with Tusla to enable them to participate in the National Childcare Scheme.

While these initial Regulations provide primarily for a registration process, they will be replaced by comprehensive Regulations, which will address wider aspects of quality, including qualification requirements for staff. The Department carried out a public consultation on draft quality guidelines and comprehensive regulations during 2019. The consultation report will be published in 2020.

Tusla, Early Years Inspectorate

Oversight of Tusla Early Years Inspectorate continued in 2019 through major challenges, including media and Oireachtas scrutiny of alleged regulatory compliance breaches by services and the re-registration of pre-school services. Following an RTÉ Investigates broadcast, the Minister began a process to give additional powers to Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate.

During 2019, Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate undertook 2,308 inspections of early years' services, and removed four services from the register of early years' services due to persistent non-compliance with Regulations. A further six services are currently appealing their notice of removal from the register. De-registrations and prosecutions are evidence of Tusla's robust approach in taking action where it finds evidence of non-compliance.

A pilot of Quality Regulatory Framework (QRF) based inspections was undertaken in early 2019. Following the successful pilot, Tusla commenced the roll-out of QRF-based inspections in late 2019, and will continue to introduce this format into inspections in 2020. Tusla has developed a QRF eLearning programme, which will be available to all providers and their staff on the Tusla website from 2020.

Under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, 4,117 early years services were due to re-register with Tusla by 31 December 2019. In recognition of difficulties many providers were experiencing with meeting re-registration requirements, Tusla revised the time-line for submission of some of the supporting documentation, including on fire safety and planning requirements. DCYA has convened an Inter-Agency project team to support completion of this extended second phase of the re-registration process.

Department of Education and Skills (DES), Early Years Education Inspections

The Department continued to work closely in 2019 with the DES Inspectorate, which carried out education-focused inspections of ECCE services on behalf of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. In line with a commitment in First 5, preparatory work took place in 2019 on the extension of the provision of education-focused inspections to children of all ages (0-6) in early learning and care settings.

Operations and Systems Alignment

The Department chairs an Operations and Systems Alignment Group (OSAG) that brings together agencies that inspect and monitor early learning and care services, in order to ensure coordination and minimise disruption to services.

The work of the OSAG in 2019, included inter-agency development of a self-evaluation framework for early learning and care settings, to replace the existing Síolta Quality Assurance Programme (QAP), so that providers can assess their own performance along the quality spectrum, from compliance to excellence. Other actions included the chairing by the Department of a joint conference of the two inspectorates in October.

The Department has committed, under First 5, to reform early years regulatory and inspection systems. This will include consideration of options for reforms to ensure a proportionate inspection regime and a more integrated approach to early learning and care inspections. The review of the inspectorate system will also be informed by an OECD Country Policy Review scheduled for 2020/2021.

Early Years Projects: The National Childcare Scheme (NCS)

Strategic Objectives 2, 5 and 6

The National Childcare Scheme opened for online applications on Wednesday, 20 November 2019. Under the NCS, families will be supported to meet the cost of quality early learning and care and school age childcare through a system of universal and income related subsidies.

Additional funding provided under Budget 2019 ensured that an estimated 7,500 additional children will benefit from the NCS, with over 40,000 other children, who are already eligible, seeing increases to their subsidies. Income based subsidies are available to families with reckonable household incomes of up to €60,000 which can translate into approximately €90,000 gross for families in certain circumstances.

Budget 2020 also saw additional measures introduced including:

- The extension of “savers” from a one year provision to allowing families remain on legacy schemes until they choose to move across to the NCS or where eligibility lapsed (e.g. aging out).
- Changes to maximum number of hours available to families on the NCS (taking effect in Sept 2020). This measure was particularly focussed on services serving disadvantaged communities and school aged childcare providers.

A total of 3,646 providers had signed up for the NCS by the end of 2019. By the end of 2019 almost 15,000 applications had been successfully submitted relating to over 20,000 children, with over 13,000 awards having already been issued to parents.

NCS ICT Project - Strategic Objectives 2 and 6

2019 also saw the delivery of the modernised delivery platform to support parents and childcare providers in accessing schemes and subsidies. The first component delivered on this system was the NCS. The system will provide a robust and integrated platform which will provide greater efficiencies and ease of use.

The Department oversaw a broad based project team co-located with Pobal which dealt with administrative, communications, technical, legislative, and administrative requirements for the platform and the NCS.

The project also provided for multi-layered governance and controls, with a project board containing independent and cross-departmental representation.

NCS Legislation, Policy Guidelines and Procedures - Strategic Objectives 2 and 5

The Childcare Support Act 2018 was signed into law by President Higgins on 2 July, 2018. A full primary and secondary legislative framework is in place as well as detailed policy guidelines which were published in 2019.

A number of regulations were signed into law covering information to be provided in the application process, the processing of data, the assessment of income, the calculation of financial supports, the payment of financial supports, and reviews and appeals under the NCS.

The Regulations in tandem with the comprehensive policy guidelines provide a clear and robust underpinning for the NCS which represents a radical innovative departure from legacy schemes.

The legislative framework and policy requirements ensure strong governance and oversight, and provide a platform for compliance and effective management of public monies.

Administration and engagement with parents and providers - Strategic Objectives 2 and 5

Pobal was appointed as the scheme administrator for the NCS on behalf of the Department.

A key innovation in the NCS was the greater involvement of parents in the management of their own applications. A dedicated external provider was engaged by Pobal to receive applications for subsidies through the new online system and to support and inform parents on the operation of the NCS.

On foot of the changes brought about by the NCS, Pobal (who also administer other childcare schemes for the Department) undertook to restructure and reform in 2019 in order to meet emergent needs.

Provider and Stakeholder NCS Training - Strategic Objectives 2 and 5

Over 600 NCS Provider Training Sessions were held nationwide across two phases.

57 Training sessions at Intreo, local Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) offices and Citizens Information Centres, with over 1,000 attendees, were held to ensure local Government Offices could also inform parents about the NCS.

A further 200 information sessions, workshops and public engagement stands were arranged locally and nationally. This included hard to reach groups, parent toddler groups as well as information sessions at local providers for parents. Online resources such as webinars, a NCS YouTube Channel with training videos and training materials were also made available on the NCS website.

NCS Communication and Information Campaign - Strategic Objective 2

A comprehensive and multifaceted information campaign was carried out in 2019 to ensure parents were aware of the supports available under the NCS. An information website and materials as well as an NCS mailbox was opened at the NCS launch to inform parents and providers about the NCS. A large scale advertising campaign using digital, radio, outdoor and video was used in tandem with widespread distribution of information materials to providers, Government Offices and public libraries.

Additional Supports for Childcare Providers- Strategic Objectives 2 and 5

In supporting the rollout of the NCS, the Department also released a number of support to providers:

- The NCS Capital Scheme was designed to support providers in meeting (through hardware and/or software) attendance tracking and management or other administrative requirements. In addition, providers were issued an attendance tracking template which could be used to support attendance management.

- The NCS Transition Programme Support Payments were also rolled out to support providers to meet the administrative requirements associated with transitioning to the NCS and, in particular, the parallel requirements of legacy schemes and the NCS within the first year.

Early Years Finance, Governance & Reform: Budget Early Years 2020

Strategic Objective 2

€63.5m of additional investment in childcare was included in Revised Estimates 2020. These additional resources provided for the following:

€50m	To support the implementation of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), increase the minimum and maximum NCS hours from September 2020 (from 20 to 25 and 40 to 45 hours respectively), and provide for a full year of NCS 'Savers.'
€10m	To continue supporting significant numbers of children under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), and support full roll-out of the model over the 2 year ECCE programme.
€0.7m	For the implementation of the First 5 Strategy, including research activities and a Pilot for a Meals Programmes in 45 Early Learning and care services.
€0.7m	Increased allocation for Tusla's Inspectorate to enable it to perform its statutory function.
€0.5m	New Sustainability Funding to support Community Services experiencing specific challenges, and to support these services, where necessary, should a Sectoral Employment Order be made in 2020.
€1.6m	Additional funding associated with delivery of the Schemes and supporting good quality service provision in the sector.

Sustainability Funding and Case Management Supports to ELC and SAC services – Strategic Objective 2

- Expanded and improved Case Management process with Pobal.
- Developed joint policy with Pobal for dealing with overclaims.
- Operationalised funding strands agreed in 2018. Approved funding for 10 services.
- Added a sustainability funding strand for overclaims.
- Oversaw Case Management process with measurable results - 27 cases brought forward into 2019; 73 new (majority of them overclaims); 46 resolved and 54 carried forward into 2020.
- Strengthened the Case Management Team in Pobal with agreed additional resources to ensure the provision of consistent and skilled support to all of the City and County Childcare Committees.

Programme C: Policy & Legislation

Introduction

Alternative Care Policy

The review of the Child Care Act 1991 continued apace during 2019. The Department prepared a series of papers in relation to specific aspects of the Act, including the care of separated children seeking asylum, children excluded from the family home and mechanisms for entry into State care, inter-agency cooperation, and private foster care. As part of this work, the Department worked closely with relevant stakeholders. This included the organisation of a number of regional consultations with Tusla staff and foster carers, in addition to other forms of consultation with a range of stakeholder groups.

Department officials worked with colleagues in the Office of Parliamentary Council (OPC), the State Claims Agency, the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Tusla to finalise a Government Order that brought foster carers within the terms of the General Indemnity Scheme.

The Department continued to provide funding to the Child Care Law Reporting Project to continue its ongoing research into child care proceedings in Ireland.

Tusla Programme Development and Cross Government Framework

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures

A whole of Government approach is a key element of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF), the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020. The Department has responsibility for co-ordinating the implementation of BOBF, however, individual commitments remain the responsibility of the relevant Departments. In 2019, implementation of BOBF continued across Government and all elements of the implementation infrastructure continued to meet regularly.

In July, 2019 the BOBF Annual Report for 2018 was published, which reported good progress being made, with over two-thirds of the 163 commitments completed and many more in progress with the expectation that they will also be completed.

The National Advisory Council for BOBF developed a work plan in 2019 containing priority areas for progression. These areas included child poverty, prevention and early intervention, homelessness, housing and community, rights and equality, learning and development and monitoring of BOBF's constituent strategies (early years, LGBTI+,

participation, youth and the forthcoming Irish Youth Justice Strategy). The Department worked with officials across Government to advance the priorities included in the Advisory Council's work plan. The Council met five times in 2019.

The Children and Young People's Policy Consortium represents the keystone in the implementation infrastructure for BOBF. The Consortium (chaired by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs) is tasked with overseeing and driving the effective implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures within the respective spheres of responsibility across departments, agencies and sectors. The Consortium met three times in 2019. Children and young people continued to be engaged in the process and the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive presented to the Consortium in September.

Children and Young People's Services Committees

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) are a key structure identified by Government to plan and co-ordinate services for children in every county in Ireland. There are 27 CYPSC established and there is also a National Coordinator in place.

The total co-funded budget for CYPSC in 2019 was €4.6m made up of allocations from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Tusla and the Department of Health and Healthy Ireland. The contribution from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs was €2.4m.

CYPSC undertook various projects in 2019 with each CYPSC receiving approximately €108,000 in funding. Some of the projects included mental health and well-being supports, parenting supports, health, nutrition, activities, play, children and young people's participation, LGBTI+ supports and resources and homelessness supports. See www.cypsc.ie for more details.

In November, 2019 the Minister launched CYPSC *Shared Vision, Next Steps 2019–2024* which sets out a platform for the further development and vision for CYPSC over the next five years. It is intended to further structure and support the capacity of CYPSC to reflect relevant policies and emerging developments and respond to emerging needs, both national and local.

The actions outlined in *Shared Vision Next Steps* will provide the basis for a work programme for CYPSC for 2019 – 2024 based on policy and strategic direction from the DCYA, the CYPSC National Steering Group and the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, with input from the relevant sectors. There are ten main high level goals in the *Shared Vision Next Steps 2019 – 2024* (with 37 corresponding actions) covering:

- Strengthened Leadership
- Collaboration
- Building Capacity
- Resourcing
- Planning and Reporting
- Data and Evidence
- Communications
- Participation of Children and Young People

- Joint Commissioning
- Evaluation

Child Poverty

Work continued in advancing the Whole of Government response to reducing the number of children living in consistent poverty. Throughout the year collaboration on this issue continued, with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the National Advisory Council and other Government Departments working together to explore ways in which the child poverty rate can be reduced further.

There has been a drop of 5% in the child poverty rate between 2014 and 2018. The rate reduced by 1.1% to 7.7% in 2018, as per the published CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions Data for 2018. The figures for 2019 will be available in Q4 2020.

In November, 2019 the Minister hosted an Open Policy Debate on Child Poverty in association with the Children's Rights Alliance. The event included key note speakers from Oxford University and Maynooth University. It gathered stakeholders from Government Departments, Government agencies, research and academic institutions, civil society organisations amongst others in a stakeholder partnership forum.

The purpose of this Open Policy Debate was to identify the latest thinking and research on combatting child poverty, and to discuss innovative ways in which child poverty reduction efforts could be enhanced, particularly in the next iteration of BOBF.

At the debate Minister Zappone also announced the commencement of a child-specific research programme to explore these issues. This initiative is being led and funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs through the *What Works* initiative.

North East Inner City (NEIC) Initiative

The Department has shown continued leadership of the NEIC Initiative in 2019, chairing Subgroup 6 on the 'Alignment of Social Services', which is working towards the integration and coordination of services in the NEIC to best support children, young people and families.

The NEIC Initiative is related to Strategic Priority 1 in the Statement of Strategy aligning with BOBF's 5 national outcomes and their transformational goals, with a specific focus on 'Safe and Protected from Harm' and 'Cross Government Working'. This is demonstrated through the work on the *City Connects* pilot programme which began its planning phase in the NEIC in 2019. The Department is collaborating with the Department of Education and Skills and Tusla Education Support Service to implement this pilot in the 10 NEIC primary schools with the view to its expansion following a number of evaluation processes.

The *City Connects* model founded by Boston College is a school based programme which works to the principle of progressive universalism. This approach means that the strengths of each individual child within a school setting are identified and a set of supports identified which can build on these strengths, while addressing areas of need.

The *City Connects* pilot in the 10 NEIC primary schools received funding for 2019 from the NEIC Initiative to plan and review adaptations necessary for the *City Connects* programme to be implemented in the Irish school context in September 2020. The planning and adaptation phase includes engaging with the principals, education sector staff, agencies and the community and voluntary sector. Work will continue on the programme in 2020.

Learning and Development

In 2019, the Department continued to enhance its provision of learning and development opportunities for staff. The prioritisation of learning and development opportunities was informed by corporate, unit and personal needs identified to support the delivery of the Department's goals and objectives. The Performance Management and Development System was an essential component in planning learning and development needs throughout 2019. A significant number of training interventions were provided to staff throughout 2019. Learning and development opportunities were provided in areas such as, but not limited to, Freedom of Information, risk management, diversity and unconscious bias, managing up, procurement, finance, behavioural economics and information mapping. Grade specific training was provided for staff.

The Department continued to support *OneLearning*, the centralised shared model for learning and development in the civil service. Staff attended a range of *OneLearning* courses on subjects such as Information and Communications Technology, communication skills, management development and project management.

During 2019, the Department continued to promote and manage its Education Support Scheme for staff interested in pursuing further education relevant to their role within the Civil Service.

In order to continue to cultivate an environment of formal and informal on the job training, coaching and self-managed learning, the Department commenced a process to develop an eLearning service to provide staff with access to a range of relevant online courses in addition to those envisaged by *OneLearning's* Learning Management System.

ICT, Procurement and Records Management

Record and Content Management

The project to transfer paper records to secure offsite storage continued in 2019. Offsite storage improves security and access. The plan for a new electronic content management system progressed with the roll out of *eDocs* to commence in early 2020.

eDocs is an electronic and record management application built by the Office of Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). It provides a consolidated location in which staff can store and track both electronic and paper files, enabling users to store electronic information that is securely held and can be exported to the National Archives at the end of its lifecycle (currently 30 years). *eDocs* aims to replace the traditional method of storing documents on shared drives.

Procurement

An internal audit of the Department's procurement processes and controls was carried out in 2017 and a number of recommendations were made.

In response to the recommendations in that audit a dedicated Procurement Unit was setup in 2018. Significant progress has been made on implementing these recommendations and the following are now in place;-

- The Department's Internal Procurement Policy and Procedures Document was signed off by the Secretary General in June 2019 and circulated to all staff. This policy will be reviewed annually.
- All staff have been informed of their procurement obligations, including informing the Procurement Unit of all tendering being carried out in their respective unit which includes a list of required documents from each tender process to be forwarded to Procurement Unit which are then held centrally.
- Procurement training was offered to all staff in Q4 2019 with additional training planned in 2020, if demand exists.
- A register of "live contracts" was established and units are contacted when contracts are nearing their expiry date.
- An external procurement consultancy company was contracted to provide procurement advice to the Department.
- Training for all procurement staff was provided and is on-going as required. This includes attending relevant national procurement conferences and networking events.
- A supplier spend analysis is to be undertaken each quarter and units advised if they are approaching the total spend for any contracts that they are responsible for.
- A collection of guidance documentation and procurement templates are available to all staff.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

In 2019, the Department oversaw the successful migration of its existing IT desktop support to a 'Build to Share' model of service provided by the Office of the Chief Government Information Officer (OGCIO). The 'Build to Share' model has been identified as one of the key strategic objectives in the Public Service ICT Strategy that will set the future direction for innovation and excellence in ICT within the Public Service.

The Department spent over a year in planning and preparing for the migration, working closely with the OGCIO. Some of the key changes were:

- Desktop and Enterprise system Video Conferencing were implemented throughout the Department.
- Direct Access system to support remote working.
- Moving to the 'Build to Share' suite of applications including *eCorrespondence*.
- The Staff Intranet and the Support Helpdesk ticketing System has been rolled out across the Department.
- Moving the existing email platform to Outlook has supported the move to electronic filing through *eDocs*.

Human Resources

The Department recruited 47 new staff in 2019, accounting for around 16% of employees in the Department. 15 employees or 5% of employees were promoted through internal or external competitions. The Department held internal competitions at both PO and HEO level.

In November 2018, the Management Board sanctioned Phase II of the restructuring of the Department. An internal Project Team was established in HR to lead out on the process.

The aim of the project was to ensure the Organisation has the appropriate structures, adequate resources and the required skills mix in each Division to enable the organisation to provide an appropriate and modern service both now and into the future.

The stated main objectives were as follows:

1. A deep analysis of the current fit of the Department bearing in mind in particular the growing, changing and competing priorities;
2. An in-depth review of the Department's own internal capacity to deliver the business objectives of the Department;
3. An in-depth review of the Department's own internal capacity in terms of
 - (a) governance of its agencies; and
 - (b) evaluation of performance of its agencies;
4. Highlighting emerging business issues facing the Department/each Division/Unit;
5. Identifying business issues impacting the delivery of each Division's mandate;
6. Identifying areas of resource strain/flexibility within the system;
7. Evaluating the adequate distribution of responsibilities and resource allocation across the Department;
8. Identifying deficiencies and developing recommendations for skills improvement;

9. Identifying low-value functions/activities across the Department;
10. Consideration of the effectiveness of cross-government and sectoral engagement, a key function of the department;
11. Outlining additional issues/themes emerging as part of the exercise.

The preferred bidder commenced work on 11 March 2019 and the Management Board accepted the final report and implementation plan in September 2019, with implementation of the roadmap under consideration at the end of 2019.

Corporate Governance

Risk Management

The Department's Risk Management Strategy aims to have proactive management-led behaviours and processes to help achieve its strategic and operational objectives. The Department's Governance Framework outlines the overall approach to Risk Management as part of the system of internal controls and business management. The Department also maintains a centralised record of risks in a Risk Register on the eRisk system, which is part of the *Build to Share* platform. The Register is the primary tool for risk tracking, containing the most up-to-date information relating to risks including the status of any risk mitigation actions.

The full Management Board (MB) functions as the Department's Risk Committee. The Secretary General, as Accounting Officer, has ultimate responsibility for risk management as part of the system of internal controls. The Risk Committee met four times in 2019 for the purpose of:

- overseeing the system of risk management in the Department, and embedding risk management effectively;
- considering corporate risks and reviewing their ongoing management;
- reviewing reports detailing high scoring risks across MB areas, and considering whether mitigation and management measures are appropriate and adequate.

Governance of Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

The relationship between Government Departments and bodies under their aegis is determined primarily by:

- the underpinning legislation establishing the body; and
- the requirements set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

The public bodies funded through the Department's Vote and for which the Secretary General is the Accounting Officer, are as follows:

- the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), established in January 2014 under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013;
- the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI), established in November 2010 under the Adoption Act 2010;
- the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO), established in 2004 under the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002; and
- the children detention schools established under the Children Act 2001.

The Department also provides the primary source of funding for Gaisce, the President's Award. Gaisce is a limited company set up under the Companies Acts.

In general, the relationship between the Department and the respective bodies under its remit, including on governance matters, is managed by the relevant unit or Division within the Department. This includes oversight of the functions of the body and the respective responsibilities of the Minister, Secretary General as Accounting Officer, Board and Chief Executive. It also involves all related parliamentary support to the Minister on matters relating to the governance of the body.

The relationship between the Department and those bodies under its aegis varies in terms of the nature of the work and scale of operation of each body and its governing legislation.

Gender balance of aegis bodies with Boards under the remit of DCYA

In 2011 the Government introduced new arrangements to increase openness and transparency in the selection of appointees to State Boards. Where a vacancy arose on the Board of a State body, vacancies were advertised on the relevant Department's website or by the independent Public Appointments Service (PAS).

In 2014 the Government decided the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform should prepare guidelines for appointments to State Boards. These guidelines continued to include the target to achieve 40% representation of women and of men on State Boards. This 40% target was also reflected in the Programme for a Partnership Government. It is also included in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 under Action 4.7 and Action 4.8.

All of the DCYA aegis bodies with Boards met the gender balance requirement at the end of 2019, having at least 40% representation of each gender among their Board members, with the average representation of women and of men in the membership of State Boards in these bodies, expressed as a percentage of all board members being 52% and 48% respectively.

Internal Audit and Audit Committee

The mission of the Department's Internal Audit Unit is to provide independent, objective assurance on the system of internal controls and consulting services designed to add value and improve the Department's operations. It helps the Department accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

The Department's Audit Committee has an independent role within the Department to oversee and advise on matters relating to the operation and development of the internal audit function and the business control, governance and risk management environment. The Committee met on five occasions during 2019.

Completed Internal Audit reports are circulated to the Secretary General, Management Board and the Audit Committee. In 2019 fourteen such reports were circulated to the Committee, and discussed at their meetings on the following matters:

- Tusla Payments;
- Appropriation Account review on the implementation of previous audit recommendations;
- IT Security Framework;
- Review of the implementation of recommendations in relation to Youth Service Grant Scheme;
- Disbursement of funds to Pobal;
- Youth Affairs Grant Drawdown and Disbursement Process: Payments to ETBs;
- Review of the governance arrangements in respect of Oberstown Children Detention Campus;
- Funding drawdown and the control of expenditure processes at Oberstown;
- Human Resources: Staff related payroll costs;
- Dormant Account Funding;
- Risk Management;
- Review of governance arrangements in respect of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency;
- Procurement Audit;
- Review of the implementation of recommendations in relation to SLAs for Commissioning Arrangements.

Risk management is a standing item on the Audit Committee's agenda and some suggestions were made to the Department's Risk Committee during the year. In the course of 2019 the Audit Committee sought and received presentations from the heads of a number of the Department's business units, and in accordance with its Charter, met with the External Audit team from the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Adoption Policy

Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) Governance

The Department engages with the AAI through regular meetings and formalised reporting on governance matters with regard to its statutory obligations under the Adoption Act 2010 and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016. In August 2019, the contract of the current Chief Executive Officer of the AAI was renewed for a period of five years.

Open Adoption

The Department completed a statutory review and consultation in respect of the potential introduction of open or semi-open adoption in Ireland, in accordance with Section 42 of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017. As part of this review process, an Open Policy Debate involving key stakeholders was held in May 2019 and the public were also invited to contribute to an online survey which ran for five weeks in May and June. The final report, which made a number of recommendations for measures to support families who wish to enter into open or semi-open adoption arrangements, was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas in November 2019.

Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016

Work continued in 2019 on progressing the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016. In June 2019, the Bill commenced Committee Stage, which was then paused, with the agreement of the Seanad, in order to allow further consultation in relation to proposed amendments to Part 5 of the Bill which related to the release of birth information and birth certificates. A series of intensive engagements with stakeholder groups, the Attorney General and members of the Oireachtas led to the identification in November 2019 of a number of options for advancing the legislation. This work will inform the future direction of travel in relation to information and tracing legislation.

Illegal birth registrations

Following the discovery of illegal birth registrations in the files of St. Patrick's Guild in 2018, the Department engaged with Tusla in relation to the process for informing the individuals concerned, throughout 2019. In addition, the Department worked with other Departments and Agencies in 2019 to identify issues arising for individuals affected.

Sampling review into illegal birth registrations

Following the discovery in 2018 of indicators of illegal birth registrations in the files of St. Patrick's Guild, the Minister commissioned a review of a sample of adoption files to determine if similar markers could be found on other adoption files. During 2019, Tusla and the Adoption Authority of Ireland reviewed a large number of files, under the supervision of the independent reviewer.

Ex-gratia scheme for clients of ARC Adoption

Following a Cabinet decision on the matter, the Department established an *ex gratia* scheme to repay a number of former clients who had paid ARC Adoption a refundable registration fee. A total of 69 payments of €2,750 were made during 2019, and the scheme has now closed.

Irish Youth Justice Service

Approval of draft General Scheme and Heads of a Bill to provide for alternative sentencing options for children obtained.

In 2019 the Government approved the drafting of Heads of a Bill to provide alternative sentencing options to Courts. The proposals will ensure that community-based alternatives to detention can continue when a child turns 18, and that there is an increased focus, at the sentencing stage, on reintegration into the community post-release.

Mother and Baby Homes

Commission of Investigation:

The Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters was supported to progress its independent statutory investigations in accordance with its terms of reference.

In its Fourth Interim Report, the Commission provided an update on its work with a focus on the logistical challenges involved in a statutory investigation of this scale and complexity. The Government agreed to a request from the Commission for an extension of one year (until February 2020) to facilitate its analysis of diverse sources of information and its continued engagement with former residents and others with connections to these institutions. While acknowledging that this development would disappoint former residents, the Minister noted that the additional time would facilitate the Commission to comprehensively address the wide range of concerns referred to it for examination, which would be in the public interest.

The Fifth Interim Report examined burial arrangements in the institutions under investigation by the Commission and the transfer of remains to educational institutions for the purpose of anatomical examination. The report included extensive technical assessments, which assisted the Departments' on-going work to advance legislation to enable the planned forensic excavations at the site of the former institution in Tuam, Co Galway. Arrangements for the transfer of a contribution of €2.5m in respect of the costs of this project were agreed with the Sisters of the Bon Secours Ireland and approved by the Government.

The Minister published the Fourth and Fifth Interim Reports of the Commission of Investigation in January and April 2019 respectively.

Collaborative Forum:

Engagement with former residents on matters of concern to them and their families continued through the Collaborative Forum process. A formative evaluation was initiated to capture the learning from the process to date and build upon the initial vision. The Government published the recommendations from the First Report of the Forum and tasked relevant departments with advancing a comprehensive analysis of the legislative, resource and policy implications of the recommendations. Publication of the full report will be

considered after the Commission delivers its final report subject to the legal advice of the Attorney General.

Significant progress was made in a number of areas, including:

Health supports:

The Department contributed to the working group established by the Department of Health to examine the Forum's health recommendations. The Report of this working group was published and the Government provided dedicated funding for an initial package of health supports. As part of the package, a programme of research will be undertaken to identify the specific health needs of former residents of these institutions to inform the development of further services as appropriate.

Research:

DCYA commissioned research, in partnership with the Irish Research Council COALESCE Research Fund, into the use of Language and Terminology in relation to former residents of Mother and Baby Homes.

Information and Tracing Bill:

The Forum's recommendations were considered in the context of progressing legislation on information and tracing. Consultation with Forum members was facilitated and input informed the next steps in the process.

Youth Reform, Strategy and Participation

LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy Significant Achievements 2019:

1. The Department published the First Annual Implementation Report of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy reporting that 56 of the 59 actions have either already been started (46) or have reported a plan for carrying out the action (10). There are 3 actions for which Leads have not reported any information on (2) or are under review (1). Publication of the Annual Report took place at the first Implementation Forum hosted by the Department in collaboration with the LGBTI+ Youth Forum on October 26th at Collins Barracks.
2. 2019 also saw the Department's continued implementation of actions under the Strategy including the following:
 - a. Establishment of an LGBTI+ Youth Forum.
 - b. Design of an LGBTI+ Welcome Sticker for dissemination across society in 2020.
3. The Department also administered the second LGBTI+ Capacity Building Grants Scheme and allocated 25 grants to organisations to support the development and delivery of evidence-informed Continuous Professional Development (CDP) initiatives specifically related to working with and supporting LGBTI+ young people.

The CPD includes training, mentoring, coaching, and the development of guidelines/policies/procedures to support professional service providers, inclusive of youth services.

Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making 2019:

1. The Department held consultations with children and young people on a range of policy areas in collaboration with other Government Departments and agencies, including with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on the reform of the Relationships and Sexuality Education, with the Teaching Council on Teacher Supply, with the Irish Youth Justice Service on the Garda Youth Diversion Programme, with the Department of Health on the Active Schools Initiative and with Creative Ireland on the implementation of Cruinniú na nÓg.
2. The Department continued to support and develop Comhairle na nÓg in all thirty-one local authorities underpinned by the administration of the €620,000 Development Fund and supported by the Department's Participation Team.
3. The Department supported the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive to complete their programme of work under the theme of *Equality in Schools* with two significant projects launched by the Minister the first being the social media campaign *#TeachMeAsMe* and the second being the design and launch of an online resource for schools called *OurVoicesOurSchools.ie*.
4. Dáil na nÓg 2019 was hosted at the Houses of the Oireachtas as part of the Dáil 100 celebrations with the topic of *climate action* as the focus of the day's deliberations. Dáil na nÓg chose *Sustainable Transport Solutions* as the focus of its work for the next National Executive of Comhairle na nÓg.
5. The Department published the 3rd Annual Report on Implementation of the *National Strategy for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020* in July 2019. The Report was accompanied by a midterm review of the Strategy and a revised 2 year Action Plan for 2019 and 2020.
6. Hub na nÓg continued the delivery of a wide range of training and capacity building initiatives across Government to ensure that the voice of children and young people was heard in relation to any decisions that affect their lives. Hub na nÓg also progressed the development of a National Participation Framework.

Play, Recreation and Culture

1. The Department administered and allocated the sum of €450,000 for the Capital Play Funding Scheme and the Play Day and Recreation Week Funding.
2. The Department supported a mapping of playgrounds in Ireland by DCU.
3. The Department continued to collaborate and engage with Creative Ireland, including on the implementation of its commitments in the Creative Youth Plan.

4. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, along with the Lord Mayor of Dublin, launched *the 1916 Children's Commemorative Play Garden*.

Research and Evaluation

The Department carries out research in order to support the achievement of better outcomes for children and young people through the promotion of evidence-based policy development and service delivery. It does this through four work streams: Growing up in Ireland, Statistics, Evaluation, and the Evidence into Policy Programme.

Growing Up in Ireland:

In 2019, the Department managed and progressed 'Growing Up in Ireland: The National Longitudinal Study of Children' (GUI), which, since 2006, has tracked two cohorts of children for the purposes of studying factors that contribute to, or undermine, the well-being of children in contemporary Irish families. Significant achievements in 2019 included:

- The extension of the current contract for GUI with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) until the end of 2022.
- Securing Government agreement on providing a long-term sustainable future for GUI through the transfer of GUI to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) from 2023, and the establishment of a tripartite governance structure with representation from the Department, the CSO and the ESRI in order to plan for and support the transition of GUI to the CSO.
- 2019 saw the completion of the main phase data collection with Cohort '98 at age 20 years old and the publication of a number of research outputs, including reports on the following:
 - Being 20 Years Old;
 - Physical Health and Development;
 - Socio-emotional Well Being and Key Relationships;
 - Education,
 - Training and Employment;
 - The Lives of 5 Year Olds; and
 - The Effects of Economic Recession and Family Stress on the Adjustment of 3-year-olds in Ireland.

More information on GUI can found at <https://www.growingup.ie>.

Statistics:

The Department undertook several activities to support the dissemination and use of statistical information on children and young people. Significant achievements associated with the Statistical programme in 2019 included:

- Progress on the transformation of the 'State of the Nation's Children' publication from a biennial series of hard copy releases to a 'live' document that will be available on-line and that will automatically update as new data becomes available.
- The publication of a methodology report to accompany the publication entitled 'An Indicator Set for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures'.
- The publication of a Statistical Spotlight on the 'Reconciliation between Work and Family Life'.
- The successful commissioning of a report on the Pathfinder Project to link the GUI study with administrative data held in the CSO's Administrative Data Centre (ADC).

Evaluations:

The Department's Evaluation team support the development of evaluation initiatives across the department and delivered a number of specific projects during 2019, including:

- The completion of a Focussed Policy Assessment of the Early Childhood Care and Education Higher Capitation payment.
- The delivery of the second pilot of the 'Goal' 2-Day Evaluation Training Programme to 22 middle and senior managers from across 10 different government departments.
- The publication of a Guidance Note entitled 'Evaluating Government-Funded Human Services'
- The completion of a cost estimates report for the reform of the Guardian Ad Litem service.

The Evaluation team is the Department's locus for the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES), and is an active participant in the IGEES network. In 2019, IGEES engagement included ongoing engagement in IGEES Advisory Groups, dissemination of information on events and publications to the Department's policymakers, engagement in the OECD review of IGEES and the development of the IGEES' medium term strategy.

Evidence into Policy Programme:

The Evidence into Policy Programme is a dedicated resource to support the Department in meeting its strategic research and evidence needs and to drive the research to policy cycle. Significant achievements in 2019 included:

- The establishment, at the Minister's request, of a child-specific poverty research programme. Preliminary results of the first phase, a statistical baseline scenario with comprehensive analyses of the situation of children living in poverty, were presented at an Open Policy Debate in December 2019.
- The establishment of a DCYA-ESRI Research Partnership that will support Government public policy development in the areas of children and youth. The Partnership agreed in December 2019 on two research projects for 2020 - the first on the dynamics of child poverty and outcomes (initiating Phase 2 of the child-specific poverty research programme), and the second on adolescent behaviour.
- Providing research support, advice and capacity for a range of internal research projects within the Department; commissioning research projects; and progressing commissioned and Irish Research Council supported research projects, to inform policy development/implementation.
- Progression of the development of a dedicated Research Framework Agreement for the Department with the Office of Government Procurement.
- Publication of two guidance notes to build policymakers' capacity to drive the research to policy cycle; a Research and Evaluation bulletin; and a research briefing detailing an internally conducted literature review of findings on school engagement as a facilitator of school attendance.

Facilities Management

A major objective for 2019 was to secure additional office accommodation to provide for internal workforce planning and recruitment. Temporary office accommodation was secured in September 2019 for a period of 12 months to meet the short term accommodation needs of the Department. Planning was also underway with the Office of Public Works throughout 2019 on a longer term solution to provide for the projected increased accommodation needs for 2020.

Legislation

The following legislation was progressed by the Department in 2019:

- The **Health and Childcare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2019** was signed into law in October 2019. The Department was responsible for Part 3 of the 2019 Act which amended the Childcare Support Act 2018. This was necessary in the event of a no-deal Brexit, to provide for British citizens to access the National Childcare Scheme on the same basis as Irish citizens.
- The text of the **Childcare (Amendment) Bill 2019** was finalised and published in August 2019. The main objective of the Bill is to ensure that the Guardian ad Litem service can be provided to benefit the greatest number of children and young people, so that their voices can be heard in child care proceedings and that this service will be of high quality and sustainable into the future. Second Stage of the Bill was taken in the Dáil in September, followed by Committee Stage in October.
- The Department continued to progress the **Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016** during 2019. In June, the Minister proposed a number of Committee Stage amendments to make changes to the previously published Scheme for the release of information to adopted persons. The changes to the Scheme, as proposed by the Minister, were not supported by the Seanad and Committee Stage of the Bill was paused to allow for the Minister to hold consultation meetings with Oireachtas members and representative groups.

Subsequently, the Minister announced in December 2019, that a consensus had not been reached on an amended Scheme for the release of birth information, and that it was instead her intention to progress a Bill which would include provisions providing for the following:

- the safeguarding of records;
- the placing of the National Adoption Contact Preference Register on a statutory footing; and
- tracing for the purposes of reunion/contact.

The **Childcare Support Act 2018** aims to provide a statutory basis for the Affordable Childcare Scheme. The Scheme is intended to provide financial support for parents to help meet the cost of childcare. Sections 2 to 6 and Section 8 of the 2018 Act came into effect in February 2019, with all remaining provisions coming into effect in September 2019. A number of regulations to enable the operation of the Act were also developed and came into effect during 2019. These are as follows:

- Childcare Support Act 2018 (Assessment of Income) Regulations 2019;
- Childcare Support Act 2018 (Reviews) Regulations 2019;
- Childcare Support Act 2018 (Appeals) Regulations 2019;
- Childcare Support Act 2018 (Payment of financial support) Regulations 2019;
- Childcare Support Act 2018 (Calculation of Amount of Financial Support) Regulations 2019;

- Childcare Support Act 2018 (Processing of Personal Data) Regulations 2019;
 - Childcare Support Act 2018 (Assessment of Income) (Amendment) Regulations 2019.
- The Department continued to progress the **Review of the Child Care Act 1991** throughout 2019. It organised a number of specific consultations on child care proceedings and foster care to inform the development of policy positions regarding the relevant sections of the legislation. Initial proposals were developed in a number of areas with the view to seeking stakeholder views on those as part of an online consultation in 2020.
- The **General Scheme of the Certain Institutional Burials (Authorised Interventions) Bill 2019** was published in December 2019. The purpose of this General Scheme is to provide the statutory basis and framework under which Government may decide to authorise interventions at certain sites where manifestly inappropriate burials have taken place associated with institutions operated by or on behalf of the State or in respect of which the State had clear regulatory or supervisory responsibilities.
- The **Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2019** were completed and came into operation in February 2019. These Regulations amend the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) Regulations 2018 by deferring the commencement date of those regulations that relate to ratio requirements in respect of certain classes of service.

Appendix I: Public Sector Duty

The Department acknowledges the positive duty imposed on it by Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 to have regard to human rights and equality in the performance of its functions.

Under Section 42, a public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination,
- (b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and
- (c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.

Our work embodies proactive consideration of equality and the human rights of children and young people in the development of policy and legislation. Examples of this include the Access and Inclusion Model for children with disabilities to avail of pre-school services; engagement with representatives of the Traveller and Roma community to increase participation of children from those communities in pre-school services; and the LGBTI+ National *Youth Strategy* 2018 - 2020.

The Department is committed to protecting the dignity and respect of staff working for the Department. The Department endorses and implements the Civil Service Dignity at Work Policy which aims to promote respect, dignity, safety, and equality in the workplace. Every member of staff is aware that all forms of bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment are unacceptable and that every member of staff has a duty to behave in an acceptable and respectful manner.

In our Customer Service Action Plan and Charter we state our commitments to our customers. We meet same by -

- giving our customers the best possible service and advice;
- treating customers in a proper, fair, impartial and courteous manner;
- aiming to ensure that rights to equal treatment set out by equality legislation are upheld in the delivery of our services;
- aiming, where possible, to meet any special needs our customers may have.

The Department will report annually on the human rights and equality issues relevant to our functions, with such functions to be expanded on foot of the new Programme for Government: “Our Shared Future”.

Appendix II: Publications in 2019

- Evaluation of The Bail Supervision Scheme for Children (Pilot Scheme)
- General Scheme of a Certain Institutional Burials (Authorised Interventions) Bill
- Review and Consultation in respect of the Potential Introduction of Open or Semi-Open Adoption in Ireland
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs: Review of the potential introduction of Open or Semi-open Adoption in Ireland | Submission by the Ombudsman for Children's Office
- Final report on the Potential Introduction of Open or Semi-Open Adoption in Ireland
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs: Review of the potential introduction of Open or Semi-open Adoption in Ireland | Submission by Barnardos
- Shared Vision, Next Steps 2019 - 2024
- First Annual Report on the implementation of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex (LGBTI+) National Youth Strategy 2018–2020
- Transitional Rules for DCYA Targeted Childcare Programmes
- Mid-Term Review and Phase Two Action Plan of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020
- Report on the Collection of Tuam Survivors' DNA
- Draft Childminding Action Plan
- Child Care (Amendment) Act 2019: Regulatory Impact Analysis
- Charter for a collaborative forum of former residents of mother and baby homes and related institutions
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) Regulations 2018: Additional information
- Better Outcomes Brighter Futures - Fourth Annual Report: April 2017 – December 2018
- Children First Interdepartmental Implementation Group Annual Report 2018
- 3rd Quarterly Report of the Expert Assurance Group to Oversee and Advise on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the HIQA Statutory Investigation into Tusla's Management of Referrals
- First 5 Implementation Plan 2019-2021
- Open Policy Debate: The Potential Introduction of Open or Semi-Open Adoption in Ireland
- Children First Sectoral Implementation Plan
- Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation: 5th Interim Report
- Rules for ECCE Programme 2019/20
- 2nd Quarterly Report of the Expert Assurance Group to Oversee and Advise on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the HIQA Statutory Investigation into Tusla's Management of Referrals

- Incorrect Birth Registrations: Third Interim Report - April 2019
- Mother and Baby Homes E-zine: April 2019
- Mother and Baby Homes E-zine: March 2019
- Governance Framework for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (July 2019)
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs: Customer Service Action Plan and Charter 2019 - 2021
- Update on Issues relating to Mother and Baby Homes: February 2019
- Mother and Baby Homes E-zine: January 2019
- 1st Quarterly Report of the Expert Assurance Group to Oversee and Advise on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the HIQA Statutory Investigation into Tusla's Management of Referrals
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs Annual Report 2018

Appendix III: Overview of Energy Usage in 2019

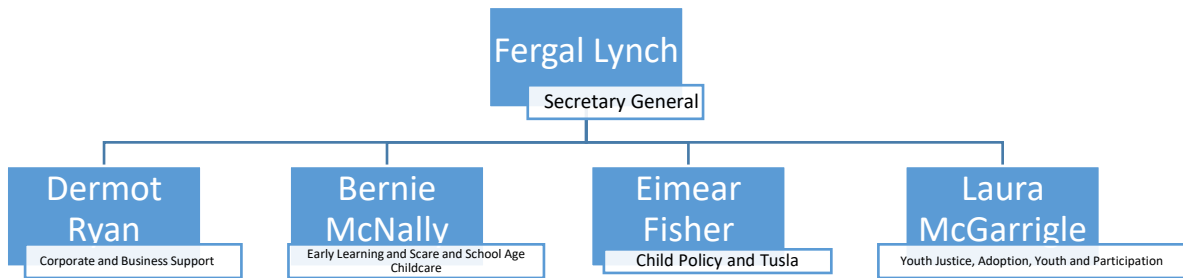
This section sets out the energy usage of the Department of Children & Youth Affairs for 2019 and the steps taken to improve our energy performance. Returns are made to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on an annual basis and the 2019 performance is detailed below.

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

Location/Year	Electricity kWH	Gas kWH	Total kWH	Total kWH/FTE
Headquarters, Miesian Plaza Baggot street.				
2019	527,154	504,851	1,032,004	3867.30

The Department engages with the OPW Optimising power@work initiative and the other tenants at Block 1, Miesian Plaza to get the best results from our Electricity and Gas consumption, and in working towards the target of 50% reduction in energy usage by 2030.

Appendix IV: Management Board



Appendix V: Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Bodies under the aegis of the Department and associated Commission

Tusla, Child and Family Agency

Mr. Bernard Gloster
Chief Executive Officer
The Brunel Building
Heuston South Quarter
St. John's Road West
Kilmainham,
Dublin 8.

Adoption Authority of Ireland

Ms Patricia Carey
Chief Executive Officer
Shelbourne House
Shelbourne Road
Dublin 4.

Oberstown Children Detention Campus

Mr Pat Bergin*
Director
Oberstown
Lusk
Co. Dublin
*Until October 2020
Mr Damien Heron, Interim Director,
from November 2020

Office of the Ombudsman for Children

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

Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes (& Certain Related Matters)

Judge Yvonne Murphy
73 Lower Baggot Street
Dublin 2.

Gaisce, the President's Award

Ms Yvonne McKenna
Chief Executive Officer
Ratra House, North Road
Phoenix Park
Dublin 8.



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND