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Annual Report 2023

Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

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Foreword of Minister

I am very pleased to present the Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth's 2023 Annual Report.



The Annual Report details the Department's activities, and achievements in 2023. The Department's priorities are set out in the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future.

This was the third and final year of the Department's Statement of Strategy 2021 - 2023 which outlines how it aims to deliver on the vision of a fair, equal and inclusive society where rights are respected, and where everyone can reach their potential.

In 2023 the work of the Department, including its agencies and funded bodies, helped those most vulnerable by continuing to enhance the lives of children, young people, adults, families and communities, recognising diversity and promoting equality of opportunity.

Working with others to promote a progressive, respectful, and equal society, we are learning from the experiences of past generations and are seeking to respond to the needs of survivors.

Among the achievements in 2023 I am most proud of are -

- Completion of the transfer of responsibility for Community Based Disability services from the Department of Health to this Department and the launch of the Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023-2026 Disability Services for Children and Young People was launched in October 2023.
- Securing Government approval for the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 – 2026. The Plan, which was published in December 2023, sets out a programme to increase service capacity, whilst also seeking to continue and reinvigorate the reform agenda in disability services policy.

- Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023 - 2028 was launched on 21 November 2023.
- The enactment of the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme Act 2023 to underpin a Payment Scheme for survivors and former residents of Mother and Baby institutions.
- Publication of the Heads and General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023.
- By the end of 2023 the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) was accommodating a total of 26,279 applicants including 5,621 children, across its portfolio of 258 IPAS Accommodation Centres and Emergency Accommodation Centres. This figure represents an increase of 7,175 on year-end figures of 2022. The total number of arrivals in 2023 seeking IPAS accommodation was 12,281.
- The Anti-Racism Committee's National Action Plan Against Racism was submitted to Government in March 2023 and launched on 21 March 2023, the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
- Realisation of €1.108 billion in funding for early learning and childcare as announced under Budget 2024, an 8% increase (or an additional €83m) on the previous year.
- The appointment of a Programme Board to oversee the design and implementation planning phase for a dedicated early learning and care and school-age childcare agency in Ireland.
- The First 5 Implementation Plan (2023-2025) was launched in November 2023 which includes 125 actions, each with a defined 2025 output and a clear schedule of associated annual milestones.
- Increases in foster care allowance of €25 per week, up to €350 per week for children aged under 12 and €377 per week for those over 12 were achieved.

- Development of the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making: Action Plan 2023-2028.

Outside of activity linked to our published Statement of Strategy, the Department and its staff continued to play a central role in providing access to emergency temporary accommodation for people fleeing conflict in Ukraine. The Department worked with partners across Government, Local Authorities, Communities, NGOs, and Agencies so that Ireland meets its international obligations and provided accommodation for over 81,000 fleeing the conflict by year end 2023.

I want to take the opportunity to convey my thanks to the Secretary General, the staff of the Department and all stakeholders who have worked collectively to deliver the Department's strategic goals, and for their continued efforts for the significant work undertaken in 2023.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Roderic O'Gorman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Roderic O'Gorman TD

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Foreword by Minister of State Rabbitte

I welcome the publication of the Department's Annual Report for 2023 in my capacity as the Minister of State for Disability



I am delighted that responsibility for Community Based Disability Services transferred to this Department in March 2023 bringing together for the first time responsibility for coordinating and steering all-of-government policy promoting the equal participation in society of people with disabilities, policy responsibility for specialist disability services alongside cross-government coordination provides an opportunity to drive strategic policy development, investment and reform.

Highlights of the year include securing Government approval for the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 – 2026 in July 2023 and launching the Roadmap to improve Children's Disability Services 2023-2026. This Roadmap set out an important set of actions that, collectively, will enhance children's disability services in Ireland and sets out a targeted plan to achieve the government's commitment to improving the lives of people with disabilities, in alignment with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

I look forward to working with the dedicated and committed team in the Department in progressing the vitally important work that it ongoing on a range of issue that impact on service users and their families.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Anne Rabbitte'.

Anne Rabbitte T.D.

Minister of State with responsibility for Disabilities

Foreword by Minister of State O'Brien

As Minister of State with responsibility for Integration, I welcome the publication of the Department's Annual Report for 2023. I have been proud to work with the dedicated staff of the Department throughout the year to achieve the goals set out in the Programme for Government. The Department published its National Action Plan Against Racism on 21st March 2023. The ambitious plan proposes actions to help make Ireland a place in which the impacts of racism are fully acknowledged and actively addressed. The Department launched a number of different integration funding initiatives through the year. This includes the Community Integration Fund launched on 15th February 2023, the International Protection Integration Fund launched on 26th April 2023, the Ireland Against Racism Fund launched on 2nd May 2023 and the National Integration Fund in October 2023.



In addition, the Department held a National Community Integration Event in Croke Park on 22nd June 2023. The event was open to community organisations nationwide, and more than one hundred attended. Organisations were provided with the chance to record a promotional video, which has now been published on the department's website. Also, during very challenging circumstances, the Department worked to provide shelter for 26,279 International Protection applicants and 81,184 Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection and established structures to improve community engagement. I look forward to continuing this vital work in 2024 to make Ireland a more integrated and inclusive society.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Joe O'Brien". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joe" and last name "O'Brien" clearly distinguishable.

Joe O'Brien, TD

Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development, Integration and Charities

Introduction by Secretary General

I am pleased to introduce the Department's Annual Report for 2023, published in accordance with section 4 of the Public Service Management Act 1997.



This Annual Report clearly outlines the positive impact we, as a department, continued to have on the lives of children, young people, members of diverse groups across our communities and all those in society who are most in need of support.

This work was supported by an increase in the Department's gross funding provision to €7.185 billion. This represented an increase of €4.45 billion, or 163%, over the 2022 outturn. This increase included resources associated with the transfer of responsibility for Specialist Community Based Disability Services from the Department of Health from 1 March 2023, significant additional investment in the Early Learning and School Age care sector, as well as increased provision for International Protection Accommodation Services and for accommodating Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection.

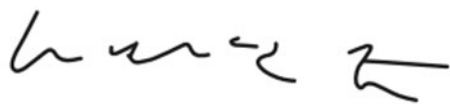
Legislation, policy initiatives and service enhancements were advanced across all areas of our wide-ranging remit, including early learning and childcare supports, child protection and welfare, youth services, international protection, equality, disability, integration, and the historic legacy issues that we continue to address. The transfer of responsibility for Community Based Disability Services to the Department was a significant and very welcome milestone.

During 2023, the Department continued to meet the major challenges of the large-scale humanitarian response to the needs of those fleeing the war in Ukraine, as well as a significant increase in the number of people seeking international protection.

The work of the department relies on the dedication, agility and commitment to public service values that has been demonstrated by staff across the organisation, often in very challenging circumstances.

During 2023, we embarked on an extensive internal organisation development process, involving volunteer contributions to a number of task groups, from staff right across the organisation. Their positive willingness to contribute their time and ideas in helping to build our organisational capability to meet the challenges of a high pressured and fast growth working environment is greatly appreciated. The recommendations arising from the work of the task groups has formed the basis of an extensive organisation development plan.

I am grateful to Minister O’Gorman, Minister of State Rabbitte and Minister of State O’Brien for their continuing leadership, and to the Department’s agencies and funded bodies for their commitment and support as we build on the progress set out in this 2023 annual report to continue to deliver for everyone we serve.



Kevin McCarthy,

Secretary General



Vision, Mission, and Values



Our Vision - A fair, equal and inclusive society where rights are respected and where everyone can achieve their potential.



Mission - Enhance the lives of everyone in Ireland from childhood onwards by upholding rights, promoting equality of opportunity, recognising diversity, and delivering supportive legislation, policies and services.



Values – Respect and Inclusivity, Equality and Human Rights, Integrity and Commitment.

Respect and Inclusivity

- We place everyone in Ireland at the heart of what we do.
- We respect the rights of all people to participate fully in society.
- We recognise the diversity of Irish society and the importance of ensuring that we are responsive to diverse needs.
- We acknowledge our role in supporting integration.
- We deal respectfully with each other and with all our stakeholders.

Equality and Human Rights

- We adhere to the principles of equality and respect for human rights.
- We recognise the role and importance of all families in our society.
- We listen to children, young people, and adults, realising their right to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.
- We act to protect children and all the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people and to champion their needs.

Integrity and Commitment

- We act with integrity and impartiality at all times and are accountable for our actions.
- We value and support our staff and we encourage creativity and innovation in the delivery of our vision and mission.



High Level Objectives

1

We will develop, implement, and influence evidence informed policies and legislation that improve the outcomes for those we serve.

2

We will support the provision of a range of quality and sustainable services within our legislative remit underpinned by strategic investment that meets the needs of individuals, families, and society.

3

We will provide shelter to people fleeing conflict and support those in particular need to overcome adverse circumstances and achieve their potential including children, young people and at-risk individuals.

4

We will promote the development of a progressive, respectful and equal society, including for persons with disabilities, in line with a rights-based approach, and informed by the experiences of past generations, and seek to respond to the needs of survivors.

5

We will work in partnership with the people we serve and across Government Departments, public bodies, and civil society to achieve better outcomes.

6

We will maintain high standards of performance and corporate governance with engaged, motivated, and supported staff.

2023 Notable Department achievements

Hearing before UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

On 24th and 25th January 2023, the Minister led a delegation of officials from relevant government departments for the hearing before the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva.



The Committee published its Concluding Observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Ireland, on 9th February 2023. The Committee recognised the positive steps taken by the State since Ireland's last review in 2016. In particular, they welcomed the progress made with the commencement of the Children First Act, Children and Family Relationships Act, the Irish Sign Language Act and the adoption of a number of other strategies.

Transfer of Community Based Disability Services to the Department

This Department assumed responsibility for Community Based Disability Services in March 2023 bringing together for the first-time responsibility for coordinating and steering all-of-government policy promoting the equal participation in society of people with disabilities, policy responsibility for specialist disability services alongside cross-government coordination provides an opportunity to drive strategic policy development, investment and reform.

Delivery and enhancement of Childcare Funded Schemes

The number of children who successfully claimed a subsidy under the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) from 1st January 2023 to 30th November 2023 is 178,793 while the number of children who availed of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme for the programme year 2022-23 was 108,616.



National Action Plan Against Racism published.

The Anti-Racism Committee's National Action Plan Against Racism was submitted to Government in March 2023 and launched on 21st March 2023, the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Ireland Against Racism Fund and a new Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism were announced on the same day as the plan.



Progression of Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023

The Heads and General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023 were published in April of this year and underwent pre-legislative scrutiny in May. The purpose of the Bill was to revise and update the Child Care Act 1991 Act to reflect changes in child welfare and protection services in Ireland in the 30 years since enactment of the 1991 Act. The Bill also aimed to revise and update the regulation of early learning and childcare services. The proposals included reforms to enhance the enforcement powers of the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate and to remove the legal exemptions of childminders from regulation, in line with the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028.

The Ireland Against Racism Fund launched

The Ireland Against Racism Fund (IARF) was launched on 2nd May 2023. The purpose of the funding scheme is to support community development projects and initiatives that work with minority ethnic communities; to address racism, promote inclusion and to enable these communities to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. Under this scheme, a total of 24 projects were funded, with funding of €1.3 million provided to local, national, and regional projects aiming to combat racism, foster racial equality and community cohesion.



Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention established.

In March 2023 the Minister formally established the Office of Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam and in May 2023 he appointed Mr Daniel MacSweeney as the Director to manage and oversee the excavation, recovery, analysis, and identification of the children's remains at the site.

Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme Act 2023 enacted.

In July, the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme Act 2023 was enacted. This legislation underpins a Payment Scheme for survivors and former residents of Mother and Baby institutions and represents an important element of a comprehensive package of support measures agreed by the Government as part of the *Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions*.



Funding increase for Early learning and Childcare delivered.

A total of €1.108 billion in funding for early learning and childcare was announced under Budget 2024. This represents an 8% increase on last year's funding. A €25 per week increase in the foster care allowance, up to €350 per week for children aged under 12 and €377 per week for those over 12 was also secured with further increases in November 2024, up to €400 per week for children aged under 12 and €425 per week for those over 12.



Young Ireland: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028 launched.

Young Ireland Framework, launched on 21st November 2023, sets out current issues impacting children and young people, identified by them. It sets out work to create an environment to ensure that children and young people are a central part of everyone's agenda. It announces spotlight programmes to



focus on the most significant challenges for children and young people, with resources from across government.

The First 5 Implementation Plan launched

The First 5 Implementation Plan (2023-2025) was launched on 20th November 2023, coinciding with the fifth anniversary of the strategy and World Children's



Day. First 5 is the whole of Government strategy of babies, young children and their parents 2018-2027. The new Implementation Plan includes 125 actions, each with a defined 2025 output and a clear schedule of associated annual milestones.

International Protection Support Services

Several deliverables on the integration and support strand of the White Paper to End Direct Provision and replace it with a new International Protection accommodation policy centred on a not-for-profit approach have been achieved including:



- A dedicated unit for victims of trafficking (VOT) was established.
- Establishment of integration teams at local authority level.
- Introduction of two new International Protection Integration funds with a combined total value of €4.1 million:
 - An International Protection Integration Fund which enables community-based organisations to play a greater role in the integration of IPs.
 - Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) fund which enhances the provision of their support services to children, young people and their families in International Protection accommodation settings.

Ukraine Response

During 2023, the Department continued to develop its capacity and capability in responding to what had originally been an emergency response to meet needs of those fleeing the war in Ukraine.



The areas of work of the Ukraine Division include:

- Procurement of temporary accommodation, contract negotiation, oversight of accommodation and facilities management services for people fleeing Ukraine under Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTPs) under the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).
- Providing strategic supports to implementing partners in the delivery of temporary accommodation streams as part of the all-of-government Humanitarian Response Accommodation Working Group.
- Coordinating operations, developing Ukraine policy and engaging with stakeholders including other Departments, the Health Service Executive, Local Authorities, Community Response Forum, Non-Governmental Organisations, Implementing partners and with both the Ukrainian Embassy and Ireland's embassy network at international level.
- Managing the Ukraine National Transit Hub in Citywest, Co. Dublin including the cross-government administration, processing, and allocation of accommodation functions.

Building Organisational Capacity and Capability

2023 saw significant activity across Human Resources and Learning and Development operations culminating in a headcount of 778 at the end of the year.

Key achievements include:

- L&D Unit, in partnership with the IPA was a finalist of the L&DI (Learning and Development Institute) Best L&D Collaboration Category at the L&DI Awards 2023, for their collaboration on the Civil Servant in the Democratic Process Training Programme.
- 264 new staff recruited to the Department averaging at 22 persons per month.
- Transfer of staff from Department of Health as part of the transfer of Disability functions was managed.
- The L&D team has successfully transitioned into the wider HR team ensuring a holistic approach to employee support and development and assisted with a total of 1495 attendances were recorded on OneLearning between on-demand self-directed courses and live instructor led courses.
- In 2023, External HR liaised with Department policy units and the aegis bodies regarding workforce planning, sectoral recruitment and retention initiatives and other ad hoc matters that required engagement.



Progress against Strategic goals in Department Statement of Strategy

The following section summarises the progress achieved during 2023 with regard to six strategic goals as set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2021-2023.



Strategic Action 1 - We will develop, implement, and influence evidence informed policies and legislation that improve the outcomes for those we serve.



1.1 - We will ensure that delivery of the Strategy is underpinned by a comprehensive programme of legislation and reflective of the Programme for Government.

The Department concluded the following important pieces of legislation in 2023;

- The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 was enacted in April 2023. The legislation introduced a range of entitlements for parents and carers, including an extension of breastfeeding breaks to two years; 5 days leave for medical care purposes; a right to request remote working for all employees and a right to request flexible working for parents and carers. It also included provisions introducing 5 days paid leave for employees who have or are experiencing domestic violence. The Act forms part of a sequence of developments in family leaves, which have increased significantly in recent years – notably with the introduction of paid Parent's Leave and subsequent extensions to that leave.
- The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme Act 2023 was signed into law in July 2023.



- The General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023 was published and submitted for Pre-Legislative Scrutiny in April 2023. Bill aims to update the Child Care Act 1991 Act to reflect changes since 1991 in child welfare and protection services. The Bill will also revise and update the regulation of Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare (ELC and SAC) services.



1.2 - We will build on the success of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF), and its implementation infrastructure, by developing a successor strategy that is integrated, action-focused and whole of society oriented in its input and application.

Young Ireland

Young Ireland: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028, was launched on 21st November 2023. Young Ireland envisages an Ireland that fully respects and realises the rights of all children and young people, and is the key framework to advance children's rights in Ireland over its lifetime. Guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Young Ireland sets out actions that aim to incorporate systemic changes to ensure the realisation of children's rights across policymaking, including Spotlight areas that require a cross-government approach.



With the support of the European Commission's Technical Support Instrument (TSI), the Department worked closely with the OECD to reflect on how Ireland coordinates, implements and monitors progress on our child and youth policies. This research will inform an OECD report, to be published in 2024, on how the State can deliver the Young Ireland Framework in an integrated and effective way.





1.3 - We will continue to develop and implement high quality, evidence-based policy to improve access to high quality and affordable Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare (ELC and SAC) that will deliver better outcomes for children, families, the economy, and society.

A New Operating Model for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare

Significant progress was made in advancing plans for a dedicated state agency for ELC and SAC. It is envisaged that this agency will undertake the functions currently carried out by Pobal Early Years (including Better Start), the 30 City/County Childcare Committees (CCC), as well as operational functions currently undertaken by the Department.

Independent consultants were contracted in 2023 to carry out a phase of research, analysis, and robust stakeholder engagement to inform the design of the agency. The work will take 18-24 months and will culminate in a costed agency design, including the remit, organisational structure and service delivery model.

Independent Review of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme

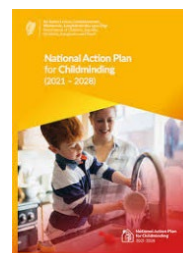
In 2023, an independent review of the ECCE programme was completed as a precursor to putting the ECCE programme on a statutory footing, as committed to in First 5. The review, which will be published in 2024, assessed whether the ECCE

programme is meeting its core objectives and considered any change or improvements that can be made to the Programme, based on international evidence and experience to date.



National Action Plan for Childminding

Progress on the implementation of phase 1 of the National Action Plan for Childminding (NAPC) (2021-2028) continued during 2023. The first annual report of the Steering Group for the NAPC was published on gov.ie. Childminding regulations were drafted and a public consultation planned for early 2024. The number of Childminding Development Officers employed by the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCCs) increased from 12 to 18 Fulltime equivalents (FTEs) to ensure support for all childminders at a local level. Work continued on the development of pre-registration training.



Inspection System

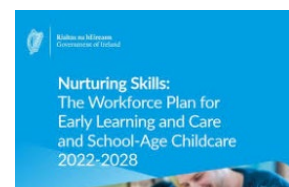
In 2023, the First 5 Implementation Plan (2023-2025) committed that the Department will begin a design and implementation planning process to bring together the functions carried out by Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate and the Department of Education (DE) Inspectorate's Early Years team into a single body that provides integrated care and education inspections.



The Department also continued its work of ensuring a more streamlined and coordinated approach to inspection of ELC and SAC services. The Department reviewed the work of the Inspection Streamlining and Coordination Working Group that was established in January 2022.

Nurturing Skills

2023 was the second year of implementation of Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for ELC and SAC (2022-2028). The first annual report (2022) was published. Progress was made in 37 of the 47 actions for 2023, and an annual progress report on 2023 is due for publication in Q1 2024.



Joint Labour Committee (JLC)

The JLC continued to meet during 2023 to discuss possible changes to the Employment Regulation Orders (EROs) that set minimum rates of pay for the ELC and SAC sector. The Department provided data to the JLC to support its work, and funding for providers to meet wage requirements through Core Funding. Following Labour Court recommendations suggesting a 5% increase for all roles contained in current EROs, the JLC began drafting new ERO proposals for consultation in Q1 2024.



1.4 - We will develop quality, evidence informed youth policy, including through the establishment of a new National Youth Sector Engagement Structure and the production of a renewed Youth Strategy.

Substantial work was undertaken by the Department to inform a new national policy in respect of youth services, including an extensive suite of consultations with the public, key stakeholders and young people themselves. A draft Policy Vision and set of Strategic Outcomes was developed, which will form the basis for the final strategic document, incorporating agreed priority measures, which is expected to be finalised in early 2024.





1.5 - We will lead on the development of family and parenting support policy. This will include clear policy guidance for, and oversight of, the provision and commissioning of family and parenting support services by Tusla and other relevant services.

Counselling, psychotherapy and therapeutic supports and services for children and young people experiencing social and economic disadvantage.

In May €700,000 in Dormant Accounts funding was allocated to 37 community and voluntary organisations - via Tusla - to increase counselling, psychotherapy and therapeutic supports and services for children and young people experiencing social and economic disadvantage in communities around Ireland. The aim of the fund is to increase counselling and psychotherapy and other therapy types (play, drama, art and creative therapy, bereavement support) to children and young people who are socially/economically disadvantaged and who, without support, cannot access these services. The funding helped to address unmet need and reduce waiting lists for community-based counselling and therapeutic services.



Signposting of parenting support services for parents

A commitment set out within Supporting Parents, a national model for parenting support services, looks at improving signposting of parenting support services for parents. Planning commenced for a national mapping of all Tusla parenting support services between DECDIY and Tusla. The objective of this project is to make awareness of and access to parenting support services easier for parents as well signposting to these services easier for practitioners.

Build greater awareness of parenting support services.

During 2023 the Department initiated a communications campaign under the banner of Supporting Parents on the Department's social media channels, targeting parents with information on parenting support services available nationally. Traffic from this campaign was directed to a new campaign page on gov.ie called Supporting Parents. Traffic to this page increased by 400% during the social media campaign.

Parent Peer Support Fund

During 2023 the Parent Peer Support Fund was launched. The fund was open to all organisations working with parents and/or children and young people to facilitate the development and support of parent peer support groups. Organisations who received funding included organisations working with parents of LGBTI+ children, parents of children with a disability and parents of children who have recently migrated to Ireland and the fund will continue in 2024.

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) Parenting Support Service Awareness Fund

A CYPSC Parenting Support Service Awareness Fund was piloted in 2023. The aim of this fund is to assist each CYPSC in developing a clear action-focused plan for the promotion of existing parenting support services in their area. Ten CYPSC took part and activities ranged from

setting up of parenting hub websites for parents, promoting parent hubs, providing learning opportunities for parents (e.g. baby massage, paediatric first aid, distributing booklets on parenting), to a showcase event of parenting services. Following the success of the pilot the initiative will be extended to all CYPSC in 2024.



Family Resource Centres (FRCs)

The Department continued to support Tusla in the delivery of the Family Resource Programme which provides approximately €20m in funding to 121



FRCs around the country providing services to a large number of communities. FRCs are uniquely positioned to deliver services reflective of the needs of their community and are benefiting from the WRC agreement reached in 2023 improving the sustainability and survivability of these Section 56 organisations. Examining the potential for future expansion of the FRC programme is one of the Minister's priorities contained in the Performance Framework 2024-2026 which issued to Tusla in September 2023.



1.6 - We will provide for reform of the Guardian ad litem service in childcare proceedings through publication and enactment of a new Child Care (Amendment) Bill, preparations for commencement of the Act and the establishment of a new national Guardian ad litem service.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) National Service

The Department continued to work towards establishment of an Executive Office to run the new Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) National Service, following the enactment of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2022. The GAL National Service will provide a high quality, standardised service to the courts and to children and young people who are the subject of public childcare proceedings.



The Department held an open procurement process in 2023 seeking consultancy services in relation to the development of the operating model, practice manuals and workforce plan for the GAL National Service, including a transition plan to facilitate the building of the new service.



1.7 - We will develop and implement detailed proposals for the legislative, policy and operational modernisation of the Child Care Act, 1991 to ensure that the best interests of children are upheld.

Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023

The General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023 was published and submitted for Pre-Legislative Scrutiny in April 2023. The Bill aims to update the Child Care Act 1991 Act to reflect changes since 1991 in child welfare and protection services and will also revise and update the regulation of ELC and SAC services. The Joint Oireachtas Committee's recommendations were considered in assessing whether further refinement of the legislative proposals was required.



1.8 - We will oversee an effective adoption framework, with the best interests of children at its centre, and drive policy and legislative reform in the area of adoption services, with a priority focus on expanding access to birth information.

The Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI)

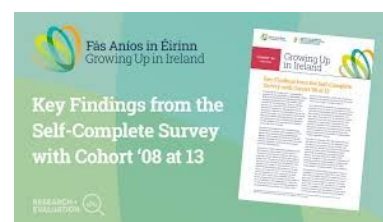
The Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) granted 87 adoption orders in 2023 including stepparent adoptions, infant adoptions and adoptions from long term foster care. In addition, 193 entries were made on the Register of Intercountry Adoptions.



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

The Department marked the first anniversary of the opening of services provided for by the Birth Information and Tracing Act. Throughout 2023, AAI and Tusla continued

to process applications for identity information and, since September 2023, all applications received have been responded to within statutory timeframes.



Birth Information and Tracing services – end of 2023	
Applications for information	10,892
Information applications completed	8,551
Applications for tracing	5,694
Entries on the Contact Preference Register	3,521
▪ Matches between relatives	307
▪ Relatives placed in contact	131



1.9 - We will plan and deliver a new model of delivery for “Growing up in Ireland, the national longitudinal study of children and young people.”

“Growing up in Ireland”

The new model of delivery for “Growing up in Ireland”, involving a partnership approach between the Department and the CSO, was implemented on schedule from 1st January 2023. Two new advisory panels (academic and policymaker stakeholders) were formed and participated in consultation events.



The publication, *Key Findings from Cohort '08 at 13*, was launched by the Department in July 2023. The technical report was published online by the Department in August 2023.

The first Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) annual research conference since the transfer to the Department took place in November 2023. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) commenced fieldwork for the main phase of Cohort '98 at age 25. CSO conducted a pilot for the new Cohort '24 at 9 months in Q4 2023.



1.10 - We will develop and implement gender equality and wider equality policies, which address the under-representation of women in leadership and decision-making and the needs of working families. We will do this through the provision of family leave and other initiatives.

Enactment of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023

The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 was enacted in April 2023. The legislation introduced a range of entitlements for parents and carers, including an extension of breastfeeding breaks to two years; 5 days leave for medical care purposes; a right to request remote working for all employees and a right to request flexible working for parents and carers.



The Act forms part of a sequence of developments in family leaves, which have increased significantly in recent years – notably with the introduction of paid Parent's Leave and subsequent extensions to that leave.

Introduction of Domestic Violence leave

The Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 included provisions introducing 5 days paid leave for employees who have or are experiencing domestic violence. The leave can be taken at short notice to access legal and other supports.

To support the introduction of the leave, the Department commissioned Women's Aid to develop templates and guidance for employers in developing their own domestic violence workplace policies.

The aim of the leave is to prevent employees who experience domestic violence, predominantly women, from losing employment which would put them at risk of poverty.



1.11 - We will develop and implement policies which facilitate the integration of migrant populations, promote the inclusion and participation of Travellers, Roma and people with disabilities, and which address racism.

National Action Plan Against Racism

A national consultation was conducted in October 2023 to support the development of a successor strategy to the Migrant Integration Strategy. The aim of the consultation was to gain insights into the migrant experience in Ireland, and to better understand the challenges, needs and opportunities for supporting and promoting migrant integration.



The National Action Plan Against Racism was endorsed by Government in March 2023 and launched on 21st March, the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Ireland Against Racism Fund and a new Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism were announced on the same day. The action plan will be implemented over a five-year period: 2023-2027.

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy

The Department has oversight responsibility for the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS). There were 2 meetings of the National Traveller and Roma Steering Committee in 2023.



Work continued on a number of the objectives in the Strategy including:

- Funding of €5.942m was allocated to Traveller and Roma representative bodies, and to advance NTRIS actions across areas such as employment, culture and heritage, inclusion, education, gender equality, mental health and mediation. A

further €0.93m was secured from Dormant Account Funding to support Traveller and Roma initiatives.



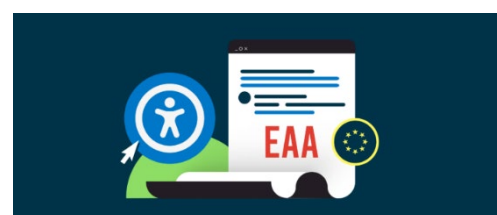
- The funding of Traveller Pride Week in July 2023.
- Undertaking the role as the National Roma Contact Point for the purpose of the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation.
- An Employment Conference was held in May 2023 to showcase Traveller and Roma employment and enterprise initiatives to a range of stakeholders in the public and private sectors.



Related Legislative Developments

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 and the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Act 2022 were commenced, along with supporting Regulations, in April 2023. The Act abolished wardship for adults in the State and ushered in a new rights-based model of decision supports for persons lacking capacity. Commencement of the legislation also saw the operationalisation of the Decision Support Service, which is charged with managing and overseeing many of the provisions of the Acts.

Transposition of the European Accessibility Act (EAA) which was completed in December 2023 will introduce mandatory accessibility requirements for certain products and services



across the EU. Accessibility is a central prerequisite for the full participation and inclusion in our society. Transposition paves the way for subsequent implementation of the Directive by June 2025. The EAA will deliver important benefits for persons with accessibility needs and also for businesses trading in accessible goods and services in Ireland, who will benefit from harmonisation of standards across the Single Market.



1.12 - Working across sectors, we will lead implementation of Ireland's LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy and National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy, 2019-2021 to ensure that LGBTI+ adults and young people are visible, valued and included.

The implementation of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy reviewed in 2023 and a report prepared for publication in 2024.



National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy

The Department has oversight responsibility for the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy. There were two meetings of the National LGBTI+ Steering Committee and two meetings of the Research Subcommittee in 2023.



A number of the Department's objectives in the LGBTI+ strategies were achieved in 2023:

- Following a successful LGBTI+ Community Services Funding Call in 2023, 26 projects received funding totalling €1,010,985.
- Under the LGBTI+ research programme, a number of research publications were published in 2023:
 - LGBTI Ireland (2023). LGBTI+ People Living in International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) Accommodation: Best Practices and Lived Experiences.
 - Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2023). IPSOS Survey on People in Ireland's Attitude Towards Diversity.

The following research was progressed in 2023:

- Fenton-Glynn, Martin, Ryan. *Legal Recognition of Gender for Children under 16*.
- Quality Matters. *Not Being Out on Your Own: Research on the Needs and Experiences of Parents of LGBTQI+ Children and Young People*.
- Trinity College Dublin. *Mental Health in the Irish LGBTIQ+ Population with Disabilities*
- Trinity College Dublin. *Being LGBT in Ireland*.

Contracts awarded in 2023:

- A contract was awarded to Tasc for the provision of a research study on Strategies for Promoting Straight Allyship with LGBTI+ Young People in Ireland.

“Looking back, moving forward” Campaign

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth launched the public awareness campaign ‘Looking back, moving forward’ in May 2023. The campaign sought to start a conversation about how far Ireland has come in achieving equality for the LGBTI+ community, while also reflecting on the work that remains to be done.

Conversion Practice

The Department published research into the issue of conversion practices in Ireland in February 2023, carried out by Trinity College Dublin, School of Nursing and Midwifery. The research provided an insight into how conversion practices operate in Ireland, with findings indicating that it takes place in Ireland.

The research examined international research literature in the area. The Government is carefully considering the underpinning policy matters to ensure that vulnerable members of society are protected from these harmful practices. Work on drafting the General Scheme is ongoing and officials continue to engage with the Office of the Attorney General on the matter.



1.13 - We will develop and implement high quality, evidence-based strategies and policies to help deliver better outcomes for people with disabilities.

The 2020 Programme for Government contained a commitment to work to implement the findings of the Capacity Review to 2032. The review set out the extra capacity required in disability services, as a result of existing unmet need and demographic change.



In July 2023, the Department secured Government approval for the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 – 2026. The Plan, which was published in December 2023, sets out a programme to increase service capacity, whilst also seeking to continue and reinvigorate the reform agenda in disability services policy.





Strategic Goal 2 - We will ensure the provision of a range of quality and sustainable services, underpinned by strategic investment, that meet the needs of individuals, families and communities.



2.1 - We will ensure that delivery of all of our priorities is underpinned by strategic investment and robust financial planning. This will include a strong focus on workforce planning with a view to ensuring that the delivery system has both the capacity and supply to respond to identified need.

Community Based Disability Services

An Interdepartmental Workforce Steering Group, chaired by the Minister of State for Disabilities, established to direct efforts to address immediate and longer-term workforce supply. Expansion of eligibility for work permits secured for professions working in Disability Services. HSE employment levels grew by approximately 662 FTEs. Upon introduction of a HSE recruitment pause, the Department protected targeted growth through a derogation for disability services. Strategic commitment to enhance Disability workforce underpinned by commitments included in the published Action Plan for Disability Services and the Roadmap for Disability Services for Children and Young People. In budget 2024, funding secured to support recruitment of a further 707 HSE WTEs; funding secured to increase CDNT staff employed by Section 39 agencies and to fund a phased 8% pay increase for Section 39 staff.



Funding for Tusla:

For 2023 Tusla had a core budget allocation of €917.082m (€899.582m Current and €17.5m Capital). In its 2023 Business plan, Tusla indicated a potential



overspend/deficit. The department sought and secured them a Supplementary Estimate of over €84m (€84.069m) to cover its 2023 overspend as well as additional costs arising from the WRC agreement on Section 56 pay and the double payment to foster carers in 2023 announced in Budget 2024.

The final Tusla core budget for 2023, was €1,001.151m which was drawn down in full by Tusla by the end of year, not including other funding from the Department, including Ukraine, DSGBV Services, Early Years Inspectorate etc, or funding from the Department of Education.

€m	Current	Capital	Total
2023 Original Allocation	899,582	17,500	917,082
Supplementary Allocation	84,069	0	84,069
2023 Final Allocation	983,651	17,500	1,001,151



2.2 - We will develop and enhance youth service provision in Ireland, including through reform of youth funding programmes and strengthening of youth quality initiatives.

A number of core reforms were delivered in 2023. These included the development of a Policy Intent Statement outlining the primary objectives of this scheme as well as the introduction of a Grant Funding Agreement. This agreement, and the associated new grant scheme rules, put the Youth Service Grant Scheme (YSGS) on a more enhanced footing from a governance and oversight perspective. The introduction of these core reforms allows the opening of the YSGS to new entrants in 2024.



Through strategic investment and regular sectoral engagement, the Department continued to work to develop and enhance youth service provision in Ireland, including through the allocation of €77 million to support youth services in 2023.

As part of its consultation process to develop a new national policy document for youth services, the Department sought input in respect of approaches to strengthening quality mechanisms within youth services. Work to further develop and comprehensively implement youth quality support mechanisms is continuing in 2024, taking into consideration the 2017 review of the National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work.



2.3 - We will deliver a range of schemes and initiatives to ensure that children and families can access high quality and affordable Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). We will ensure that Government investment is utilised to best effect through monitoring of delivery, a robust programme of evaluation, and continuous quality improvement including feedback from service users.

Quality Improvement Supports

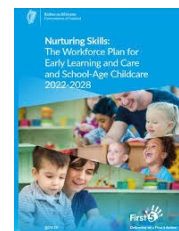
The Department continued to provide oversight and promote coordination and consistency in the quality practice supports provided by various support organisations in the ELC and SAC sector, including Better Start (a national initiative

established by the Department and hosted by Pobal). The Department funded the National Síolta Aistear Initiative led by the Department of Education to implement both the quality and curriculum frameworks in the ELC sector. The Department has introduced an annual quality improvement planning process for services within Core Funding.



Learner Fund

In 2023, 425 bursaries were awarded to graduates of degree programmes in ELC. In December, the Minister announced the introduction of a pilot Nurturing Skills Learner Fund to support early years' educators to undertake qualifications while continuing to work in the sector.



Workforce Qualifications

The Department maintains a list of qualifications that meet regulatory and contractual requirements for ELC. Better Start continued to assist the Department in its ongoing assessment of applications for qualification recognition. Approximately 1,810 applications were processed in 2023.



Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme

108,612 children were registered on the ECCE programme in 2022/23, a small increase on 2021/22.

Parent and Toddler Grants

Funding of €352,580 was allocated to Parent and Toddler Groups through local City/County Childcare Committees in 2023 with the emphasis on supporting Parent and Toddler Groups that offered a welcome to families who were newly arrived in Ireland.

Enhancements to the National Childcare Scheme (NCS)

Further reforms to the NCS were introduced in 2023 to improve the affordability ELC and SAC. Since January 2023 - with the increase in the minimum NCS subsidy to €1.40 per hour - out of pocket costs for ELC and SAC to families have fallen by 25% on average. Arising from Budget 2024, the minimum subsidy will increase again to €2.14 per hour - leading to a 50% reduction in out-of-pocket costs over two years. Record numbers of children are now benefitting from this Scheme.



The NCS Parent Portal award for 'Best Citizen / Customer Experience' at the inaugural Public Sector Digital Transformation Awards.

First 5 Trials

The First 5 Trials programme explores innovative initiatives to meet a range of objectives in First 5, by testing the effectiveness of initiatives in an Irish context and determining suitability for nationwide implementation.



In 2023, the First 5 Trials included;

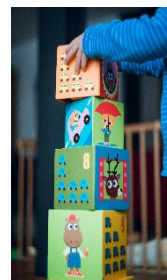
- The First 5 Little Library, which included My Little Library - a free book bag with storybooks and resources for every 4 and 5 year old who started school in September 2023 and the Little Book at Bedtime - free bedtime story books for every children of 4 years and under. Both of which were available for collection through local libraries.
- The First 5 Little Baby Bundle - a welcome gift from the State for a new arrival to a family to acknowledge the very significant and special moment for parents. It is filled with a range of useful items, including play items to encourage early communication and bonding, household items for help with safe bathing and safe sleep, as well as a range of other items to support new parents after the birth. 350 expectant parents from the Rotunda Hospital Dublin and 150 parents from Waterford University Hospital were offered an opportunity to participate in the trial of First 5 Little Baby Bundle pilot.
- The Additional Nutrition Programme – a collaboration with Pobal, Tusla, nutritionists and ELC and SAC services - tested the delivery of different meal options in ELC and SAC.



Each Trial has been subject to an evaluation, the findings of which will inform proposals for wider roll-out.

Delivery of Building Blocks – Improvement Grant

Investment in the ELC and SAC sector, under the revised National Development Plan (2023-2025) consists of three pillars - Modernisation, Capacity and First 5 / Innovation Initiatives. The Modernisation pillar operated in 2023. Under the Building Blocks - Improvement Grant, €9m was made available to 151 ELC and SAC providers for the upgrade of premises.



Grants ranged from €35,000 to €75,000 across two separate strands: Green Energy and Retrofit. Services that signed up for the Core Funding Scheme were eligible for funding under the Grant.

Core Funding

€259 million was allocated to Core Funding in Year 1 (September 2022-August 2023) and 95% of providers signed up to the scheme. Key achievements of the scheme in year 1 included:

- a fee freeze among 95% of services, which meant that increases to NCS subsidies were fully felt by parents;
- a 15% increase in the number of services offering the NCS;
- historic Employment Regulation Orders, which resulted in improved pay for an estimated 73% of those working in the sector;
- extended support for graduate-led provision outside the ECCE programme; and
- a significant expansion of capacity, with analysis showing the increased capacity is the type of capacity that is in highest demand relative to supply.

€287 million was allocated to Core Funding in Year 2 (September 2023-August 2024) and 94% of providers have signed up to the scheme to date – with the absolute number of providers participating higher than in Year 1. As announced in Budget 2024, the Core Funding allocation for Year 3 of the Scheme will increase by 15% - to €331m.



2.4 - We will manage the latest phase of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme to bring 2,900 refugees to Ireland and to resettle them in communities across the country.

The Irish Refugee Programme (IRPP) welcomed 172 refugees during 2023, including resettlements of Syrian nationals and humanitarian admissions from Afghanistan.

Refugees were resettled to the community following their orientation in one of the Reception and Orientation Centres (ROCs).

The resettlement to the community was facilitated with the support of local authorities, who receive funding from IRPP. The Community Sponsorship Ireland Programme was subject to review during 2023 and the recommendations of the programme will be implemented in 2024. Ireland submitted a resettlement pledge to the European Commission for 2024 and 2025 in September 2023.



2.5 - We will develop and implement a new model of accommodation and related supports for persons in the International Protection process, centred on a not-for-profit approach, and delivery of ongoing services to such persons.

Continued implementation of the White Paper to end Direct Provision took place in 2023, while in parallel a reassessment of the underlying assumptions and implementation approach was also advanced.



With regards to integration and supports the following were achieved:

- A dedicated accommodation for Victims of Trafficking (VOT) was established.
- Sanction secured to provide for an International Protection Child Payment.
- Progression on introduction of independent monitoring of Direct Provision centre standards by HIQA.

- Establishment of integration teams at local authority level with recruitment commencing in Q4 2023.

Funds aimed at IP integration rolled out:

- An Integration Fund enabling community-based organisations play a greater role in the integration of IP's. €1.2m in funding was provided in 2023.
- A Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) fund which enhances the provision of their support services to children, young people and their families in International Protection accommodation settings. €1.3m in funding was provided in 2023.



2.6 - We will support Tusla in their commitment to continued improvements in service provision and performance to optimise outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Tusla Corporate Plan and Oversight Agreement

The department continued to engage with Tusla in relation to the priorities contained in Tusla's Corporate Plan (2021-2023) and worked with Tusla to revise the Oversight Agreement between the Department and Tusla.



What Works Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative

The Department provided Dormant Accounts funding to Tusla for three projects under the What Works Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative:



- €304,640 was allocated to scaling proven models from the ABC Programme, which aims to build on tested approaches to developing area-based responses to mitigate and address the impact of long term inter-generational poverty.
- Funding was also provided in expanding 'Early Talk Boost', which is a targeted intervention for children aged 3-4 years old who have delayed language development.
- €199,050 was allocated to the Traveller Parenting Pilot to support parents from the Traveller community to access quality parent support programmes and to increase engagement.

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. The Department allocated €2.405 million to Tusla towards the initiative, with funding also provided by the Department of Health. CYPSC projects in 2023 included parenting supports, health, nutrition, activities, play, children and young people's participation, LGBTI+ supports, mental health and well-being supports, anti- racism and internal protection supports. During 2023, CYPSC continued to respond to the arrival of families from Ukraine. Plans for a Review of the CYPSC initiative, to commence in 2024, were also progressed.





Strategic Goal 3 - We will help those who are vulnerable, including children, young people and at risk individuals, to overcome adverse circumstances and to achieve their full potential



3.1 - We will further develop Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) programmes and schemes to ensure that children and families who need services most can access them. This will include children living with economic disadvantage, children with additional needs and parents seeking to engage in or return to work.

Access and Inclusion Model

The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) supported 6,800 children with disabilities to access and meaningfully participate in the ECCE programme across ELC services through targeted supports in 2023. Further funding was secured in Budget 2024 to support the extension of AIM to ECCE aged children outside of time spent in the ECCE programme (in term and out of term).



Equal Participation Model

Arising from a commitment in First 5 and recommendations from the Expert Group and in Partnership for the Public Good, the Department progressed the development of a tailored policy response for Tackling Disadvantage - the Equal Participation Model (EPM). The model is informed by extensive consultations with stakeholders throughout 2023. Through the EPM, services will be provided with a proportionate mix of universal and targeted supports to support children and families accessing their services who are experiencing disadvantage. Budget 2024 secured funding to commence initial rollout of the EPM from September 2024.





3.2 - We will strengthen the safeguarding and protection of children through leadership across Government, strong direction, and support to Tusla and engagement with other stakeholders to enhance child welfare and protection.

In 2023 the Department advanced proposals in the General Scheme of the Childcare (Amendment) Bill 2023 in this regard, which aim to support the effective coordination of services across Government, in order to provide comprehensive services that meet the range of needs of children and young people in care, in aftercare or known to Tusla.

Children First Inter-Departmental Implementation Group

The Children First Inter-Departmental Implementation Group (CFIDIG) includes representatives from every Department, the HSE, Tusla and An Garda Síochána. The Group met twice in 2023 and continued to focus on monitoring implementation of the Children First Act 2015.



The annual report of the CFIDIG for 2022 was published in June 2023. The report included contributions from Departments and Agencies outlining initiatives and actions to promote Children First and child protection and welfare in their sectors.

Children First Awareness Week took place during September 2023 and was delivered by Tusla on behalf of the CFIDIG. The information campaign raised awareness about Children First and had a particular focus on the responsibilities of organisations under Children First.





3.3 - We will further develop the policy and strategic approach to children in care (Residential, Foster and Special Care) and work with stakeholders to enhance outcomes and ensure that the rights of children in care to access required services are upheld.

The Department prioritised the securing a meaningful increase to the foster care allowance in Budget 2024 to support the vital role being carried out by foster carers. Foster care is the preferred option in Ireland for children who cannot live with their parents or guardians, and foster carers are the backbone of our child-care services.



From 1st January 2024 the rates of the foster care allowance increased by €25 per week, up to €350 per week for children aged under 12 and €377 per week for those over 12. The foster care allowance will be further increased in November 2024, up to €400 per week for children aged under 12 and €425 per week for those over 12. In addition, a double week of the foster care allowance was also paid to foster carers on 8th December 2023.

The Department is leading on the *Care Experiences Project*, in close collaboration with Tusla. This project has its foundations in the 2009 Ryan Report which recognised that more needed to be understood about young adults leaving the care system and how they got on in their future lives. The research project seeks to examine the factors which support or undermine the well-being of children and young people in care and aftercare and adults who were in care as children, so that services and policies can be enhanced to meet their needs.

CARE LEAVERS - 10 YEARS ON STUDY HAVE YOUR SAY AT OUR PLANNING WORKSHOP!

**EVER LIVED IN
STATE CARE?
WE WANT TO
HEAR FROM
YOU**

WHAT'S THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?



This national study is about the experiences of people who've grown up in Irish state care. Your opinion on how we plan to do this research matters to us.

WHO WE ARE



We're a team from Trinity College Dublin and the University of Sussex who want learn about the lives of care leavers. With your help, we hope this study will inform care policies and services in Ireland.

WHO CAN JOIN?



- Anyone aged 18+ with experience of Irish state care (foster care or residential care).
- Anyone interested in helping us to make a great study.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?



- Share your ideas.
- Give us feedback on our research plans.
- Help us make our research as relevant as possible to care leavers.

WHY TAKE PART?

- **Be heard** - your voice will help this research to have a greater impact.
- **Connect** - meet others who share your experience.
- **Make a difference** - help us improve care for future generations.
- **Get travel expenses covered and receive a gift voucher** - your time and insights are valuable to us.

WORKSHOP DETAILS



FRIDAY 26TH APRIL 2024



11AM - 2PM



**TRISS SEMINAR ROOM,
ARTS BLOCK,
TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN**

**LUNCH &
REFRESHMENTS
PROVIDED!**

THEY'RE ON
WHATSAPP TOO



INTERESTED?

We'd love to hear from you!

For more information and to **register for our planning workshop**, contact us at:



CARELEAVERSSTUDY@TCD.IE



0862006448

www.careleavers10yearson.com



SCAN ME



At the heart of the Project is the Care Experienced Expert Panel (CEEP). These young adults provide expertise and advice on every aspect of the Project's implementation and delivery. The Project also benefits from guidance and strategic direction from a Programme Board comprising officials from various government departments and agencies to ensure the learnings from the Project are far-reaching. A number of advocacy organisations, working with children in care and young care experienced adults, are also involved in providing insight and advice to the Project.

Special Rapporteur on Child Protection

In January 2023, Ms Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC was appointed by Government as Special Rapporteur on Child Protection for a three-year term. The appointment followed an open competition run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS).



3.4 - We will conduct formal assessments of international protection applicants to determine any special reception needs for vulnerable persons, including children.

During 2023, the Resident Welfare Team conducted 1,949 Vulnerability Assessments with International Protection Applicants. These assessments, carried out by Assessment Officers and Social Workers, deemed that approximately 1,100 persons had one or more vulnerabilities within the meaning of S.I. No. 230/2018 - European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018. As a result of the assessment, persons were provided with support and signposting to relevant services. In some cases, the Resident Welfare Team made a recommendation regarding specific or more suitable accommodation, where available.



Separated Children Seeking International Protection (SCSIP)

There was an unprecedented increase in the numbers of separated children arriving in Ireland from countries other than Ukraine, placing a significant burden on Tusla resources in 2023.

The Department worked with Tusla to identify budget cost pressures and secured a 2023 Supplementary Estimate of over €84m for residential care including approximately €14m for non-Ukrainian separated children.

SCSIP in Care (Section 5)

Year	2021	2022	2023
Figure	86	129	322
Percentage increase	N/A	50%	274%



3.5 - We will oversee safe and secure care for young people sentenced or remanded by the Courts in a way which meets their health and education needs, supports them to move away from offending, and prepares them to return to their families and communities.

The Department maintained close oversight of Oberstown Children Detention Campus performance and compliance in 2023. This was characterised by regular monitoring of daily occupancy vis a vis remand and detention orders, representation on the Board of Management and Board Sub-Committees, management of appointments to the Board and monthly senior management meetings with Oberstown. Remission requests and transfer authorisations to the Irish Prison Service were managed in a timely fashion. There was oversight to ensure that the Policies and Procedures outlined in the Children's Rights Framework were adhered to.





3.6 - We will continue to lead on innovations in prevention and early intervention to optimise outcomes for children, young people, their families and communities.

What Works Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative

The What Works Prevention and Early Intervention initiative provided funding for the Building Evidence Fund in 2023. This fund aims to support the gathering and analysis of data and evidence within the community and voluntary sector. During 2023, 13 successful applicants received a total of €635,287.



€75,000 was also provided for Fighting Words, a programme operating under Creative Ireland, for the expansion of its Story Seeds programme. Story Seeds supports young people to write their own story with the aim of enabling them to begin to understand their own life story including the personal, circumstantial and emotional aspects and their place, be it geographical, social and/or imaginative.

Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023-2026

The Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023-2026 Disability Services for Children and Young People was launched in October 2023. The Roadmap contains an important set of key actions that, collectively, will enhance children's disability services in Ireland. They include significant measures to integrate and improve access to services, expand the workforce and advance better communication and engagement with families. The Roadmap sets out a targeted plan to achieve the government's commitment to improving the lives of people with disabilities, in alignment with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD).



Strategic Goal 4 - We will promote the development of a progressive, respectful and equal society, informed by the experiences of past generations and seek to respond to the needs of survivors.



4.1 - We will continue to support the State's response to the priority needs and concerns of survivors of institutional trauma, and to the Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes

First annual report on implementation of Government's Action Plan

The first annual report on implementation of Government's Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions was published. Quarterly updates were also sent directly to survivors throughout the year.



Payment Scheme

The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme Act 2023 was signed into law in July 2023. Work to establish the administrative structures needed to open the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme continued throughout 2023. Furthermore, in May 2023, Ms Sheila Nunan was appointed to lead negotiations with the religious bodies with a historical involvement in the institutions, aiming to reach an agreement with those bodies that they would contribute to the cost of the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme.

Tuam Intervention

In March 2023 the Minister formally established the Office of Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam and in May 2023 he appointed Mr Daniel MacSweeney as the Director to manage and oversee the excavation, recovery, analysis and identification of the children's remains at the site. The Advisory Board to the Director of

Authorised Intervention, Tuam was appointed by the Minister in September 2023. The Director's priorities in the initial phase of the intervention involved the establishment of core administrative and staff structures, engagement with relatives, survivors and former residents and preparation for the excavation at the site.

Special Advocate for Survivors

In March 2023, a campaign began through the Public Appointments Service to recruit a Special Advocate for Survivors.

National Centre for Research and Remembrance

In July 2023, Government approved the masterplan for the overall National Centre for Research and Remembrance campus and a preliminary business case for the main National Centre building – museum and repository. Government also approved,



in principle, proposals for the wider National Centre campus comprising social housing, educational and community facilities. In July 2023, Government also approved plans for an initial public consultation on specific elements of the Centre, which ran from July to September. Responses from the consultation will directly inform the ongoing work on the development of the National Centre. The Department has continued to process applications received under the Magdalen Restorative Justice Ex-Gratia Scheme.

The Department continued to meet its obligations in relation to providing access to records for individuals and provided responses to subject access requests to 195 individuals and 27 responses to FOI requests in respect of Commission records. It continues to support individuals who may wish to make a subject access request and operates a dedicated telephone information line which provides information to callers on procedures for making requests.



4.2 - We will develop policies and legislation to promote gender equality and wider equality and to address barriers preventing individuals from full participation in Irish society.

The Research and Evaluation Unit (REU) funded and published research on:

- how individuals who are LGBTI+ found the International Protection system
- the housing conditions faced by children in early and middle childhood and the implications of these housing experiences for their cognitive, socio-emotional and health outcomes
- Wages and working conditions of non-Irish nationals in Ireland.





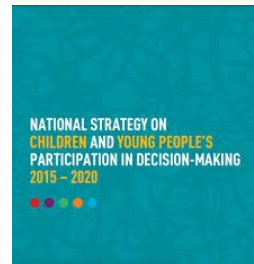
Strategic Goal 5 - We will work in partnership with individuals, families and communities, and across Government Departments, outcomes.



5.1 - We will lead Ireland's effort to realise the right of children and young people to have a voice in decisions that affect their individual and collective lives through effective legislation, policy and service provision.

Participation Action Plan

Development of a new Participation Action Plan commenced in 2023, building on the implementation of first National Participation Strategy 2015-2020. This new action plan will make child and youth participation structures inclusive of all children; build capacity among policy makers and service providers to engage meaningfully with children and young people when developing policy, legislation, services and research that will impact their lives, continue implementation of the National Participation Framework; provide accessible participation training to professionals working with and for children and young people; continue development of participation support structures, including the National Participation Office and Hub na nÓg. The Action Plan will be published in 2024.



Child Care Act 1991

In 2023, the Department considered proposals that emerged from the review of the Child Care Act 1991 to draft the General Scheme and Heads of Bill to amend the 1991 Act. As referenced above, the General Scheme was approved by Government and underwent Pre-Legislative Scrutiny in 2023.

The General Scheme includes proposals to enhance the voice of the child such as modifying section 25 to facilitate more children being made party to proceedings.



5.2 - We will continue to oversee the implementation of First 5 and continue to contribute to the development of cross Government policy, taking shared ownership for delivery. We will use our comprehensive stakeholder engagement framework to consult with children, families, the Early Learning and Care and School Aged Childcare providers and staff, and other stakeholders in developing policy and overseeing implementation.

First 5

The First 5 Annual Implementation Reports (2020 (2021/22) were published in June 2023 followed by the First 5 Implementation Plan (2023-2025) in November 2023. This Implementation Plan was informed by ongoing engagement with stakeholders across the sector. Key inputs included an Open Policy Debate, Annual Implementation Reports (2019, 2020 and 2021/2022), an analysis of submissions to a public consultation, and bilateral meetings with other Government Departments. Over this phase of implementation, 125 actions will be delivered across 10 Government Departments, the HSE and Tusla as well as 31 delivery partners.



AIM

An evaluation of AIM, which engaged with almost 2,000 stakeholders – parents, educators, providers and representative groups, was progressed in 2023. The report of this evaluation, which was published in January 2024, will both inform the expansion of targeted AIM supports to children beyond time spent in the ECCE programme, in term and out of term from September 2024, and any further enhancements of or expansions to AIM.



Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout 2023, the Department hosted numerous meetings of the Early Learning and Childcare Stakeholder Forum (ELCSF). Subgroups of this forum were established to engage on workforce recruitment and retention, the development and design of the financial reporting requirements under Core Funding and the development of an Action Plan for Administrative and Regulatory Simplification.



5.3 - We will develop successor equality strategies through proactive partnership with key stakeholders, including through Cross-Government collaboration implementation.

National Disability Inclusion Strategy

The Department made significant progress in 2023 toward the development and delivery of a successor strategy to the National Disability Inclusion Strategy. Following the launch of a survey in summer 2023 to scope high-level priorities, with support from the National Disability Authority, the Department led a robust and wide-ranging stakeholder consultation process for the development of what will be a whole-of-government strategy.



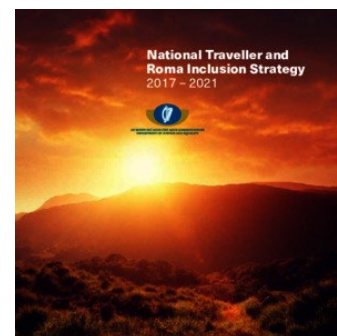
This included but was not limited to:

- town hall events,
- a series of focus groups concentrating on seldom-heard voices;
- cross-government engagement.

The Strategy will be delivered in 2024, building on this work for the delivery of a Programme for Government commitment.

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy

In 2023, work continued on the development of the successor National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. Consultations were carried out with representatives of the Traveller and Roma communities, as well as Government Departments and State agencies. The successor Strategy will have a stronger outcomes focused approach and will also incorporate a robust implementation structure and monitoring system, with achievable actions and clear Key Performance Indicators. The new strategy is expected to be launched in Quarter 2, 2024.



National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy

A review of the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy was commissioned in 2023. The purpose of the review is two-fold:

1. To determine what has been achieved / not achieved under the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy.
2. To identify key priority areas for inclusion in the successor National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy.



The review includes an assessment of LGBTI+ Strategies in other jurisdictions and national and international research to determine, among other things, key themes, gaps, and priorities that should be considered for inclusion in a successor Strategy. It is intended that a successor Strategy will be published in 2024.





5.4 - We will engage with EU institutions, and lead and coordinate Ireland's reporting process to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on our implementation of the UNCRC, and Ireland's response to the Committee's Concluding Observations.

The Department have actively engaged in EU institutions to promote Ireland's interests and contribute to important policy and legislative discussions. In 2023 significant progress was made at EU level on (i) agreeing new binding standards for equality bodies, (ii) updating reception conditions for those seeking asylum, and (iii) creating a new EU Disability Card.

Ireland also became the first Member State to host a meeting of the National Coordinators of the European Child Guarantee, with officials from 24 EU countries joining us for a two-day conference in Dublin sharing good practice on ways to improve outcomes for those at risk of child poverty.



UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

In January 2023, the UNCRC held a hearing to review Ireland's record in implementing children's rights. Delegates from nine departments attended the Hearing, with Ireland's response coordinated by the Department. In the Concluding Observations, the Committee recognised the positive steps taken by the State since Ireland's last review in 2016 and the legislative, institutional and policy measures taken by the State party to implement the Convention. The Experts of the Committee on the Rights of the Child also expressed admiration for how Ireland had received children fleeing Ukraine.

Child Summit

Ireland's second Child Summit took place in Croke Park in November 2023 and was attended by 250 delegates including young people, statutory organisations, academics, non-statutory and voluntary organisations.

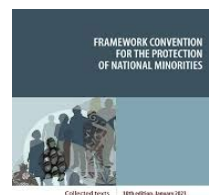


5.5 - We will review how we communicate with our stakeholders and develop and implement a comprehensive Communications Strategy to support delivery of the Department's strategic objectives.

The Department has evolved its communications in 2023 and will finalise a new communications and stakeholder engagement strategy in 2024. Examples of stakeholder engagement in support of key policies and services are as follows: -

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

In July 2023, the Government approved the content of Ireland's Fifth Periodic Report under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), which was drawn up by the Department in coordination with a number of other Departments.



The Fifth Periodic Report was duly submitted to the Council of Europe on 12 July 2023. This was followed by a visit of a delegation of the FCNM Advisory Committee in September 2023. The FCNM Advisory Committee's opinion in respect of Ireland is expected in summer 2024.



National Childcare Scheme (NCS) and First 5

The NCS was promoted through press releases, sponsored editorials and stalls at Bord Bia Bloom, the National Ploughing Championships, and the Pregnancy and Baby Fair.

In addition, the Department sponsored the First 5 Garden of Wonder and Discovery at Bord Bia Bloom 2023 to promote the importance of outdoor play and access to green spaces. The Garden, designed in consultation with young children, was awarded 'Gold Medal', 'Best in Category – Large Garden', 'Best Planting' and 'People's Choice Award'.



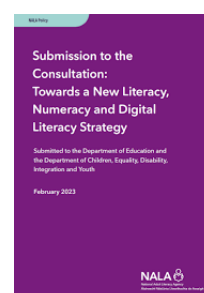
New Early Learning and School age Care Operating Model

A full Communications and Consultation Plan has been developed to ensure all stakeholders are kept informed of developments throughout the design and implementation of the new agency for ELC and SAC. In December 2023 the first of a series of stakeholder consultation sessions attended by Pobal and City/County Childcare Committee managers, staff and board members along with wider stakeholders in the sector. Engagement with a wide range of stakeholders will continue as a key feature of this reform programme as we work together to design a new operating model for the benefit of children and their families, providers, educators and practitioners.



Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (LNDL) strategy

In 2023, the Department and Department of Education jointly carried out a wide-ranging consultation process, as part of the development of the successor strategy to the National Strategy Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011 – 2020. This successor Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (LNDL) strategy will be published in 2024.



International Protection Transparency Unit

The Transparency unit was set up in 2023 and delivered intensively under intense and growing political and media attention. As part of its support for the Parliamentary and related processes, it dealt with:

- approximately 300 PQs; 50 media queries per month (600 total); over 50 FOI requests; and approximately 200 eCorrespondence.
- requests for Leaders' Questions (LQs) notes, Commencement Matters, Payments Account Committee (PAC) briefings, Ministerial Briefing and Speeches, and difference ad-hoc queries from the Minister's Office, and queries from NGOs and Government research bodies.

The Transparency Team was also instrumental in the Community Engagement Team (CET) response to the International Protection accommodation situation.





Strategic Goal 6 - We will maintain high standards of performance and corporate governance with engaged, motivated and supported staff.



6.1 - We will ensure that there is a strong and effective corporate governance framework operating within the Department, including structured governance and performance oversight, led by senior management, of aegis bodies and funding intermediaries.

During the year, the Department engaged extensively with key stakeholders, including its staff, in preparing and publishing the new Statement of Strategy 2023-2025.

The Department maintains and adheres to an overarching governance framework that sets out the structures, policies, and processes in place to manage its work efficiently and effectively. It operated effective business planning, to effectively plan for, monitor its progress against and deliver on its statutory, policy and service obligations consistent with its Programme for Government commitments and priorities set out in its Statement of Strategy.

Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth
Statement of Strategy
2023 - 2025



The Department's Risk Management processes serviced to identify and mitigate potential threats to the achievement of organisational goals. The Risk Committee met four times in 2023 to oversee the risk management while the audit committee met and reported to the Secretary General and Accounting Officer on the operation of the Department's internal controls.

The Department's governance and oversight extended to close engagement and oversight to aegis bodies, including formal governance oversight meetings, review of oversight agreements and, where appropriate, performance delivery agreement so that their objectives and achievements complimented the Department's work.

Examples of this engagement and oversight work are described below.

- **HSE**

An Oversight Agreement developed between the Department and the HSE is the overarching governance framework for the important relationship of the Department with the statutory agency, considering the relevant legislative provisions and supporting administrative agreements. It provides structured accountability and governance arrangements to support reporting, communications, and liaison between the Department and the HSE.



- **Tusla**

The Department developed a new Performance Framework for Tusla for 2024-2026, containing seven core priorities for Tusla to progress over the next three-year period which issued from Minister O’Gorman to Tusla in September 2023. This informed the development of Tusla’s Corporate Plan for 2024-2026.



- **National Disability Authority**

A strong governance relationship between the Department and the National Disability Authority has continued, with regular engagement set within a concrete corporate governance framework. Following commencement of Assisted Decision-Making legislation, much work has been done to formalise the governance and funding relationship between the Department and the Mental Health Commission, the body in which the Decision Support Service resides. Robust funding agreements are in place with other bodies funded to carry out bespoke disability initiatives on behalf of the Department, including through the Disability Participation and Awareness Fund and the Open Doors Initiative.



- **Oberstown**

Comprehensive governance activities were undertaken, and an Oversight Agreement and Performance Delivery Agreement were in place to ensure close monitoring of Oberstown's activities. There was daily monitoring of Oberstown's occupancy in relation to the current Certificate issued by the Minister for CEDY under the Children Act 2001. The Department worked with Oberstown and the Public Appointments Service in the selection and appointment of a new Chairperson, Ms. Kyriakoulla Yiasouma.



- **The Adoption Authority of Ireland**

The Authority operates in accordance with best practice corporate governance principles in line with the Adoption Act 2010 and, where applicable, the guidelines as set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016. The Board is accountable to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and is responsible for ensuring good governance. It performs this task by setting strategic objectives and targets and taking strategic decisions on all key business issues. The Department maintains a strong governance and oversight responsibility for the Adoption Authority of Ireland. Regular meetings are scheduled with corporate governance and financial management as standing items on the agenda.



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

The Adoption Policy Unit (APU), reporting to the Assistant Secretary for Adoption, Mother and Baby Homes and Research Division, managed the Department's relationship with the AAI. APU monitored and evaluated performance through strong governance and accountability systems. Effective communication arrangements are in place. The Unit met with the Authority regularly (approximately every six weeks) and governance was a standing agenda item for these meetings. Any staffing matters were referred to the Department's External Human Resources Unit which dealt directly with the AAI on matters concerning terms and conditions of staff and referred to APU regarding business cases for new staffing.

Data Protection and Access to information

The Department continued to expand its capacity in respect of data protection to ensure its obligations under GDPR are met and to implement best practice records management. Activities included but are not limited to:



- introductory talks on both records management and data protection at inductions for new staff,
- enhanced supports to embed eDocs as the Department's document and records and management system.
- various data protection learning opportunities,
- a monthly data protection newsletter and network events.

Operational activities included arrangements to progress the transmission of a significant body of records associated with the transfer of functions relating to specialist disability services from the Department of Health.

The Department continued to meet its obligations in relation to providing access to records for individuals and provided responses to subject access requests to 195 individuals and 27 responses to FOI requests in respect of Commission records. It continues to support individuals who may wish to make a subject access request and operates a dedicated telephone information line which provides information to callers on procedures for making requests.



HR, Procurement and ICT

In 2023 External HR (EHR) provided guidance to the Department's aegis bodies on HR policies, IR matters and recruitment processes. EHR also engaged in oversight of aegis bodies' HR processes and business



cases and held regular bilateral meetings with aegis bodies and Departmental policy units respectively.

EHR oversaw compliance of aegis bodies' implementation of DPENDR HR policies, circulars, and the public service pay agreements and associated processes.

A business case submission template and appraisal toolkit was developed and is currently being piloted with one agency. This template will assure business cases are appraised more efficiently and effectively with considered rationale for the decision.

In 2023 the ICT and Procurement Unit:

- Completed the Digital Governance Returns in line with Circular 14/21 "Arrangements for Oversight of Digital and ICT-related Initiatives in the Civil and Public Service".
- Completed value management reviews on a portfolio of strategic projects for the Department. The resultant value management reports were presented to the Business Systems Programme Board (BSPB). The Board then prioritised several strategic projects for IPAS and Gender Equality to progress for business analysis in 2024.
- Tendered for ICT project support services and a contract was put in place in 2022. As a result of the growing remit of the Department and the Ukraine crisis, the services provided under this contract have been used at a higher rate than anticipated. To meet the additional demand for ICT projects, The ICT team returned to the market in May 2023 for ICT project support services. The total value of this contract is €5m over a maximum period of four years. The support services sought were Business Process Optimisation Expertise, Project Management Expertise and a Solution Implementation Team. This contract was awarded to Auxilion in August 2023.



- Completed the move to the new e-tenders platform in 2023. The old e-tenders platform will not be available to Departments after May 2024.



Transfers of function

The transfer of functions to the Department from the Department of Health and the Department of Justice brought significant additional financial and governance accountability obligations which motivated the Department to review and strengthen its corporate governance framework and structure. The Childcare database, the Repatriation database and Contracts and Payment database were converted from Lotus Notes and transferred to the Department in 2023. The transfer of other Lotus Notes databases from the Department of Justice will continue into 2024.



6.2 - We will develop a revised Strategic Workforce Plan to ensure that the Department has the resources, knowledge, skills and experience to deliver on its strategic objectives. We will also ensure an agile and flexible workforce, support our staff through Learning and Development initiatives, and create an environment where staff feel valued and respected.

The expansion in the Department's remit, along with the large intake of staff required to fill posts across our policy and service delivery areas, necessitated the commencement of a review of our capacity and capability. During the year, the Department conducted an employee survey to gain an understanding of the opinions and attitude of staff and to harvest ideas on how to address the challenges faced. The results of the survey showed that staff had a very high level of affiliation with the Department's mission, vision and values and were keen to contribute to organisational goals. The positivity shown by staff and their willingness to shape the development of our workplace and workforce of the future is a very encouraging sign that the Department will evolve to meet the goals set in our new Statement of Strategy as well as any challenges that lie ahead.

There was significant movement of staff in the Department during 2023 with a headcount of 778 at the end of 2023. Key achievements include:

- 264 new staff recruited to the Department averaging at 22 persons per month.
- Specialist competitions run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) supported by the Department.
- The Department activated its recruitment licence and initiated a direct recruitment campaign for EO grade.
- Transfer of staff from Department of Health as part of the transfer of Disability functions was managed.
- Internal promotion competitions for PO, AP, HEO and EO grades were held.
- Staff and managers supported during the probation process to ensure successful probation outcomes - 378 staff on probation during 2023.
- The L&D team has successfully transitioned into the wider HR team ensuring a holistic approach to employee support and development.
- In 2023, External HR (EHR) liaised with Department policy units and the aegis bodies regarding workforce planning, sectoral recruitment and retention initiatives and other ad hoc matters that required engagement.
- EHR commissioned the UCD Research Project 'Pathways to Social Work' which surveyed Social Work students across Ireland to understand the motivations and challenges in becoming a social worker to inform improved recruitment and retention initiatives for social workers in Ireland.
- EHR worked co-operatively with Tusla and DPENDR colleagues to avert escalated industrial action amongst Tusla Clerical Administrative Grades III to VI.
- EHR sanctioned 27 new posts across 5 agencies, including 11 in the Decision Support Service.





6.3 - We will ensure that there are strong and effective Vote management arrangements in place within the Department to account to Government, the Oireachtas and the public for all expenditure incurred.

The Department operates a structured devolved financial budget process with the day-to-day responsibility for budget management residing with the budget holder in line units. The Finance Unit manages, and coordinates matters regarding overall expenditure on Vote 40. Activities involved in the management is working collaboratively with line units to report regularly on expenditure to a range of stakeholders including, the Government, Minister, Management Board and DPENDR.



During 2023, a more extensive Vote monitoring regime applied, including fortnightly monitoring meetings with DPENDR, the submission of quarterly expenditure Memos to Government regarding updates on both current and capital expenditure as well existing formal monitoring and reporting arrangements.

The Finance Unit (Vote management) led out and secured supplementary funding for the Vote on two occasions in 2023. The Finance Unit (Vote management) along with the line units proactively managed the expenditure during the year within the agreed original and revised allocations.

Following the Transfer of Functions in March 2023, financial management structures have been established with the Health Service Executive (HSE). There is monthly engagement with the HSE in relation to financial performance. In addition, a process for the management of weekly cash drawdowns to the HSE has been implemented, including analysis of trends in spending and escalation of issues as they arise.

The Appropriation Account for Vote 40 was prepared and submitted in full and on time to underpin the outturn for the year against the amount provided by Dáil Éireann, in compliance with the Exchequer and Audit. A new Procure to Pay (P2P)

system was developed using novel technology to support the prompt payment of invoices for Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection emergency accommodation. Reports of material spending were published periodically, as required, for transparency.

The Secretary General and Accounting Officer was invited to attend a meeting of the Committee of Public Accounts in February 2023 to present on the previous year's appropriation account and responded to questions from Committee members on a range of topical matters related to the Department's vote.



6.4 - We will ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place for the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare budget in order to achieve optimal outcomes and ensure value for money.

New Operating Model

A governance framework has been approved for the design and planning phase for a new state agency for ELC and SAC. A Programme Oversight Board comprising inter-departmental representatives and external experts with experience at senior level in change management and large-scale reform, leadership, governance, public policy and a knowledge of the sector has been appointed to oversee this phase. An internal Design Authority comprised of Departmental officials has also been appointed to act in an advisory capacity to assist the Board. Memorandums of Understanding to cover the programme to establish the agency between the Department and Pobal/Better Start and boards of each of the 30 City/County Childcare Committees have been agreed and signed.

Oversight of Funded ELC and SAC Organisations

The Department continued to ensure oversight of Pobal, 30 City/County Childcare Committees and funded National Voluntary Childcare Organisations through 2023. There is an overarching Service Level



Agreement between the Department and Pobal/Better Start, an annual Programme of Work and series of Performance Delivery Agreements, accompanied by quarterly reporting requirements have been devised, agreed and implemented. In the case of City/County Childcare Committees and National Voluntary Childcare Organisations, there are annual statements of work agreed accompanied by a quarterly reporting requirements have been devised, agreed and implemented.

The Compliance Function Departmental ELC and SAC programmes/schemes is administered by Pobal who conduct unannounced inspections of ELC and SAC services to confirm that they are adhering to key rules pertaining to relevant programmes/schemes (ECCE, CCSP, NCS and AIM). Compliance resources are administered efficiently, to ensure maximum coverage of c. 1,150 services per annum, and c. 1,700 scheme contracts. Pobal also undertake verifications of grant schemes such as the Fire Safety Grant. Ineligible expenditure found during compliance inspections or grant scheme verifications is recouped by the Department.



6.5 - We will continue to operate systems which procure accommodation for persons seeking international protection which comply with National Standards and ensure that inspections system effectively monitor that compliance.

The Minister signed into effect the European Communities (Reception Conditions) (Amendment) Regulations 2023, which provided for the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) to conduct inspections of certain accommodation centres contracted by the Department ensuring adherence to the National Standards.

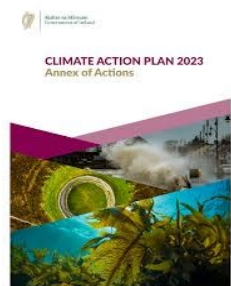


At the end of 2023 the International Protection Accommodation Service was accommodating a total of 26,279 individuals across its portfolio of 258 IPAS Accommodation Centres and Emergency Accommodation Centres. Of this total, 5,621 were children. The total number of arrivals in 2023 seeking IPAS accommodation was 12,281. We have developed new statistical outputs, which inform IPAS/IPPS Management on availability within the IPAS system, this helps guide decisions on when new accommodation is required.



6.6 - We will ensure delivery of the Department's obligations under the National Climate Action Plan and any future initiatives in this area. This will include a focus on aegis bodies.

The Department took the steps necessary to meet its obligations under the National Climate Action Plan. Aegis Bodies were informed of their obligations under the Climate Action Plan. The Head of the Corporate Governance and Climate Action Unit is the Department's Climate Action and Sustainability Champion. The Green Team operates as a sub-committee of Partnership. These structures are incorporated into the Department Governance Framework.



Energy efficient capital projects were undertaken by Oberstown to support delivery of the Department's obligations under the National Climate Action Plan and improve energy efficiency across the Campus.

On behalf of the Department, the Facilities Management Unit continues to meet its obligations under the 2023 Climate Action Plan including fulfilling SEAI's Monitoring and Reporting requirements and the annual payment into the Climate Action Fund for the Department's Air Travel in 2023.

Ukraine Response

While not captured in the programme of work contained in its Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023, securing access to emergency accommodation for those fleeing the war in Ukraine continued to represent a significant programme of work for the Department.



Introduction and Background

Since the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, in line with Government policy and as part of the whole-of-Government response, the Department has worked with a focus on providing access to emergency temporary accommodation to those fleeing the conflict who request it.

Overseeing provision of accommodation on this scale and during this timeframe was immensely challenging. Due to the urgent need to source accommodation, a broad range of accommodation types were contracted, including hotels, guest houses and B&Bs, religious properties, accommodation operated by voluntary bodies and emergency accommodation.

The areas of work of the Ukraine Division include:

- Procurement of temporary accommodation, contract negotiation, oversight of accommodation and facilities management services for people fleeing Ukraine under Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTPs) under the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).
- Providing strategic supports to implementing partners in the delivery of accommodation streams as part of the all-of-government Humanitarian Response Accommodation Working Group.
- Coordinating operations, developing Ukraine policy and engaging with stakeholders including other Departments, the Health Service Executive, Local Authorities, Community Response Forum, Non-Governmental Organisations,

Implementing partners and with both the Ukrainian Embassy and Ireland's embassy network at international level.

- Managing the Ukraine National Transit Hub in Citywest, Co. Dublin including the cross-government administration, processing and allocation of accommodation functions.

Staff required to meet the scale of operations

The unprecedented level of activity required further expansion of staffing resources established in 2022. By the end of 2023, there were over 170 staff assigned to the Ukraine team of whom approx. 50% were from outside the Department. It was necessary to draw from a wide range of recruitment/resourcing strands to achieve our staffing needs.

These included but were not limited to;

- Public Appointments Service panels,
- recruitment of temporary clerical officers,
- internal staff reassignments,
- Contracted temporary agency staff with assistance from Pobal and
- availing of staff on secondment or temporary assignment from other departments and offices.

The Division was also supported by staff from Deloitte on contract to the Department following a competitive external procurement process. Additionally, given the fast-paced nature of the Ukraine response, the Department has been innovative and agile in how it leverages skillsets across the Ukraine Division to best meet the most urgent challenges requiring resolution. The Ukraine Division prioritises strategic workforce planning and resource management to ensure key objectives are delivered to timelines.

Finance

By the end of 2023, over 100,000 BOTPs had arrived in Ireland, over 80% of whom sought assistance with accommodation from the State. The provision of access to temporary accommodation for BOTPs at this scale is costly, demand-led, urgent and highly responsive service with immediate requirements determined by numbers of arrivals from Ukraine. The initial budget allocation for the Ukraine Response was based on the 2022 outturn and always expected to be insufficient. Two supplementary estimates obtained by the Department towards the end of 2023 provided additional funds to meet the eventual outturn of some €1.49 bn spent in subhead E05 on the Ukraine response.

Payments

Early in 2023, the Department was aware of and understood the concerns that many of those providing accommodation were unhappy with delays they experienced in receiving payments. By the end of the year, the backlog of payments and associated prompt payment interest was effectively resolved. A more ambitious electronic payments project was commenced to provide an electronic solution to all stages of the procurement to payment process and is expected to be operational early in 2024.

Data Protection

Significant progress was achieved in 2023 to improve our knowledge of and compliance with data protection obligations. Given the nature of the work associated with providing access to temporary accommodation to so many individuals, data protection was a high scoring risk that required significant mitigation.

- An audit was conducted of all data sharing activities to identify needs and prioritise tasks.
- Awareness was raised in all Units of the importance of implementing appropriate controls and Staff training was arranged where appropriate.
- Data Processing Agreements were concluded with all local authorities in conjunction with the LGMA.

- A joint controller arrangement was concluded with the Irish Red Cross in relation to the work of its implementing partners on pledged accommodation.
- Work progressed to develop further agreements as needed to build on those already in place since 2022.

Parliamentary Affairs

The level of public and political interest meant that the Division was initially overwhelmed with Representations to the Ministers and other requests for information from the start of the year. However, by the end of Q3 all backlogs had been cleared.

Over 900 representations were responded to in 2023 by the Division.

Stakeholder Engagement & Communication

The Department worked as part of the wider whole-of-Government policy response in multiple ways, including the following:

- Liaising with a wide array of stakeholders including the Senior Officials Group (SOG) across Government, the Local Government Management Association (LGMA), the Health Service Executive (HSE), other Government Departments, embassies, state agencies, civil society organisations and international partners to continue to provide short-term accommodation to those fleeing Ukraine.
- Via the dedicated BOTP helpline and ticketing system, those coming from Ukraine can raise questions and concerns directly to the Department. Throughout 2023, this service received approx. 19,000 tickets in total, with approx. 365 tickets received each week.
- As a member of the Accommodation Working Group hosted by the Department of An Taoiseach to support the delivery of other accommodation beyond serviced accommodation including rapid build, proof of concept modular and refurbished properties.

- In supporting the design and development of the 90 Day accommodation policy, ensuring all legislative requirements for policy change and an appropriate accommodation portfolio will be in place in time for the new policy to go live.
- Continued to evolve Department policies guiding management of temporary emergency accommodation for those fleeing the war in Ukraine as required, including in the case of accommodation refusal, permitted BOTP absences from accommodation, anti-social behaviour guidance and others.
- Ensuring clear communication of all relevant policies to BOTPs and accommodation providers as required.

Children and Families Support

The Department supported Tusla in providing access to accommodation and services to children and families in Ireland fleeing the war in Ukraine. To meet anticipated cost for residential care and accommodation to separated children and young people arriving from Ukraine, €31.4m was provided in 2023, including provisions for Family Resource Centres to provide supports in the community.

Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Division Supports (SAC) for Ukrainian children and their families.

In 2023, the Department continued to implement the action plan to respond to the ELC and SAC needs of Ukrainian children and their families.

Key actions include:

- Facilitating access to the Department's funding schemes – the ECCE programme and the National Childcare Scheme (NCS)
- Identifying ELC and SAC places available locally and nationally for Ukrainian children.

- Proactively engaging with ELC and SAC services to explore the scope for any expansion in ELC capacity - with applications to Tusla to increase capacity in ELC and SAC services fast tracked, where possible.
- Providing an “ELC and SAC matching service” to link Ukrainian children to services.
- Providing information and a host of supports to and SAC services to help them meet the needs of Ukrainian children and their families, including training on trauma-informed practice and guidance on how ELC and SAC services can best support children and families in the context of the conflict in Ukraine.
- Providing information, supports and practical resources to Ukrainian families to support children’s early learning and opportunities for play, including information and Parent and Toddler Groups, designated play areas in temporary accommodation, Stay and Play sessions in the larger accommodation and links to wider supports for early learning, including the network of local libraries.

Citywest Transit Hub

Since March 2022, the Citywest Transit Hub has operated as the main welcome and transit centre for those fleeing Ukraine. It has also been used to help respond to the increased numbers of International Protection Applicants (IPAs) arriving in Ireland.

In 2023 some 95% of arrivals were processed and transported to their new temporary accommodation on the same day as they arrived at the Citywest Transit Hub.

By the end of 2023, over 79,000 Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTPs) had been processed in the Citywest Transit Hub. In addition, approximately 8,000 International Protection Applicants (IPAs) had also been provided with overnight emergency accommodation at the Transit hub itself.

Child safety is paramount, and a formal Child Safeguarding Statement was in operation in the Citywest transit hub. This statement was adopted to ensure best

practice was followed in line with the provisions of the Children First Act 2015 and the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children. Tusla also had a fulltime on-site officer who worked with the Department to implement the Statement.

Continuous Process Improvement Projects

During 2023, numerous process improvements initiatives were implemented to improve effectiveness, address work related pressures on key teams and to ensure the department delivered efficiently on their obligations.

Offers Portal for Commercial Offers of Accommodation

- Design and delivery of a dedicated portal for all commercial offers of accommodation was launched in January 2023.
- This dedicated channel was the one route through which providers could offer commercial accommodation to support those fleeing the war in Ukraine. Having one channel enabled Department staff to robustly track, evaluate, progress and decline offers as appropriate, in line with minimum standards as outlined by Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in the Temporary Accommodation in Existing Buildings - Single Persons & Family Type Accommodation standards document.
- Throughout 2023, approx. 2800, offers were received through the portal for evaluation.

Compliance Team

- A compliance team was established to regularise and resolve compliance issues across existing the Department's existing accommodation portfolio.
- This was necessary, as given the scale of the Ukraine response operation. Legacy compliance issues, in existence prior to the establishment of the Offers Portal needed to be investigated and regularised.

- The Department set up a dedicated team to investigate cases of non-compliance, while also establishing clear processes and procedures for this team to follow to accurately evaluate and resolve various non-compliance challenges.
- Data tracking processes were set up to enable the team to have full visibility of compliance cases open and associated progress.
- During 2023, 133 compliance cases were raised for further investigation by the compliance team, with 24 fully reviewed, regularised, and subsequently resolved.

Contract Project

- A significant project was undertaken during the first six months of 2023 to renew contracts with providers of commercial accommodation, to ensure the state had sufficient accommodation for BOTPs arriving from Ukraine.
- As part of contract renewal negotiations, it was of utmost importance that Department teams secured the highest value for money possible to protect the public purse.
- To ensure this, new rate cards and terms were developed for full-board contracts, which included introducing a contribution model where BOTPs would pay a contribution to accommodation providers for their accommodation, and included negotiating with providers to align to revised, more standardised rates.
- This project was a large success, with 204 self-catering providers renewing their contract for a further year, and 462 providers who were previously full board also electing to renew. Some of this cohort moved to self-catering provision, while some implemented the contribution model.

Policy Development

The Department continues to engage across Government on strategic policy development in respect of supports for BOTPs. Following desk-based research and engagement with national and international partners, proposals were brought

forward in December 2023 to amend supports for BOTPs to better align with those in other EU Member States.

State-supported Accommodation

Serviced Accommodation

The Department has leveraged an operational response of scale to deliver immediate short-term accommodation for all those who requested it fleeing conflict in Ukraine. All BOTPs who presented requesting State supported accommodation in 2023 have received it from the Department. To this end, various policy decisions supported this response, such as:

- the development and upgrade of the online Offers Portal;
- launch of a DCEDIY modular portal seeking expressions of interest from private developers offering turnkey solutions including sites;
- policies to enhance compliance and contract renewals.

Refurbishment Programme

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was agreed in 2023 between this Department, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the City and County Management Association.

The MoU covers arrangements in relation to:

- The work of the technical working group to identify and appraise prospective properties for refurbishment;
- The assessment and oversight of refurbishment projects by Local Authorities;
- Funding provided by the Department of Housing for refurbishment of properties for use by displaced people;

- Assessment by the Department of the suitability of properties for displaced people, arrangements for intent to utilise properties and appropriate contractual arrangements.

Templates for 5-year contracts are now in place following intensive engagement with the CSSO - all longer-term contracts for accommodation can be re-purposed for IP applicants after 2 years, where necessary. Significant progress has been made in 2023 on all State-owned properties and private properties who can refurb using their own resources, and Local Authorities are now engaging with providers with a view to finalising agreements to prepare properties for use. This has delivered approximately 1,500 bed spaces in 2023.

Engagement with D/Defence and the Defence Forces - Columb Barracks Mullingar

Throughout 2023, the Department engaged and collaborated with colleagues in D/Defence and the Defence Forces on a Modular Proof of Concept at Columb Barracks Mullingar. The Columb Barracks site was approved by Government as a 'proof of concept site' to examine the potential of rapid build 'pod' style accommodation. An agreement was reached in September 2023 that a total of 62 rapid build 'pod' style units would be delivered accommodating up to 249 BOTPs. The Department of Defence retains ownership of the overall site.

Work is ongoing with International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to identify the Ukrainian families who will be allocated the units when they are ready. The families make an accommodation contribution on the same terms as the Rapid Build programme. The approved housing body, Tuath, has undertaken the management of the units and the common areas. During 2023 the Department continued to source suitable families for the remaining units which will be ready end March 2024. The Department greatly appreciates the efforts of the Department and Defence Forces in providing assistance as part of the humanitarian response.

Modular Accommodation

In 2022, the Government approved the construction of 700 rapid build homes with the potential to house up to 2,800 individuals in family units. The rapid build homes

will be constructed on state owned land. The OPW is leading the development of this accommodation in conjunction with the Department.

All the sites will have roads, footpaths, street lighting and community facilities, including green spaces fully in line with Local Authority planning guidance. The rapid build homes will be highly energy efficient, durable units with a 60-year lifespan and the development of the sites will be conducted in an environmentally sustainable way to ensure that, post development, the site will enhance the local area.

As part of the Department's Rapid Build Programme, approx. 1,240 Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection have been supported to move to 310 units of modular housing in 7 locations across the country. This involved the support of OPW, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and relevant Approved Housing Bodies.

Student Accommodation

At the height of summer arrivals and with serviced accommodation at capacity or unavailable due to the tourist season, the Department managed to secure an additional 5,000 beds to accommodate approximately 3,200 beneficiaries of temporary protection throughout the summer months of 2023. The project involved large scale procurement, allocation and logistical management operations in accommodating the increasing number of arrivals with significant capacity constraints. The relocations unit were fundamental in both assigning student accommodation and the subsequent demands placed on the Department in ensuring that the student accommodation settings were available in time for the resumption of the academic calendar in September.

Medical /Disability

In partnership with the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Department also assisted in providing specific accommodation to meet the needs of vulnerable Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection including those with complex medical requirements and disabilities. The Department sourced accommodation for more than 600 cases ranging from medical evacuations to those requiring proximity to hospitals for complex medical treatment and ongoing supervision and after treatment care.

Critical Incidents

Between Jan 2023 – December 2023, the Critical Incidents Team dealt with 1,429 incidents. The majority of incidents were responded to within 24-48 hours of receipt. The Critical Incidents Team worked with a range of parties in addressing issues highlighted in reports including Tusla, HSE, NEPS and An Garda Síochána.

BOTP Accommodation Inspections

In Q3 2023, the Department went out to tender to procure an expanded BOTP inspections service. In addition to ad-hoc inspections, which are generally driven by a specific matter raised in relation to a property, the tender also provided for scheduled inspections of a proportion of the BOTP portfolio each year.

A new inspections protocol was developed which centralises the channelling of requests for inspection from operational teams, the prioritisation of those requests and the monitoring of outcome trends in one Unit in Ukraine Division. The procurement process was significantly advanced at year end with contracts to be signed early in 2024.

Maximising use of Contracted Vacancies

With such a large accommodation portfolio and frequent movement of BOTPs in and out of properties, vacancies will inevitably arise. Accommodation providers are contractually obliged to notify the Department each week of vacancies arising at their properties. Maximising the use of these contracted vacancies is a key priority for the Department and a dedicated team was established in Q2 2023 to actively monitor returns from providers, validate vacancies notified to ensure they meet our requirements and to make suitable vacancies available for use by operational teams.

The dedicated team also has a compliance role, ensuring that providers meet their weekly contractual requirement to notify the Department and that the returns received are correctly formatted and completed. At the end of the year, provider compliance with the requirement to notify the Department of vacancies was over 95%.

Accommodation Recognition Payment

In 2023, legislative amendments were made to extend the Accommodation Recognition Payment for community hosts to 31 March 2024, in line with the extension of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD). The scheme, which is administered by the Department of Social Protection, recognises the generosity of people who have opened their homes to provide accommodation to beneficiaries of temporary protection (BOTPs), involves a monthly payment of €800 per property per month. In 2023, almost €71m has been paid to over 12,200 hosts under the Scheme in respect of hosting over 27,100 BOTPs.

Pledge Accommodation

In 2023, the Department supported the Irish Red Cross (IRC) to resume responsibility for all operational aspects of its Pledge Project. This support has resulted in over 10,490 BOTPs being housed in over 2,290 homes pledged to the IRC by private hosts. The Department continues to ensure that effective governance measures are in place in respect of implementing partners contracted to support the activation of properties pledged by the Irish public to IRC Pledge Appeal and the D/HLGH's Offer a Home Scheme. A Steering Committee, chaired by the Department, has also been put in place to oversee work on the IRC Pledge Appeal.

Ukrainian Response in Numbers

Ukraine Division has needed to scale at a rapid pace through 2023 to meet demand for supports



In numbers...



Accommodation supports

- **74,800+** BOTPs in State-supported accommodation¹
- **16k+** in pledge or Offer a Home
- **58,600+** in short term accommodation
- **6** rapid build sites completed with **1,072** residents²



Operations

- **218** Division staff⁴
- Over **€1.35bn** payments²
- **990+** contracts signed²
- **1,936** vacancies are available in **247** properties³
- **102** compliance cases being addressed²



BOTP movements

- Over **102,600** Temporary Protection Orders granted¹
- **2.3%** of BOTPs across the EU²
- **21** arrivals daily seeking accommodation (Feb '24)
- **36** departures daily (Feb '24)

An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige | Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

1. As at 31/12/2023
2. As at 11/12/2023
3. As at 08/12/2023
4. As of 23/01/2024, 102 of which are DCEDIY staff, 98 contracted / agency, 18 secondees



Transfer of Functions

S.I. No. 688 of 2022 Specialist Community-Based Disability Services (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order 2022 was signed by Taoiseach Micheál Martin on 13th December 2022 with an operational date of 1 March 2023. These specialist disability services are provided by the HSE and a range of other providers to children and adults in residential, day and respite settings, as well as children's therapy services, personal assistance, home support and other community services and supports.

The 2020 Programme for Government contained a commitment to work to implement the findings of the Capacity Review to 2032. This review set out the extra capacity required in disability services, as a result of existing unmet need and demographic change.

In July 2023, the Department secured Government approval for the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024 – 2026. The Plan, which was published in December 2023, sets out a programme to increase service capacity, whilst also seeking to continue and reinvigorate the reform agenda in disability services policy.

The Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023-2026 Disability Services for Children and Young People was launched in October 2023. The Roadmap contains an important set of key actions that, collectively, will enhance children's disability services in Ireland. They include significant measures to integrate and improve access to services, expand the workforce and advance better communication and engagement with families. The Roadmap sets out a targeted plan to achieve the government's commitment to improving the lives of people with disabilities, in alignment with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Appendix I: Public Sector Duty

Public bodies have a duty and legal responsibility to demonstrate equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans.



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. Under Section 42 a public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to – and equality in the performance of its functions:

- (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 all individuals in the development of policy and legislation.

The Department' [Public Sector Duty Assessment and Implementation Plan](#), published in March 2021, outlines various measures that the Department has committed to in the interest of maintaining standards of public sector duty.

Public Sector Duty Monitoring Report 2023

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) recently launched its Annual Report for 2023. This report details compliance in 2023 with requirements under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's publication status is currently recorded as 'Published' and compliant.

Appendix II: Finance Overview in 2023

The gross funding provision for the Department, under Vote 40 in 2023 was €7.185 billion, following two supplementary estimates (€2.813 billion in 2022). €6.972 billion (current expenditure) and €213 million (capital expenditure). This level of funding provision includes the transfer of a budget of €2.647 billion from the Department of Health in relation to Specialist Community Based Disability Services, for which the department took responsibility, with effect from 1 March 2023.

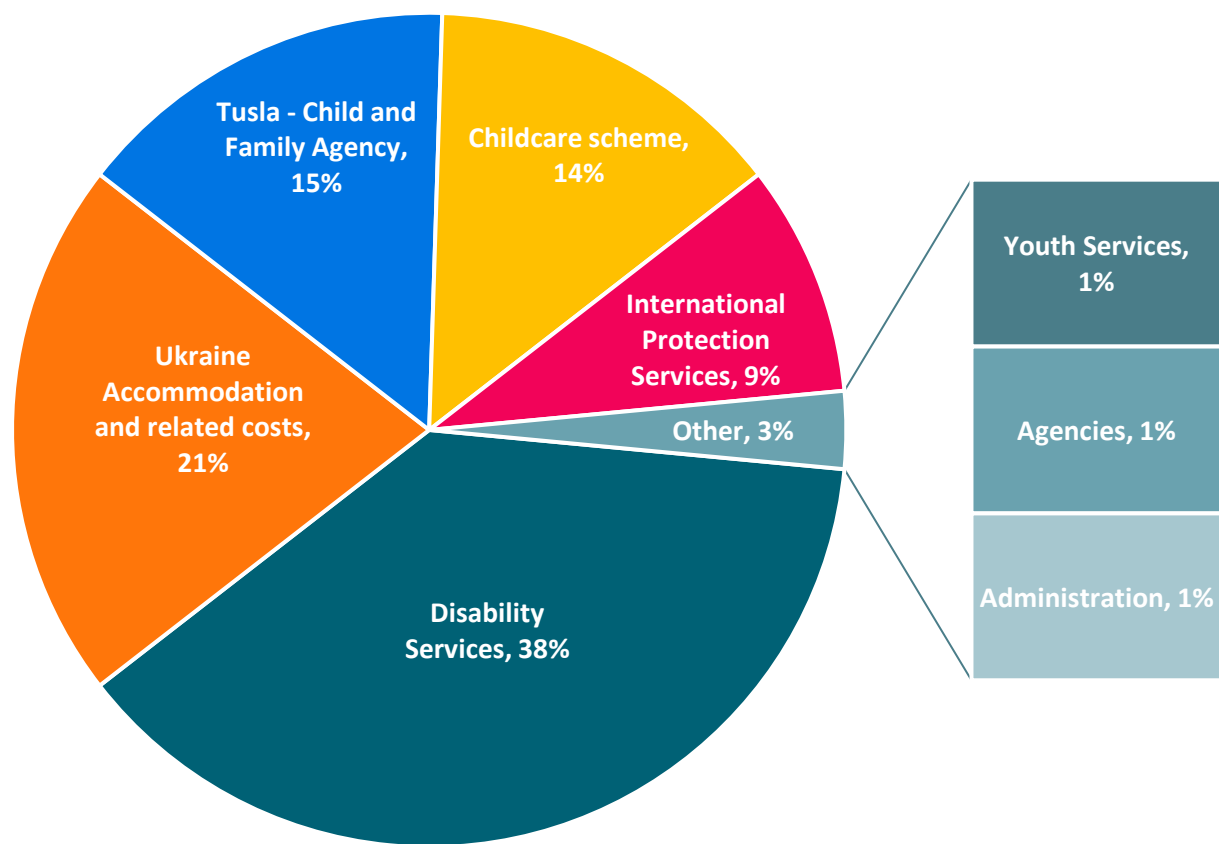
The 2023 gross provision represented an increase of €4.37 billion (155%) on the 2022 Estimate and an increase of €4.45 billion, or 163%, over the 2022 outturn. The provisional gross expenditure outturn of the Department and its agencies was €7.145 billion. The expenditure in 2023 enabled a significant level of services to be delivered across five programme areas including the new programme area of Disability Services, enabled the Department to continue to manage its significant role in the humanitarian response to the conflict in Ukraine and accommodating individuals who are seeking International Protection in Ireland.

Table 1.1 - Programme Expenditure 2023

Programme Expenditure ¹		Outturn
		€000
A	Children and Family Support Programme	1,074,285
B	Sectoral Programmes for Children and Young People	1,097,085
C	Policy and Legislation Programme	41,114
D	An Equal and Inclusive Society	2,773,346
E	A Fair and Efficient Support System for International Protection Seekers	2,159,345
Gross expenditure		7,145,175
Deduct		
F	Appropriations-in-aid	(30,668)
Net expenditure		7,114,507

¹ Please note, the values are based on provisional outturn figures and until the publication of the Appropriation Account for the Vote for 2023 on 30 September 2024, may be subject to change.

Department Expenditure by Percentage



Appendix III Learning and Development Expenditure

In 2023 total expenditure for the Department's L&D training programmes amounted to €274,775.40, where:

- OneLearning €49,332.08
- Inhouse €96,080.54
- ESS €129,362.78 (42 staff members supported: 1 CO, 12 EOs, 10 AOs, 5 HEOs, 11 APs and 3 POs).

The remaining budget was allocated to individual training requests, professional and corporate memberships and attendance at seminars and conferences. A total of 1495 attendances were recorded on OneLearning between on-demand self-directed courses and live instructor led courses.

- 731 participants on live courses and
- 764 participants on the on-demand courses.

Appendix IV Overview of Energy Usage in 2023

The Department's energy consumption is reported to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on an annual basis and tracked against the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan to achieve a 50% improvement in energy efficiency and a 51% reduction in Green House Gas emissions (measured in kgCO₂) by 2030.

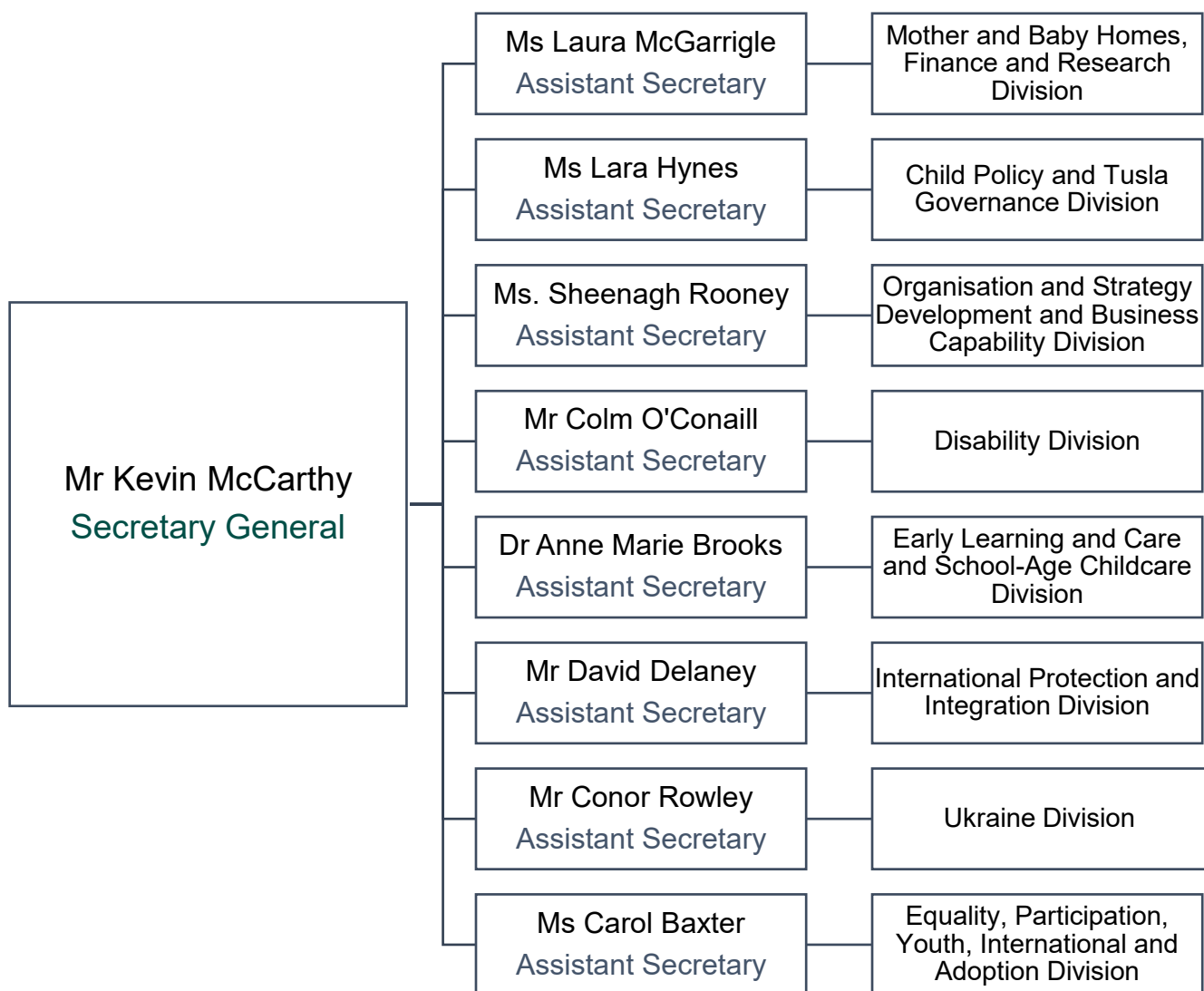
Following the formation of the Department in 2011, a baseline level of energy efficiency per staff member was established in 2012. To date, the Department has achieved a 62% improvement in energy efficiency per staff member relative to the 2012 baseline. This improvement significantly exceeds the 2030 target and is because of a number of factors, including moving the Department's headquarters to a newly redeveloped LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum accredited building in 2018 and also through the introduction of blended working arrangements to accommodate a growing workforce within existing office accommodation capacity.

Energy related CO₂ emissions in 2023 decreased by 4% relative to the 2022 figures. The 2022 figure of energy related CO₂ emissions for the Department was 930,451 kgCO₂. Energy related CO₂ emissions for the Department in 2023 was 895,139 kgCO₂². This is a reduction of 35,312kgCO₂ from 2022.

The Department is engaging in a range of initiatives to work towards the 2030 energy targets. This includes energy auditing, Green Public Procurement, participation in the OPW's Optimising Power @ Work scheme, implementing the Climate Action Plan (2024), as well as working with the SEAI and other Departments on additional Energy Actions. Agencies under the aegis of the Department report their energy consumption directly to the SEAI and, as a result, their energy usage is not covered by this overview.

² Energy related CO₂ emissions data is current at the time of publication. However, it should be noted that this data is subject to revision if the SEAI receive new or updated information from their sources.

Appendix V: Management Board 2024.



Appendix VI: Bodies under the aegis of the Department

<p>National Disability Authority</p>  <p>Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais National Disability Authority</p> <p>25 Clyde Road Dublin 4 www.nda.ie</p>	<p>Tusla, Child and Family Agency</p>  <p>An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach Child and Family Agency</p> <p>The Brunel Building Heuston South Quarter St. John's Road West Kilmainham, Dublin 8 www.tusla.ie</p>
<p>The Adoption Authority of Ireland</p>  <p>ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND</p> <p>Shelbourne House Shelbourne Road Dublin 4 www.aai.gov.ie</p>	<p>Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission³</p>  <p>Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta an Duine agus Comhionannas Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission</p> <p>16-22 Green Street Dublin 7 www.ihrec.ie</p>
<p>Office of the Ombudsman for Children⁴</p>  <p>ombudsman do leanaí for children</p> <p>Millennium House 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1 www.oco.ie</p>	<p>Gaisce, the President's Award</p>  <p>GAISCE THE PRESIDENT'S AWARD</p> <p>Ratra House, North Road Phoenix Park, Dublin 8 www.gaisce.ie</p>
 <p>Oifig an Stiúrthóra um Idirghabháil Údaraithe, Tuaim</p> <p>Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam</p>	 <p>OBERSTOWN CAMPUS</p> <p>CHILDREN DETENTION</p> <p>CARE EDUCATION HEALTH WELLBEING</p>

³ The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is independent in its functions and reports directly to the Oireachtas, in accordance with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014.

⁴ The Ombudsman for Children's Office is independent in its functions and reports directly to the Oireachtas, in accordance with the Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002.

Appendix VII: Protected Disclosures

The Department received no reports of wrongdoing under Protected Disclosures legislation in 2023.

