



An Roinn Leanaí, Míchumais
agus Comhionannais
Department of Children,
Disability and Equality

Annual Report 2025

Department of Children,
Disability and Equality



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Foreword by Minister Foley



I am delighted to present the Department's Annual Report for 2025 which covers my first year as Minister for Children, Disability and Equality.

This report captures a year of considerable progress, impact and achievement in the key areas of policy responsibility for the Department.

This includes improving the lives of disabled people by providing supports and services, investing in high quality, accessible and affordable early learning and childcare opportunities for all, enhancing child welfare and protection provision and optimising outcomes for children, young people and their families and addressing equality and inclusion as whole of Government issue.

Some key highlights during the year included –

- The publication of a number of key strategies including the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People, the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030 and the National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II and its first two year Action Plan.
- Funding for early learning and childcare increased from €1.109bn in 2024 to €1.375bn in 2025. Over the same period, the capital allocation increased from €20m to €30m.
- A total of 246,967 children benefitted from the National Childcare Scheme and legacy targeted schemes.
- In 2025, a record investment of over €1.2 billion was secured for Tusla. An additional €1 million was made available to support Tusla to address staffing issues in special care along with €1.55million for the provision of supplementary step-down placements and the capital funding to purchase, renovate and equip those units.
- The Department launched a centralised reporting database (the Gender Pay Gap Portal). This will make information on employers' gender pay gaps more accessible to the public and provide for a greater utilisation of the information to work towards eliminating the gender pay gap.
- The appointment of the Director of the Guardian *ad litem* National Service and the establishment of this Service as an Executive Office of the Department of Children Disability and Equality, marked a significant transformation of the child protection and welfare service system. Children, and their best interests, are at the centre of the National Service. The new National Service will create a national, professional, high-quality service that better serves children and the courts.

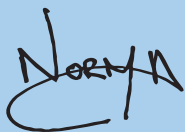
It was also a year of significant change which incorporated the transfer out of migration functions and their associated financial allocations to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, and the transfer out of youth affairs functions and their associated financial allocations to the Department of Education and Youth respectively.

I was pleased to launch the Statement of Strategy for the Department of Children, Disability and Equality 2025 – 2028. The Statement of Strategy sets out how the Department intends to meet the expectations of Government and the people we serve through delivering its programme of work for the benefit of all.

This report reflects the dedication of the staff of the Department, its agencies, and our stakeholders in delivering our mission to fund and deliver services supported by policy and legislation that realise people's rights, promote equality, celebrate diversity and that maximise opportunity to participate in society, particularly by children, disabled people and those experiencing inequalities.

My priority continues to be delivering and securing a positive impact for those whom we serve – children, disabled people and those who experience inequality and disadvantage in our country.

I look forward to working closely throughout 2026 with Minister of State Higgins, Secretary General, Kevin McCarthy, the Department's staff, our Aegis Bodies, as well as representative organisations and individuals, to build on the work and achievements made during 2025 and make a meaningful difference to the lives of all the people we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norma', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Norma Foley TD

Minister for Children, Disability and Equality

Foreword by Minister of State Higgins



As Minister for State with responsibility for Disability, I welcome the publication of the Department's Annual Report for 2025.

This Government is committed to transforming specialist disability services and making a meaningful difference to the lives of disabled people and their families. This ambition is reflected in The Programme for Government, which includes a number of commitments relating to specialist disability services, all of which are reflected in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2025–2028.

I welcome the opportunity to report on the progress achieved by the Department in advancing this agenda during 2025.

Highlights for the year included –

- Securing a record €3.9 billion allocation for specialist disability services, representing a 20% year on year increase, reflecting the Government's ongoing commitment to developing and strengthening disability services.
- The publication of the first ever National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030, which was codesigned by people with disabilities and their representative organisations.
- Increasing capital infrastructure investment from €27 million to €43 million in budget 2026, which represents an additional investment of €16 million year on year. This allocation follows a series of year on year funding increases for disability services and represents an overall increase of €1.85bn since 2020.
- Embarking on the early stages of a scoping exercise in preparation for reform of the Disability Act 2005. Progressing work on the targeted reform of Part 2 of the Disability Act to support the efficiency and effectiveness of the Assessment of Need Process. The General Scheme of the Disability (Amendment) Bill 2025 was approved by Government on 9 December 2025.
- Establishing a Disability Vision and Strategy Unit within the Department to develop a national strategic vision and reform strategy for disability services. This work will be collaborative in nature and will subsume development of the second phase of the Action Plan for Disability Services.

As we mark the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD), we will continue to support and drive delivery of the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025 – 2030, our blueprint for advancing the principles of the UNCRPD to ensure that disabled people can access the services they need to live full and autonomous lives on the same basis as all other citizens.

Our Strategy sets out coordinated actions across five core pillars - Inclusive Learning and Education, Employment, Independent Living and Active Participation, Wellbeing and Health, and Transport and Mobility -and includes ambitious cross cutting commitments such as improving accessibility, reducing the cost of disability, expanding access to assistive and digital technologies, strengthening engagement with disability stakeholders, modernising legislation, and ensuring more strategic use of disability-related resources.

I look forward to continuing to work with Minister Norma Foley, ministerial colleagues across Government and their teams, Secretary General Kevin McCarthy, HSE CEO Anne O'Connor, and dedicated staff in the Department, the HSE, and Section 38 and Section 39 organisations, alongside the National Disability Authority (NDA), Disabled Persons' Organisations, advocates, and other stakeholders. Most importantly, I look forward to working with disabled people themselves to further develop and strengthen disability services and make a real difference to the lives of disabled people across Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emer Higgins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Emer Higgins TD

Minister of State with responsibility for Disabilities

Introduction by the Secretary General



I am very pleased to introduce the Department's Annual Report for 2025 which is published in accordance with section 4 of the Public Service Management Act 1997.

This Annual Report provides an opportunity to reflect on a busy and productive year for the Department. 2025 was a year of significant change across the organisation as we welcomed our new Ministers, completed very significant transfers of functions to other Departments, and laid the groundwork for delivering on a range of new ambitions set out in the Programme for Government: Our Shared Future. These were reflected in the Department's new Statement of Strategy 2025-2028.

This report demonstrates the positive impact and the strides we have taken towards fulfilling the strategic goals set out in our Statement of Strategy. Our Values of being People and Society Centred, of Equality and Fairness, of Listening, Hearing, Engaging and Responding, of Impartiality, Integrity and Commitment guided and influenced our behaviours and actions in all aspects of our work. We continued during the year to build our organisational capacity to deliver a resilient organisation with the right people, leadership, structures, and systems, always innovating and improving.

I would like to thank colleagues in other Government Departments, our Aegis Bodies and our funded organisations for their continued cooperation and support. Cross-Government and inter-agency collaboration is a key feature of what we do and helps us to develop and deliver policies designed to support the people we serve.

As ever, I am proud to record my appreciation of the staff of the Department for their dedication and commitment to delivering work which makes a positive difference to people's lives.

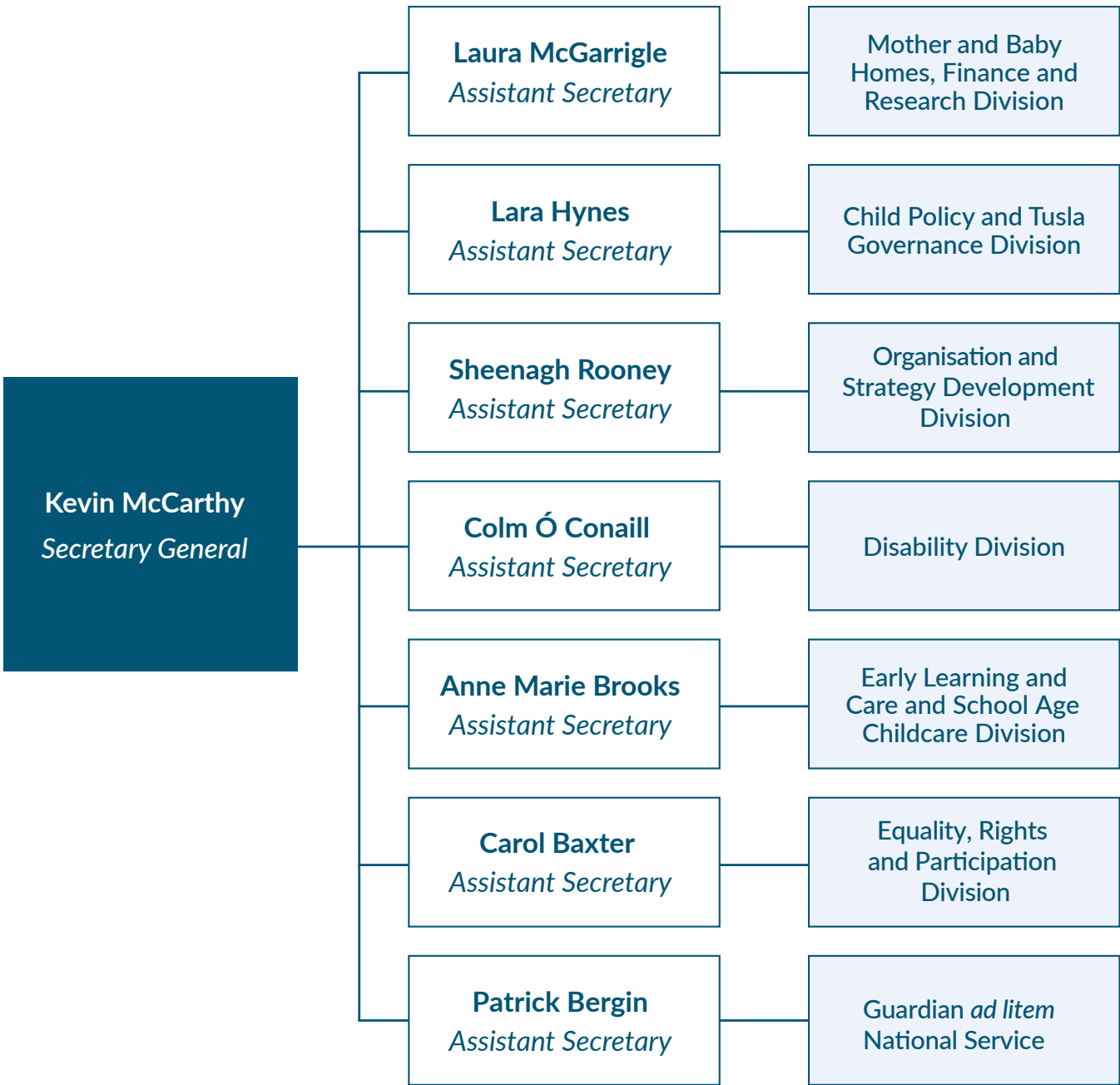
I wish to thank Minister Norma Foley TD, and Minister of State, Emer Higgins TD in her role as Minister of State for Disability, for their continuing leadership as we continue to deliver improvements across our range of responsibilities. This leadership strengthens our collective efforts to realise meaningful and positive outcomes for the people we serve, particularly children, disabled people and those experiencing inequalities.



Kevin McCarthy

Secretary General

Management Board



Our Work in Numbers 2025



86%

Number or percentage of children in care in foster care placements



126

Number of Family Resource Centres funded



109,401

Children enrolled in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)^a



246,967

Children on National Childcare Scheme (NCS) and legacy targeted schemes



252

Number of consultations and participative events held with children and young people



42

Number of initiatives to support integration of LGBTI+ people

€6.5 million
to 42 initiatives



Funding and Initiatives for Traveller and Roma Communities



101

Adoptions Granted



264

Entries on the Register of Intercountry Adoptions



17,210

Applications for information



9,034

Applications for tracing

4,410



Entries on the Contact Preference Register

253

- Relatives placed in contact

469

- Matches between relatives



17,276

Applications for Birth Information processed by Tusla and the Adoption Authority of Ireland



159,860

Number of centre-based respite nights provided to people with disabilities



1,870,938*

Number of personal assistance hours provided to people with disabilities



4,249,922*

Number of home support hours provided to people with disabilities

806



Number of priority designated Equal Start services in receipt of Staffing Supports funding (as of end 2025)



8,934

Number of children availing of all targeted Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) supports



4,586

Number of services in Core Funding (as of end 2025)

92.90%

Percentage uptake of eligible services in Core Funding (as of end 2025)



260,360

Number of times open datasets for the State of the Nation's Children and Children and Young People's Indicator Set reported by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) (PxStat) were accessed during the year.



66,394

No. of day only respite sessions accessed by people with a disability



44,739

Number of children supported by Children's Disability Network Teams at the end of the year



233

Number of new Tusla foster care workers approved



106,444

Number of Child protection and referrals to Tusla



98%

Number of children on Tusla's Child Protection Notification System allocated to an appropriate worker



96%

Number of children in care in full-time education

Department Name and Transfer of Functions

Following a Government decision to restructure Departments of State to better align them with the priority objectives of the new Government, certain functions were transferred between Departments.

As a result of the transfer of functions, responsibility for Integration, International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS), and the Ukraine Division moved from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (DJHAM).

Additionally, the Youth function transferred from the Department to the newly named Department of Education and Youth (DEY). Responsibility for the Gaisce Award also transferred to the Department of Education and Youth.

The areas that transferred from the Department covered a wide range of policy, legislative and operational responsibilities. With effect from the 1 May 2025, the Department became known as the Department of Children, Disability and Equality when a statutory instrument was signed by Government (S.I no. 182/2025).

With effect from the 1 May 2025, the Department became known as the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

A fair and inclusive Ireland where people's rights are realised and where everyone is supported to reach their potential.



Values

- People and Society Centred
- Equality, Fairness
- Listening, Hearing, Engaging and Responding
- Impartiality, Integrity and Commitment



Mission

To fund and deliver services supported by policy and legislation that realise people's rights, promote equality, celebrate diversity and that maximise opportunity to participate in society, particularly by children, disabled people and those experiencing inequalities.



Statement of Strategy 2025-2028

The Department's Statement of Strategy 2025-2028 was developed and published in October 2025. The Strategy sets out the high-level objectives and the actions within each of those objectives that the Department will be taking to ensure that it meets the ambitions outlined for the Department in the Programme for Government – Securing Ireland's future.



Strategic Goal 1

We will influence, develop and implement evidence-informed policies and legislation that realise the rights of people in Ireland, particularly those of children, disabled people and those experiencing inequalities.



Strategic Goal 2

We will empower and support people in Ireland, particularly children, disabled people and those experiencing inequalities, to participate in society and reach their potential through the provision of accessible and quality services.



Strategic Goal 3

We will design and deliver targeted initiatives that support an Ireland which is fairer, more equal and inclusive.



Strategic Goal 4

We will prioritise effective engagement with those people we serve and across Government Departments, public bodies and civil society in delivering a more equal, inclusive and fairer society.



Strategic Goal 5

We will commit to being recognised as a high performing organisation where our people are valued, supported and motivated to deliver our Vision.

Progress against Strategic goals in the Department's Statement of Strategy

The following sections summarise the progress achieved during 2025 with regard to the five strategic goals and associated actions set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2025-2028.

Strategic Goal 1



We will influence, develop and implement evidence-informed policies and legislation that realise the rights of people in Ireland, particularly those of children, disabled people and those experiencing inequalities.

The Child Care Act

- The draft Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2025 was finalised. Government approval was secured on 2 December for publication of the Bill and subsequent progression to the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Bill was published on the Oireachtas website. Provisions are included in the draft Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2025 for:
 - the establishment of the Child Care Inter-Agency and Implementation Committee;
 - a Duty to Cooperate for designated public bodies to work together to deliver more coordinated and effective services to children who are known to Tusla;
 - to place the National Review Panel on a statutory footing.
- In May 2025, a new phase of court reporting on public child-care proceedings under the Child Care Act 1991 commenced. The court reporting project is being delivered by the Child Law Project, who have been contracted until March 2027.
- The Department continued to engage as a member of the Family Justice Implementation Group. Areas of overlap between the Family Courts Act and the Child Care (Amendment) Bill were identified, and specific engagement took place regarding coordination of the implementation for both pieces of legislation.

Equality and Family Leave legislation

- The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030 was launched in November 2025. The Strategy has a single, simple vision: An Ireland where women and girls can thrive in a gender equal society. The strategy commits to supporting civil society organisations to play a role in achieving this vision.
- The Action Plan being developed under the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030 will seek:
 - to promote transparency in the uptake of parental leave and flexible working arrangements;
 - ways to further support and enable parents, including elected representatives, to care for their children;
 - to support the work of Balance for Better Business in promoting voluntary targets to achieve 40% representation of women on the boards and leadership teams for all company cohorts;
 - to examine ways to support working families in meeting the competing demands of employment and caring responsibilities.
- Given the complex and sensitive nature of the proposed legislation to ban conversion practices, the Department has considered the key policy principles that will underpin the legislation to ensure that individuals are protected from harmful conversion practices while the necessary and appropriate services for those with concerns in areas of sexual orientation and gender identity are not affected. The draft General Scheme was submitted to the Office of the Attorney General on 11 November 2025 for their views.
- The General Scheme of the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024 proposes increases to compensation limits under the Equal Status Act. A Report on Pre-legislative Scrutiny of the General Scheme was published in October 2025 with several recommendations which will be form part of considerations.

Reform of Disability Legislation

- Early stages of a scoping exercise commenced in preparation to reform the Disability Act 2005. Work progressed on the targeted reform of Part 2 of the Disability Act to support the efficiency and effectiveness of the Assessment of Need Process. The General Scheme of the Disability (Amendment) Bill 2025 was approved by Government on 9 December 2025. The Joint Committee on Disability Matters will produce a report following pre-legislative scrutiny of the Bill.

We will influence, develop and implement evidence-informed policies and legislation that realise the rights of people in Ireland, particularly those of children, disabled people and those experiencing inequalities.

Leading the implementation of national strategies and action plans

- The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People was published in September 2025.
- The Young Ireland Progress Report, outlining the first year's achievements of the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028, was published in December 2025.
- Ireland's European Child Guarantee National Action Plan continued in 2025 and is reported on to the European Commission every 2 years. The previous reporting was completed in 2024 and the next will be prepared in 2026.
- The First 5 Open Policy Debate took place in June 2025. It provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress made since the publication of the strategy, to reflect on priorities for the coming years, and to enable stakeholders to contribute to the development of the new Implementation Plan for 2026-2028.
- The First 5 Annual Implementation Report 2024 was published in early 2025 and provided an update on progress on the 2024 milestones and Phase 2 targets.
- The first Action Plan under the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028 (NTRIS II), which covers the period 2024 – 2026, continued to be implemented by Departments, State Agencies, and the national Traveller and Roma organisations.
- The second biannual progress report covering the period July to December 2025 on the implementation of NTRIS II was published on the NTRIS page on gov.ie.
- The first meeting of the new National Traveller and Roma Forum took place on 9 October 2025.
- Published in April 2024, the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making Action Plan 2024-2028 is the second national plan to support children

and young people to participate in decision-making, building on the ambition and achievements of the first National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015-2020, which set out and delivered on the government's commitment to realise the right of children and young people to be heard when decisions that affect their lives are being made.

- The first implementation report of the Action Plan under the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making 2024-2028 was compiled in 2025 for publication in 2026. The purpose of the implementation report is to understand and document the progress made on each of the actions in the Action Plan through the first year of its lifetime and to identify where further progress needs to be made.
- The third annual report on the Action Plan for Mother and Baby Homes Survivors and quarterly updates were published.

The Voice of Children and Young People

- A grant of €75,000 was awarded to Young Social Innovators in 2025. The funding provided by the Department was intended to strengthen and develop youth participatory practices within the organisation, based around 5 agreed objectives. A system of annual reporting is in place to monitor and record progress on implementation of the objectives.
- On the 20th November 2025, the Minister launched a new, free online eLearning course for involving young people in decision making. The self-paced course provides checklists, videos and quizzes to ensure that the voices of children and young people are meaningfully included in decisions that affect their lives.
- Seanad na nÓg 2025 took place on 14 November 2025, in Leinster House, bringing together 60 delegates under 18 from Comhairle na nÓg and other organisations to discuss their key issues to inform Ireland's 2026 EU Presidency.

- 400 young people from all 31 Comhairlí came together in April 2025 for the Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase 2025. The event was attended by Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Minister Norma Foley, members of Government and senior officials, who heard directly from young people about the issues that matter most to them.
- In 2025, the National Youth Assembly of Ireland was convened four times by Government Departments and agencies, with the support of the Department and the National Participation Office. The National Youth Assemblies convened were:
 - the National Youth Assembly on Climate convened in April 2025 with a focus on community action, convened by Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment;
 - the National Youth Assembly on Online Health was convened in July 2025 by the Online Health Taskforce within the Department of Health;
 - the National Rural Youth Assembly convened in September 2025 by the Department of Rural and Community Development. This Assembly formed part of a national consultation process to inform Ireland's next Rural Development Policy (2026–2030), following on from Our Rural Future (2021–2025);
 - the National Youth Assembly on Transport was convened by the Department of Transport in November 2025, following a request from delegates to the National Youth Assembly for a dedicated Assembly on the topic of transport. The topics discussed on the day were Public Transport, Sustainable and Active Travel, and Accessibility and Inclusivity in Travel.
- In 2025, researchers from Stranmillis University College began an extensive piece of research to inform an updated ethical guidance document for research involving children and young people. The researchers interviewed children and young people of all ages to ensure that the voices of all children are heard as part of this process. The updated document will be published in 2026.
- The Young Ireland Knowledge Creation and Synthesis Fund was established to draw attention to identified gaps in the research landscape and create an opportunity for policymakers to consider which policy questions would benefit from knowledge synthesis or from novel research addressing these gaps. The Fund, managed by the Department's Research and Evaluation Unit, sought applications from the Department's policy units to avail of funding to address policy questions relating to children and young people that can be answered via knowledge synthesis methods. Five projects funded under the Young Ireland Knowledge Creation and Synthesis Fund went out for tender in October 2025, with five successful tenderers to begin work in early 2026.

Birth Information and Tracing Services

- The statutory review of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 commenced in 2025.
- Work is ongoing on the EU Technical Support Instrument (TSI) project to develop a best practice framework and a roadmap for the development of the domestic adoption system in Ireland. The TSI project, which was launched by the Minister in June 2025, is led by the Department and supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the European Commission's Reform and Investment Task Force (SG-REFORM).
- Over 17,200 applications for Birth Information & Tracing were completed by the end of 2025.



Strategic Goal 2

We will empower and support people in Ireland, particularly children, disabled people and those experiencing inequalities, to participate in society and reach their potential through the provision of accessible and quality services.

Access to high quality and affordable early learning and childcare

- Shaping the Future: Early Years Action Plan (Phase 1 Report) was published in December 2025. The short-term actions in Phase 1 build on reforms to the National Childcare Scheme and Core Funding, and will use existing policy mechanisms to strengthen affordability, access and quality.
- In 2025, the Department met with the Department of Education and Youth Inspectorate on a quarterly basis which included discussion of learnings from the sector.
- As part of the First 5 commitment to develop a single body that provides integrated care and education inspections, work progressed in 2025 between the Department, the Department of Education and Youth Inspectorate and the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate.
- In 2025, the Department paid €413,338 to childminders through the Childminding Development Grant which provides up to €1,000 to assist both registered and unregistered childminders who are providing a childminding service in their own homes.
- All paid, non-relative childminders who work in their own homes can now register with Tusla and access the National Childcare Scheme. The childminding-specific Regulations, which came into effect in September 2024 and continued in 2025, are designed to be proportionate and appropriate to the home and family setting in which childminders work.
- Through the Joint Labour Committee process, further Employment Regulation Orders were signed into law in October 2025 and provided for an average of 10% increase to minimum hourly rates of pay. It is estimated that 67% of those working in the sector saw their wages increase as a result of the new minimum pay rates. As part of Budget 2026, a further €15m of ring-fenced funding to support the Joint Labour Committee process was secured.
- The Nurturing Skills Annual Implementation Report 2024 was published in early 2025, which provides an update on progress on the implementation of 'Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, 2022-2028'.
- The original allocation for early learning and childcare increased from €1.109bn in 2024 to €1.375bn in 2025. Over the same period, the capital allocation increased from €20m to €30m.
- €45 million of Core Funding to support providers meet the costs of increases in pay as result of new Employment Regulations Orders was ring fenced in September 2025 for the programme Year 2025/2026.
- All services in receipt of an AIM Level 7 capitation benefitted from a 10 percent capitation increase from October 2025. This matches the average increase in the minimum rates of pay provided for in the 2025 Employment Regulation Orders.

Lead the implementation of Young Ireland: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People

- Following the appointment of its new chair, meetings of the Young Ireland Advisory Council were held in September and November 2025 and work continued on the council's ambitious work programme. The Children and Young People's Policy Forum chaired by Minister Foley met in November 2025.

Support the Child and Family Agency, Tusla

- In 2025, Tusla had an allocation of over €1.2 billion. An additional €1 million was made available to support Tusla to address staffing issues in special care. In 2025, the Department continued to work closely with Tusla to progress short term and longer-term actions for Special Care delivery.
- € 1.55 million was made available for the provision of supplementary step-down placements and the capital funding to purchase, renovate and equip those units.
- In October, Budget 2026 was announced which included overall funding for Tusla of €1.37bn, an increase of 14% over its budget in 2025.
- During 2025, the Department continued to work with Tusla on the national implementation of the Barnahus model in Ireland. Barnahus is a safe, welcoming space where children and their families receive support when there are concerns or disclosures of child sexual abuse. At Barnahus, professionals from child protection, law enforcement, healthcare, and therapeutic services work together under one roof to provide a coordinated, child-centred response. Ireland currently has a fully operational centre in the West of Ireland and another service operating from a temporary location in the South. Capital development for this site has commenced. Work on establishing a third centre continued to progress in the East in 2025 with recruitment also progressed to complete national coverage.

- "Social Work changes lives" awareness campaign commissioned by the Department from March to May 2025, achieved c. 19.5 million impressions across platforms.

Initiatives to promote play and recreation for all children and young people

- In 2025, funding of €500,000 was announced for 28 playgrounds and play areas under the Capital Grant Scheme for Play and Recreation which provides funding to city and county councils to develop or upgrade playgrounds.
- In June 2025, funding of €500,000 was announced for 7 projects to provide new recreational spaces for teenagers under the Making Spaces for and with Teenagers initiative.
- National Play Day 2025 took place in July 2025 and 29 local authorities took part, with funding of over €90,000 provided by the Department.

Specialist disability services

- The Budget 2025 allocation was €3.2billion and in Budget 2026, €3.9 billion was allocated to specialist disability services, representing a 20% increase on the 2025 allocation and reflecting the Government's ongoing commitment to developing and strengthening disability services.
- The Budget 2025 figure of €27 million was surpassed in Budget 2026 with the allocation for capital infrastructure increased to €43 million, which represented an additional investment of €16 million year on year. This allocation followed a series of year-on-year funding increases for disability services and represents an overall increase of €1.85bn since 2020.
- During 2025, €27 million was invested in Capital, where the work continued on the Department of Health-approved de-congregation program established in 2018. This program aims to relocate residents from institutional settings into community homes.

In 2025, approximately €78 million was invested, mainly in purchasing and adapting houses for residents, prioritizing areas with the most urgent needs. The program has faced challenges due to limited availability of suitable housing but will continue in 2026, with local engagement involving Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies crucial to sourcing appropriate homes.

- In 2025, the combined HSE and Section 38 workforce grew by 1,053 Whole-Time Equivalents (WTE), an increase of almost 5%.
- The October 2025 Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT) Workforce Report indicated that there had been a 28% increase in CDNT staffing levels nationwide in the preceding two years. This equates to an additional 448 Whole-Time Equivalents (WTE). There has also been a 28% increase in the number of Health and Social Care Professionals (HSCPs) working in CDNTs since October 2023 - an additional 321 WTEs.
- A second pay agreement was reached with unions in March 2025 that included an automatic link to all future public sector pay agreements to match all future pay increases. To date 118 of 165 section 39 disability organisations have been recommended for payment. A data gathering exercise on low pay in the sector began in late 2025.

- The Department and the HSE participated on the Inter-Departmental Group on Expansion in Health and Social Care Training to progress this work.
- In April 2025, a new CDNT sponsorship programme for new graduates in Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Social Work was launched. This initiative saw 45 new graduates taking up a job in HSE, Section 38 and Section 39 led CDNTs.
- In 2025, €2.85m in funding was provided, focusing on various positions across CDNTs.

Individual supports for those using disability services

- In June 2025, the Government approved an expansion in training places in disciplines critical to disability, health and education services with effect from September 2025. This expansion is expected to provide up to 461 additional student places by 2028, with the majority commencing in 2025.
- To increase staffing, train more therapists and prioritise children's disability teams to deliver supports and services, the following took place:
- A Student Sponsorship Programme was advertised by the HSE in April 2025. This supports Health and Social Care Professional (HSCP) graduates take up a job in CDNTs.

We will empower and support people in Ireland, particularly children, disabled people and those experiencing inequalities, to participate in society and reach their potential through the provision of accessible and quality services.

- The Disability Virtual Career Fair in May 2025, featured HSE, Section 38 and Section 39 CDNT staff across a range of professions, targeting schools, colleges and overseas workers.
- In 2025, a total of 24 people under the age of 65 transitioned out of a nursing home and into homes of their choosing in the community. Additionally in 2025, 149 individuals received additional enhanced quality of life supports (EQLS), while they are currently continuing their placement in a Nursing Home.
- In 2025, €13.95m additional funding was provided to respite services to meet additional costs arising from 2024 developments and responses into 2025. This funding provided for 66,394 day sessions and 159,860 overnights.

Access to supports for those with complex disabilities

- In 2025, 5,273 clinical assessments were commissioned from private providers under the Assessment of Need Targeted Waitlist Initiative.
- The third iteration of the Cooperative Real Engagement for Assistive Technology Enhancement (CREATE) initiative, targeting unmet needs and supporting people with disabilities to participate fully in work, education, leisure, and community life was announced in August 2025. Funding of €1.079m was allocated to CREATE III through the HSE National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPDP). Funding to 9 projects was announced in December 2025.
- An Autism Assessment and Intervention Pathways Protocol was developed by the HSE in 2025 with planned implementation in 2026. The Protocol will provide a standardised assessment process across primary care, mental health and disability services. It will be the preferred assessment route for autism.
- Funding was made available in 2025 to Children's Services to build on existing recruitment initiatives, focusing on various positions across Children's Disability Network Teams.
- In 2025, €8m in funding was agreed for the Children's Disability Services Grant Fund to fund 52 projects over 3 years. The HSE continues to engage with projects to progress allocation of this funding.

Empower women and girls to enjoy full equality

- Annual grant funding is provided to women's organisations that support and promote gender equality.

Travellers and Roma access to education and employment opportunities

- Work continued in 2025 on the expansion of the Special Initiative for Travellers (SIT), which provides practical employment and training supports to address Traveller and Roma unemployment and to support Travellers engaged in the Traveller economy.
- Work progressed in 2025 on improving educational outcomes for Traveller and Roma children and young people. The Traveller and Roma Education Strategy sets out the actions to be implemented as part of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II.
- Following work carried out in 2025, the evaluation of the Traveller and Roma Education Community Development Worker Scheme will be published and the Departments of Children, Disability and Equality and the Education and Youth will review any recommendations set out in the report.

Support LGBTIQ+ persons

- The National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II and its first two year Action Plan were launched in June 2025. A Steering Committee was established to oversee implementation of the Strategy. The first progress report, covering January–June 2025, was published on the Department's website.
- In 2025, implementation of Strategy commitments continued, including:
 - rollout of the 2025 LGBTIQ+ Community Service Fund - a total of €1,724,268 was disbursed to 42 organisations to support the LGBTIQ+ community in a range of ways including frontline community supports, counselling services, youth supports and Pride celebrations;
 - under Action 31, the Department supported the "Marriage Referendum +10 Conference – Defending Freedoms, Advancing Human Rights", held in May 2025 to mark the 10th anniversary of Marriage Equality;

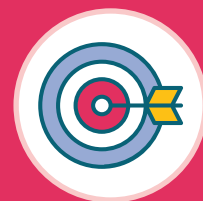
- under Action 1.6, the Department commissioned a research study, which explores the impact of social media misinformation and disinformation on the LGBTIQ+ community, the strategies and tools employed by LGBTIQ+ people to navigate and mitigate the harmful impact of misinformation and disinformation online.

Gender pay portal

- In 2025, the Department launched a centralised reporting database (Gender Pay Gap Portal) to make information on employers' gender pay gaps more accessible to the public and provide for a greater utilisation of the information to eliminate the gender pay gap.



Strategic Goal 3



We will design and deliver targeted initiatives that support an Ireland which is fairer, more equal and inclusive.

A new Vision and Strategy for specialist disability supports and services

- In 2025, a Disability Vision and Strategy Unit was established within the Department to develop a national strategic vision and reform strategy for disability services. This work will subsume development of the second phase of the Action Plan for Disability Services.

Further develop early learning and childcare programmes

- In 2025, 806 settings with an Equal Start priority designation (serving 35,000 children - 4,700 from priority cohorts) identified as operating in a context of concentrated disadvantage, received targeted funding supports for additional staff hours, that could be used to support engagement between the settings and families, as well as other child and family support services.
- The Department assessed the policy implications and mechanisms required to extend the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to children under three, recognising that their needs differ from those currently supported under the model and work commenced for delivery in the coming years.
- Based on the findings of the independent evaluation of AIM, the model was extended on a phased basis, as funding became available, to ECCE-eligible children outside of ECCE hours—both during term time and in holiday periods.

- Policy analysis was progressed in 2025 to consider the implications of certain changes for children, parents and providers, arising from the results of the ECCE review and the development of Phase 2 of the Shaping the Future Action Plan:
 - making an extra hour of ECCE each day available;
 - amending the ECCE eligibility criteria.
- Supply Management Unit was renamed the Forward Planning and Delivery Unit. Additional staff were allocated over the course of 2025. The development of a Forward Planning Model was well advanced in 2025 and extensive preparatory work for State-led services was undertaken to progress to Government.
- Officials met with officials from the Department of Education and Youth's Planning and Building Unit with a view to sharing expertise and information between the Departments and identifying opportunities for future developments of State-led facilities in tandem with the school building programme, including Irish-medium naíonraí.
- Simplify and Support, Action Plan for Simplification was published in December 2025, to respond to the issue of administrative burden on providers, by setting out the steps to be taken- in the short, medium and long term - to reduce administration and simplify regulatory requirements in this sector.

- Principles for Engaging in the Arts: A Guide for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Settings was published in June 2025 to support early years educators, school-age practitioners and childminders in promoting arts experiences.
- The Department supports and part-funds the Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme, which is delivered by the Arts Council; in 2025, the scheme, with a budget of €290,000, saw 9 successful award recipients engage with over 30 settings.
- In 2025, the Department supported and funded the delivery of Communities of Professional Practice (COPP) for early years educators, school-age practitioners and childminders; the COPPs are facilitated by the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) and focus on different areas of practice, based on local need, which includes STEM and the Arts.
- The new Nurturing Skills website, nurturingskills.ie was launched in May 2025. This website delivers on a number of actions contained in the Nurturing Skills Implementation Plan, including the development of a hub for Continuing Professional Development and establishing a one-stop-shop on careers, qualifications and training opportunities in the early learning and childcare sector.
- The Nurturing Skills Learner Fund covered up to 90% of the fees incurred by early years educators studying for Early Learning and Care qualifications at Level 7 and Level 8 that have been approved by the Qualifications Advisory Board, while continuing to work in the early learning and childcare sector .
- Since its inception in 2024 and continuing in 2025, the Nurturing Skills Learner Fund was in a position to offer financial support to over 700 educators in the early learning and childcare sector.

Nurturing skills

- Pillar 4 of Nurturing Skills includes an action to examine the development of a range of entry routes into the sector, including apprenticeships or other work-based learning, and access programmes in further education and higher education. Research on alternative entry routes to the sector, including apprenticeships, was commissioned and a final report will inform the next steps.

We will design and deliver targeted initiatives that support an Ireland which is fairer, more equal and inclusive.

Other achievements

- The fee cap values were lowered for programme year 2025/2026 and now apply to all Core Funding Partner Services and were introduced for new Partner Services for the 2024/25 programme year.
 - An evaluation of the first year of Core Funding and the development of an evaluation framework for Core Funding was initiated in 2025. This evaluation's objectives are to examine the early implementation of Core Funding and make recommendations for future evaluations of the grant supporting efficient and expedient reviews of subsequent years of the scheme.
 - The Staff Funding Additional Contribution was introduced to support employers to meet the costs of increased minimum rates of pay in the sector. This was issued to Partner Services arising from updated Employment Regulation Orders by the Joint Labour Committee.
- Other achievements in 2025 include:
 - rollout of the 'Bia Blasta' pre-school nutrition programme, which commenced in October 2025 for Equal Start designated services providing the ECCE Programme;
 - rollout of the Traveller Parenting Support Programme in 17 Tusla areas, with responsibilities on Family Link Workers to engage with Traveller parents of young children, supporting them to attend and participate in ELC and SAC;
 - appointment of Traveller and Roma Advisory Specialists to work in Better Start to promote inclusive ELC and SAC;
 - roll-out of Early Talk Boost – an intervention for language delay - to settings with a priority designation.



Strengthen the safeguarding and protection of children

- In April 2025, the Department published an addendum to the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, titled Dealing with Adult Retrospective Disclosures of Childhood Abuse, which relates to the legal responsibilities of mandated persons in cases where an adult discloses to them that they were abused as a child.
- The statutory Children First Inter-Departmental Implementation Group (CFIDIG) was chaired by the Department and included representatives from every Department, the HSE, Tusla and An Garda Síochána. The Group met three times in 2025 and continued to focus on monitoring implementation of the Children First Act 2015. The annual report of the CFIDIG for 2024 was submitted to the Minister in May 2025 and published on the Department's website.
- In September 2025, the Minister convened an extra-ordinary subgroup of the CFIDIG to discuss actions required to enhance the responsiveness of services to cases where a child is not engaging as expected with universal services. A cross-departmental, cross-agency subgroup led by the Department commenced mapping core service contact points for children from birth to 6 years old to identify visibility risks and make recommendations to the Minister for enhanced child protection processes. Work was also commenced by each Government Department to review its Sectoral Implementation Plan and underlying policies to ensure that relevant services provided or funded by it are sufficiently sensitive to children's non-attendance or disengagement from services as potential indicator of risk.
- In September 2025, the Department launched the third Children First Awareness Week, with parents and guardians as the primary target audience. The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness of Children First and remind everyone of the responsibilities to keep children safe. The Department worked in partnership with

Tusla and a subgroup of the Children First Inter-Departmental Implementation Group to design the campaign. The campaign was primarily delivered by Tusla with parallel activities across sectors.

- In relation to the Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025, areas of overlap between the Family Courts Act and the Child Care (Amendment) Bill were identified, and specific engagement has taken place regarding coordination of the implementation planning for both pieces of legislation. The Department continued to contribute to the work of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration in the development of a successor strategy.

Further develop the policy and strategic approach to alternative care

- The Department commenced the development of a National Policy Framework on Alternative Care in December 2024. Over 2025, the Department established project structures, completed initial research, and launched the national consultation process.
- As part of the consultation for the National Policy Framework on Alternative Care, engagement took place with foster carers and children and young people with care experience, which will provide an evidence-informed policy approach to supporting foster care and children as they age out of State care. This included examination of enhanced payments and examining a pension solution for foster carers and supporting young people as they age out of State care.
- In June 2025, the Minister for Social Protection announced that the Back-to-School Clothing and Footwear Allowance eligibility was extended to include children for whom Foster Care Allowance is being paid.
- The Protocol on Young People Leaving Care was revised, which aims to ensure consistent and improved assessment, housing, and support for young people leaving State care.

- Care Experiences: Journeys Through the Irish Care System is a research and data programme, which is being run by the Department in close collaboration with Tusla. The Programme, which commenced in 2022, is using a combination of primary research and strengthened administrative data collection and analysis to examine and better understand the lives of children and young people in care and aftercare and those who were in care as children. It comprises four iterative Projects –

1. developing the capacity of Tusla's case management system to better understand the pathways that children and young people take through the care system;
2. cross sectional research with care experienced adults who left the care system;
3. longitudinal research commencing while young people are currently in the care system; and
4. (4) bespoke research studies and activities on topics related to the Irish care system. There is significant work underway in each of the four projects and outputs from these projects will be used to inform future service and policy development and notably the National Policy Framework for Alternative Care.

- In 2025, the Care Experiences Programme commissioned two outputs under Project 4: a research study on the educational and employment journeys of young adults with care experience and an evidence review to identify international practices in special (secure) care. It is expected that both outputs will be published during 2026.

Special Care

- An additional bed opened in a Special Care Unit in 2025.
- Following engagements between the Department, Tusla and the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, to improve recruitment and retention in special care, a new grade was introduced from January 2025. This new Tusla Special Care Worker grade offers an improved salary scale, offering approximately 20% higher pay at top-of-scale, as of September 2025, compared to the Tusla Social Care Worker grade.
- With the support of the Department, Tusla continued to prioritise recruitment initiatives for Special Care, with a dedicated recruitment team carrying out targeted campaigns through a variety of outlets, including recruiting internationally.



- In 2025, the Department tendered for the delivery of an Evidence Review to Identify International Practices in Special (Secure) Care, seeking to identify good practice to inform the future delivery of special care in Ireland.

Foster Care

- Following significant increases to the Foster Care Allowance in 2024, the Department engaged with a range of stakeholders, including foster carers, over 2025 regarding enhancing financial supports for this vital service. This engagement occurred as part of the consultation for the National Policy Framework on Alternative Care, which will provide an evidence-informed policy approach to supporting foster care.
- The Department engaged with a range of stakeholders, including foster carers, over 2025 regarding examining a pension solution for foster carers. This engagement occurred as part of the consultation for the National Policy Framework on Alternative Care, which will provide an evidence-informed policy approach to supporting foster care.
- A revised Mileage Payment Scheme for foster carers came into effect in April 2025. This broadened the categories of journeys considered eligible for payment under the Foster Care Travel Payments Scheme.
- In 2025, foster carers commenced receiving a bonus payment at the start of each initial foster care placement. This payment aimed to alleviate the substantial out-of-pocket expenses that can be incurred by foster carers during the initial period after a child is placed in their care.
- In June 2025, the Minister welcomed the decision by her counterpart in the Department of Social Protection to extend eligibility for the Back-to-School Clothing and Footwear Allowance to foster carers.

Oberstown Children Detention Campus

- The Department continued to provide oversight of Oberstown Children Detention Campus' performance and compliance in 2025. The Department closely monitored daily occupancy levels of both remand and detention orders. The Minister is represented by a Departmental Official on the Board of Management and Board Sub-Committees.
- Established under the Children Act 2001, Oberstown provides the best possible child-centred, rights-based care and education to young people. This is provided through an integrated multi-professional approach that enables young people to address their offending behaviour and return successfully to society. The Department continued to work closely with the Oberstown management to ensure the Children's Rights Framework is at the core of the work done on the campus including in relation to staffing needs of Oberstown.

The National Model of Parenting Support

As part of improving and guiding the development of parenting support services over 2025, priority actions under the Supporting Parents National Model of Parenting Support Services (2022-2027) included:

- the roll-out of a Parent Peer Support fund to assist local organisations setting up or expanding peer support activities for parents;
- the continuation of a communications campaign which aims to destigmatise and make parents more aware of the availability of universal and targeted parenting support services nationally;
- the mapping of Tusla funded parenting support services nationally to improve signposting to these services by practitioners;

- preparation for the roll-out of pilot Community Based Parenting Hubs and dedicated Parenting Support Advisors in all Tusla Network areas; and
- the development of best practice guidelines for consulting with parents and for rolling out parent peer support groups.

Tusla's Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) and early intervention work

- Throughout 2025, Tusla's Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme, which is delivered in 12 areas of significant socio-economic disadvantage across the country, continued to work in partnership with families, practitioners, communities and national stakeholders to deliver better outcomes for children and families living in areas where poverty is most deeply entrenched.
- The Department progressed the expansion of home visiting services in Ireland through the support of the Children's Fund, resulting in the establishment of a new National Home Visiting Programme within Tusla, whose aim is to coordinate, provide direction and collect evidence and data to inform the future development of a sustainable national home visiting service.
- In 2025, through Dormant Accounts funding, the Department provided €378,000 to the What Works initiative to continue four two-year Local Area Child Poverty Action Plan pilots, which are part of Ireland's European Child Guarantee National Action Plan.
- The Department engaged the Centre for Implementation Research at the University of Limerick (CIRcUL) to undertake a comparative study between the four pilot areas to support a robust assessment and measurement of the impact of the pilots with a view to possible mainstreaming of all or part of the pilots.

- Counselling Services secured additional funding of €1.5 million on top of the annual Tusla allocation, allowing services to address unmet need and to reduce waiting lists for counselling and therapeutic services. This was particularly important for people living in disadvantaged areas.
- Six greenfield Young Parents Support Programme sites were established and 11 sites expanded to include the age range of up to 24 years for young parents.
- Recruitment of a further three, up from 17 previously, Family Support Practitioners began to support families living in State provided accommodation.
- Exchequer funding was secured, with co-financing from the European Social Fund, for the recruitment of 30 Parenting Support Advisors in all Tusla Network Areas.

Expanding the capacity and network of Family Resource Centres

- Additional funding was secured in Budget 2026 for further expansion of the Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme, increasing membership by ten to 136 centres.
- Additionally, Budget 2026 saw Core funding to FRCs increased from €160,000 to €180,000. This will benefit approximately 100 services and ensures that no FRC will receive less than €180,000 in core funding.

Developing a national policy on informal kinship care to better support kinship families

- The Department progressed the scoping exercise for the development of a national policy on the rights of children in informal kinship care which covers a review of relevant legislation; the current realities for families in such arrangements; and national and international literature and best practice models.

- The Department completed consultations with children and young people with direct experience of informal kinship care. Qualitative research was undertaken with informal kinship carers and parents were consulted on their experience through a survey.

Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions

- The third annual Action Plan report and quarterly updates were published in 2025.
- The first Annual Report of the Special Advocate for Survivors was published.
- In 2025, over 7,000 applications to the Payment Scheme were received; 6,300 determinations issued; 5,150 payments made (€75m+).
- In addition, over 2,000 medical cards were issued by the HSE on foot of eligibility being notified to them by the Payment Scheme Office and over 660 applicants living abroad were provided with the once-off health support payment of €3,000 in lieu of the medical card.
- Tuam Intervention - Excavation works began in July 2025 and four progress reports were published.
- Education & Research - The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) developed a post-primary curriculum resource; Seven post-graduate research scholarships in childhood disadvantage were awarded under the Action Plan.
- The Department continued to operate the Commemorative Grants Scheme for survivors and advocate groups.
- Communication and Engagement - In-person and online consultation events were held. Following these, an expression of interest process for survivor representation opportunities was launched in August 2025. Four survivor representatives were appointed to the steering group from 1/1/2026, and many survivors and family members were appointed to survivor panels to inform the museum element of the Centre.
- Planning permission was granted by Dublin City Council in February 2025 to build the National Centre for Research and Remembrance. Initial site investigation works were completed and phase 1 enabling works were progressed.





Funding to tackle structural barriers to fairness, equality and inclusion

- In December 2025, the Department supported the HSE in delivering services to almost 45,000 children. This was an increase on 2024 with an additional 2,700 more children receiving supports through Children's Disability Network Teams. The HSE also reported a reduction in the number of children on waiting lists for these teams, decreasing from 12,920 at the end of 2024 to 9,363 at year-end 2025—a reduction of 28%.
- In 2025, the evaluation of the Baby Bundle pilot was completed. Revised costings and an updated Baby Bundle were prepared to reflect the evaluation.
- In 2025, a Steering Committee was established to oversee and drive implementation of the objectives and actions set out in the NLIS II Action Plan. The first Steering Committee Meeting was chaired by Minister Foley on the 19 November 2025 and the first progress report for the period January – June 2025 was published on the Department's website.
- Traveller and Roma rights were promoted nationally and internationally with the 2025 celebrations of International Roma Day and the Traveller Pride Week which were funded by the Department.
- In June 2025, awardees under the most recent round of the Disability Participation and Awareness Fund were announced. Grants of up to €200,000 were provided to 22 innovative projects to support people with disabilities to participate in community, sports and physical activities, arts and cultural activities, social enterprises and neurodiversity initiatives. This funding stream further supports Ireland's commitments under the United Nations on the Convention of Rights for Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Guardian *ad litem* National Service

- Substantial engagement with Judiciary, Tusla, NGO, Guardians *ad litem* and other stakeholders took place in preparation for commencement of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2022.
- In January 2025, the Executive Office of the Guardian *ad litem* National Service was established. The Executive Office was tasked with the development of a project implementation plan for the commencement of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2022.

Address equality-related challenges

- Gender equality is being promoted in Ireland under a whole-of-government policy framework provided by the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030. This Strategy utilises a life-course approach; to recognise and engage with the different support needs women and girls have as they progress through the different stages of life. An intersectional approach is adopted in the Strategy to ensure it coheres effectively with other national policies and is of relevance to all women and girls.
- The General Scheme of the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024 was referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children and Equality for pre-legislative scrutiny. A report was published in October 2025 with several recommendations.
- As part of the aim to create and enhance child and youth friendly living environments through the development and implementation of new play and recreation strategies which underpin the right of all children and young people to play, in 2025, Local Authorities, working with their local Comhairle na nÓg (local youth council), were invited to develop and submit a proposal for a project to address the recreational needs of teenagers in their local authority area. The top two applications were awarded €125,000 to contribute to their proposed project. A further five local authorities each received €50,000, to implement certain elements of their proposed plans. A total of €500,000 in Dormant Account funding was allocated to this pilot project.
- The annual National Play Day 2025 took place in July to promote play and recreation opportunities for children and young people across the country. The theme was 'The Power of Play' bringing a focus on the potential for play to foster both individual development and community cohesion. Through this initiative, the Department provided support to Local Authorities and delivered a programme of activities aimed at promoting and encouraging play.
- The Planning for Play Seminar took place in Athlone in October 2025. It focused on how children and young people's right to play and recreation can be realised during the Local Authority planning process. All 31 Local Authorities were represented at the seminar. Throughout the day examples of international, national and local initiatives were presented, demonstrating how play and recreation can be moved beyond the traditional playground space.
- The output from the seminar, which included a consultation on planning and play, will inform the development of the next National Play and Recreation Strategy, alongside other consultations planned.

Strategic Goal 4



We will prioritise effective engagement with those people we serve and across Government Departments, public bodies and civil society in delivering a more equal, inclusive and fairer society.

Seeking the opinions of those we serve

- Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) bring together a diverse group of agencies across the statutory, community and voluntary sectors in local county areas to engage in joint planning of services for children and young people. The model aims to connect national policy with local service provision.
- The Department commissioned the Centre for Effective Service (CES) to inform the policy and strategic direction of the CYPSC initiative and the CES Review of CYPSC was published in 2025. The review findings and recommendations will inform the development a new successor policy to the national CYPSC policy Shared Vision Next Steps 2019-2024 which has come to an end.

Progress engagement

- During 2025, the Department continued to prioritise structured and outcome-focused engagement with key cross-Government bodies and influential fora. This included active participation in Cabinet Sub-Committees, Senior Officials Groups, and relevant Oireachtas structures.
- These engagements supported the advancement of a wide range of Department-led policies, strategies and action plans. The Department ensured the consistent provision of timely, high-quality updates to these bodies, strengthening oversight, coordination, and alignment across Government.
- Through this approach, the Department has reinforced its leadership role in

driving strategic priorities, enabling informed decision-making and maintaining momentum in the delivery of key national initiatives.

- An example of this work is the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030. This Strategy will be progressed via a Delivery and Monitoring Committee, chaired by the Department of An Taoiseach. This work will also involve the relevant Senior Officials Group and the Cabinet Committee on Disability, ensuring Cross-Government alignment and accountability through the support of an implementation and monitoring group, which directly includes disabled persons and Disabled Persons' Organisations.
- Following an Expression of Interest process, a formal Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) Group was established in December 2025 as part of the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030, with members appointed by the Minister and integrated into the Delivery and Monitoring structures for the implementation of the Strategy.
- The primary focus of the DPO Group is on the priority actions and deliverables set out in the Strategy and related issues during the timeframe of implementation. The group ensures ongoing involvement by representing DPOs on key committees, participating in various coordination groups, reviewing progress reports, and providing lived experience and expert input into policy implementation and monitoring. This approach ensures DPOs are systematically involved in governance rather than consulted on an ad hoc basis, in line with UNCRPD obligations.

Work collaboratively with partners

- The Social Work Awareness Campaign, which ran in March and again in November 2025, was led by the Department's External HR with the assistance of the Department's Communications unit. The campaign consisted of a multi-media/channel digital and print campaign comprising a mix of touchpoints, including display, social media, and paid ads across apps such as TikTok, Snapchat, You Tube, LinkedIn and Google. The campaign sought to raise awareness of this important profession and received over 19 million impressions across social media platforms.
- In 2025, the Department participated in the consortium responsible for the development of the Social Care Apprenticeship Programme. This will provide 55 additional training places at University College Cork and Munster Technological University from September 2026.
- The Department contributed to the Department of Health's 'Ireland's Future Health and Social Care Workforce' Report which was published in December 2025. Topics of note that the Department contributed to include Social Care, Tusla Workforce, Health and Social Care Professionals, Care Workforce, Social Workers and Occupational Therapists.
- The Department contributed to the Interdepartmental Working Group on Health and Social Care Professions (HSCPs), established in April 2025 with the remit to expand the provision of training places priority HSCP disciplines. Through the work of this group, Government approval was received to expand training places in critical HSCP disciplines, to include an additional 320 student places in 2025, and a further 141 in subsequent years.
- The Department worked with colleagues in Tusla and in Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation on the creation of a new Special Care Worker grade which was sanctioned in September 2024 and introduced by Tusla in 2025. The introduction of the Special Care Worker grade offers substantial long-term financial benefits to many existing employees, and a more attractive salary for new entrants than is available to broader public sector social care roles.
- The Department contributed to the Interdepartmental Group (IDG) responsible for reviewing submissions made under the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Economic Migration Policy review in 2025. In preparation for this review, the Department supported Oberstown and Tusla with the development of submissions for changes to the Critical Skills Occupations list.

We will prioritise effective engagement with those people we serve and across Government Departments, public bodies and civil society in delivering a more equal, inclusive and fairer society.

Support Tusla

- In line with Action 7 of the Youth Homelessness Strategy, the review of the Housing Circular 46/2014 protocol on Young People Leaving State Care (often referred to as CCMA Joint Protocol) commenced in January 2024. Officials from the Department proactively engaged with their counterparts in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Tusla on this action and the revised Protocol was published in 2025. Included in the revised Protocol is a stipulation that Housing Authorities be cognisant of Housing Circular 27/2023 when developing their respective Homelessness Action Plans and that particular consideration is given to vulnerable cohorts identified in the Youth Homelessness Strategy, including care leavers.
- In 2025, the Department progressed work to develop a National Policy Framework for Alternative Care. This will deliver on a Programme for Government commitment to address current issues in accessing appropriate care places, and a longer-term vision for how the care system will operate into the future. In this regard, the Department commenced a national consultation to support the development of the Framework, which included robust engagement with stakeholders, key workers, foster carers, parents, and children and young people with care experience.
- Central to the Care Experiences Programme is the Care Experienced Expert Panel. This Panel, which was established in October 2023, comprises eleven adult members all of whom are care experienced. The Panel provides expert advice and feedback on all aspects of the Programme's work to ensure that it is relevant to children and young people in care and to those who are care experienced. They also provide advice on particular components of Programme research including how best to recruit and retain those who are care experienced in research that affects them and how to effectively communicate and disseminate research findings to all stakeholders. Panel members are also ambassadors for the Programme, promoting its visibility amongst the care community.
- In 2025, 246 new residential places were delivered and as of December 2025, a total of 8,911 residential beds were registered for individuals with disabilities who require a specialist disability service.



Support the HSE

- The HSE's National Service Plan for 2026 was published on 22 December 2025. As set out in the National Service Plan, €65 million was allocated to Disability Residential Services to support new developments during 2026.
- In Budget 2026, €40 million was allocated for the provision of 199 residential responses. This includes 152 newly created residential placements (72 planned placements and 80 unplanned urgent placements), as outlined in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2026. Funding will also support new residents in existing placements that have become vacant and require enhancement and in limited circumstances, placements in nursing home settings.
- In 2025, there were 31 transitions from congregated settings to more appropriate settings in the community and in Budget 2026, €3 million was allocated which is expected to support 58 transitions from congregated settings in 2026.
- In Budget 2026, €10 million was allocated to support the transition of 45 people (U65s) out of nursing homes to more appropriate homes in the community, an additional €2 million was allocated to provide enhanced quality of life supports (EQLS) to people who are remaining in nursing homes due to will and preference or assessed medical need.

Engagement with early learning and childcare stakeholders

- The Department of Education and Youth provides guidance on making school buildings available for early learning and childcare and other community uses and supporting the provision of after-school in particular is strongly encouraged. Arising from this almost one quarter (22.5%) of early learning and childcare provision is delivered on school sites and registrations among school going children grew by 77% from 2022 to 2025.
- An Early Learning and Childcare Planning Matters Working Group between the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Education and Youth met throughout 2025. Several meetings were held since summer 2025 between members of the working group and officials from different local authorities who were nominated by the City and County Managers Association Planning and Land Use Committee. In parallel, planning is underway to capture the views of other stakeholders who will have an interest in the revised guidelines.
- In July 2025, the Department commenced a Core Funding Fee Table Approval process, wherein CCC reviewed the 2025/2026 fee tables of services that applied to the Fee Increase Assessment process in programme year 2024/2025. Accompanied by new fee table rules in programme year 2025/2026 and a fee table guideline document, this exercise promotes compliance with and understanding of scheme rules among Partner Services, as well as transparency for parents through simplification and standardisation of fee table data.

Proactive dissemination of evidence-based analysis and information

Spotlights and Indicator Sets published by the Data and Analytics Unit in January 2025 include:

- Statistical Spotlight #14: Roma in Ireland
- Statistical Spotlight #15: The State of the Nation's Women and Girls

Research publications in 2025 include:

- Growing Up in Ireland Research Needs Report for Cohort 24 at 3 years (April 2025)
- Priority Areas of Research Interest (May 2025).
- Growing Up in Ireland in Context (June 2025 and updated in November 2025)
- Review of the current funding and resourcing model for Comhairle na nÓg (June 2025).
- Spending Review: Disability Residential Services (September 2025)
- A report on Wellbeing and Mental Health in the Older LGBTQI+ Population in Ireland: Findings from the Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland Study, prepared by Prof. Agnes Higgins, Trinity College Dublin, was published in July, 2025. The report presents findings on the self-reported mental health and wellbeing of older LGBTQI+ people (60+ years) in Ireland.
- A report on Mental Health in the Irish LGBTQI+ Population with Disabilities: Findings from the Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland Study prepared by Prof. Agnes Higgins, Trinity College Dublin, was published in July, 2025. The report addresses the relationship between self-reported disabilities and mental distress within the LGBTQI+ population in Ireland.
- A study Not Being Out on Your Own: Research on the Needs and Experiences of Parents of LGBTQI+ Children and Young People was prepared by Quality Matters and published in July 2025. The research centres the experience of parents and carers in order to identify what can facilitate parental support or present barriers to parental support for LGBTQI+ children and young people.
- A review of ethical and methodological practice when conducting research or consultation with children and young people who experience poverty, prepared by Dr Delma Byrne and colleagues at Maynooth University was published in February 2025.
- A study exploring the key wellbeing factors identified across studies that have utilised Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) data over time was published in November, 2025. The study was led by Dr Ross Neville, University College Dublin, and is available here: [What we know from Growing Up in Ireland \(GUI\) \(2008-2024\): Key Well-being Factors for Children and Young People.](#)
- A Focused Policy Assessment (FPA) on Disability Day Services was published in August 2025. Prepared by Department officials, the FPA explores the current policy and approach to funding and provides policy insights.

A series of papers was published under the DCDE-ESRI Research Programme, designed to utilise data from the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study across 2025. Publications included:

- Smyth, E; Darmody, M; and Russell, H; (2025). Including non-resident fathers in cohort research: a scoping study, ESRI Research Series 211, Dublin: ESRI
- Slevin, E; Russell, H; and Maître, B (2025). Deprived children in Ireland: Characterising those who are deprived but not income-poor, ESRI Research Series 217, Dublin: ESRI
- Russell, H; Smyth, E; and Slevin, E (2025). Afterschool care for school-aged children in Ireland, ESRI Research Series 222, Dublin, Ireland: ESRI
- Smyth, E., & Darmody, M. (2025). Experience of bullying and bullying behaviours in childhood and adolescence. Dublin: ESRI.

Actively engage in relevant all-island, EU and International Fora

- The Department coordinated the State delegation to appear before the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in July 2025. The Department hosted a consultation with stakeholders in October 2025 to inform the preparation of the State report for the UN Universal Periodic Review which is due for submission in 2026. Consultations also took place with children and young people.
- In October 2025, Minister Foley endorsed the European Commission's 'Declaration of principles for a gender-equal society', published as part of the European Commission's Roadmap for Women's Rights.

- The Department is the lead Department in Ireland's intervention in support of the European Commission in C-769/22 Commission v Hungary. The opinion of the Advocate General given on 5 June 2025 considered that Hungary, by prohibiting or restricting access to LGBTI content, infringed EU Law on all grounds, including under Art 2 of the Treaty on the European Union.

Support the enactment of EU legislation

- In 2025, the Department completed the full transposition of the Directive (EU) 2022/2381 Gender Balance on Corporate Boards. The European Union (Gender Balance on Boards of Certain Companies) Regulations 2025 were signed into law on 28th May 2025 and these Regulations completed the necessary steps to ensure full transposition of the Directive into Irish law.
- In 2025, in supporting the enactment of EU legislation within its remit, the Department, through its EU & International Unit, maintained effective engagement with relevant stakeholders, including the European Commission and the Houses of the Oireachtas (notably the Seanad Select Committee on EU Scrutiny and Transparency). The Department also participated in the Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) on European Engagement, where it provided regular updates, including quarterly reporting on the transposition of EU directives into national law and on infringement proceedings, helping to ensure that Ireland met its legal obligations under EU legislation.

Deliver the DCDE component of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU

- Detailed planning was undertaken on the policy and logistical aspects of the EU Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2026 in the areas under the Department's remit.
- In preparation for the Presidency, the Department hosted a session "Hosting a Conference Accessible to All" in December 2025 with approximately 70 attendees from across 20 Government Departments and Agencies in attendance to learn more about hosting accessible events. Contributors included the National Disability Authority, the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the National Transport Authority and a representative from the Danish 2025 EU Presidency. As noted on the day, hosting events accessible to all during Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the EU is a medium in its own right to display Ireland's values to our EU counterparts, irrespective of who attends the events. The event was recorded and is now available to Department staff on OneLearning, the Learning Management System for the Civil Service.
- Extensive work was undertaken across the Department to identify potential priorities for relevant EU councils and develop operational plans of the Department's Presidency events. The Department convened Seanad na nÓg to discuss and identify children and young peoples' priorities for the Presidency.

Engage with survivors

- The work on the development of the National Centre is being driven by a Steering Group which included representation from the key State stakeholders involved the development of the Centre, as well as the Special Advocate for Survivors. In June 2025, the Steering Group published a series of commitments in response to feedback received during survivor engagement events held in late 2024 and early 2025. The feedback highlighted the need for survivors to be involved at all levels of decision making of the development.
- In Autumn 2025, the survivor members were appointed to the Steering Group following an open, publicised, expression of interest process with planned expansion of membership in January 2026 to include representation by survivors and persons affected by Ireland's institutional past and its historical adoption system.
- The First Annual Report of the Special Advocate for Survivors was published in June 2025. The report provided a comprehensive overview of the feedback which the Special Advocate received across her entire remit and outlines the issues raised by survivors as well as recommendations to address them. The Department published a response to the recommendations which is available on the Department's website, alongside a commitment to continue engaging positively with the Special Advocate in relation to the issues raised. Following an expression of interest process the Special Advocate also established an Advisory Council to explore key themes of collective concern for Survivors and Affected Persons.
- Throughout 2025, the Department provided ongoing support for the Special Advocate. In terms of staffing supports and office requirements, this is provided via an annual financial allocation to Pobal.

Strategic Goal 5



We will commit to being recognised as a high performing organisation where our people are valued, supported and motivated to deliver our Vision.

Priority by the Management Board to the ongoing development of the organisation continued in 2025 through the delivery of actions across a number of organisational strategies to ensure Department can deliver for the public into the future.

People Strategy

The delivery of the Department's ambitious People Strategy, 'Valuing our People - Delivering Together 2024-2026' continued in 2025 with the following progress made against the 20 actions contained in the Strategy:

- The Department's all staff event themed "Our Work, Our World and Ourselves" was held in October 2025 and attended by 75% of staff. Speakers included senior civil servants and subject matter experts who spoke about why our work matters, how we can serve the public better, and ways to improve our wellbeing. We also shared information on some key projects and discussed our new Mission, Vision and Values following the launch of the DCDE Statement of Strategy for 2025-2028.
- Strategic workforce planning took place over a number of phases in 2025. 67 new staff were onboarded during the year with the majority recruited through public jobs and external mobility competitions. 67 staff left the Department in 2025. 90% of staff surveyed on leaving the Department said they would recommend the Department as a good place to work, scoring the Department's culture as 4.2 out of 5.
- A set of recommendations on Culture and Values were developed including agreement to run a 2026 department wide Staff Survey to gather data on the employee experience to inform future Organisation Development initiatives and promotion of the department Values through internal recognition awards.
- A programme of staff wellbeing events were delivered to cover mental, social, physical and financial wellbeing of staff. Four-week check-in calls are in place for all new staff to review their experience as a new joiner and ensure they are fully supported.
- An Event Coordination Network was established to make best use of our internal events such as Wellbeing, Divisional meetings and Social Committee. An Intranet calendar of Internal events was populated by the Network which met quarterly to discuss ways to bring people together and foster staff connections.
- The rollout of the DCDE Planning Tool which now provides a single platform for teams to capture their annual objectives, supporting tasks, expected outcomes, staffing requirements and financial allocations. It enables quarterly reporting so progress, risks and delivery issues can be tracked and reacted to consistently across the Department. The tool increases visibility of work across the Department and helps align priorities, resources and delivery in one place. It supports better prioritisation, evidence-based decision-making, improved reporting capacities, and greater agility where resources need to be reprioritised during the year.

- The Senior Management Team met twice on the topic of the theory and practice of Strategic Foresight with expert speakers and workshops to consider and discuss how longer-term trends could impact the country and the work of our department.
- A Project Support Group (PSG) was established as a single point of contact for any unit with an idea or potential project that they want to get off the ground. The PSG is one way the Department ensures people are heard and their ideas are developed in a way that gives them the best chance of a successful outcome. Since its inception the Group has received and responded to 55 requests for support from business units seeking a change, improvement or new tool.
- The launch of Copilot in Teams and the Department's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Policy, which made approved AI support available to all staff to assist in more efficient and evidence-informed ways of working, while still operating within a strong framework of practical guidance on using AI safely and responsibly.
- The Employee Privacy Notice was updated and published, and the next phase of the Plan English programme began.

Communications Strategy

- A new three-year Communications Strategy was developed during the year, providing a clear framework for how the Department will communicate with greater consistency, connection and impact.
- The Strategy builds on the strong progress made in communications over the past year and reflects the needs of a busy and evolving Department. It places a strong emphasis on a unified approach, ensuring that all communications consistently reflect the Department's values, mission and priorities, while supporting more effective planning, collaboration and a cohesive single departmental voice.

- The Strategy is underpinned by three key priorities: strengthening planning and coordination through a business partner model; showcasing the work and achievements of the Department through authentic storytelling and Plain English; and enhancing communications through innovation, improved use of data and a continued focus on accessibility.
- It was developed through a comprehensive consultation process, incorporating both internal and external perspectives to ensure it reflects a broad range of insights and supports effective engagement with staff, stakeholders and the public.

Internal engagement

- Nine one-on-one interviews with the Management Board;
- Two focus group sessions with POs;
- One cross-grade focus group.

External engagement:

- One consultation with young people (via the National Participation Office);
- One focus group with the HSE;
- One cross-mandate focus group with stakeholders from Equality, Children, Disability, and the Aegis Bodies.

Learning and Development Strategy

- The Department published its Learning and Development (L&D) Strategy 2025–2028 in December 2025. The Strategy sets out 36 actions under six strategic goals aimed at strengthening organisational capability and supporting staff development.
- Progress commenced on a number of key actions during 2025, including the development of a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Policy and an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy. Ongoing supports were provided through L&D onboarding initiatives, alongside continued engagement with the OneLearning platform to enhance staff capability. The Department also continued to promote its mentoring programme to support new and newly promoted staff.
- Work began on the development of a specification for a Department-wide People Management Programme, which is scheduled for rollout in 2026. In addition, an EDI Steering Group was established to support the development and implementation of the Department's EDI Strategy, due for delivery in 2026.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

- The Department is committed to being a leader in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and is proud that it is a diverse and inclusive employer. A Strategic Goal of the Department's Learning and Development Strategy launched in 2025 is to "Support the successful integration of diversity, equality and inclusion throughout the Department, by ensuring learning is inclusive, accessible, and aligned with the diverse needs of the workforce. This will create a learning environment that is welcoming, respectful, and supportive of all individuals, regardless of their background or identity". With this in mind the following actions in 2025 were key to supporting this objective:
 - an Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group was established to lead the development of an EDI Strategy to be published in 2026. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training was provided for Steering Group members;
 - a Neurodiversity Group was established for informal supportive meetups for all staff interested in this topic;
 - the DCDE LGBTQI+ Staff Network was established;
 - the 'Just A Minute' (JAM) initiative, which supports those with hidden disabilities, was launched in 2025 and the Department is now 'JAM' friendly.



Data Strategy

- The Department's Data Strategy 2026-2030 was drafted, developed and finalised in late 2025 for approval by the Department's Management Board in early 2026. It aims to create a culture that harnesses and integrates data from diverse, trusted sources to meet policy and governance needs. The completion of the strategy follows extensive consultations across all divisions. The Department's Data Strategy 2026-2030 roll out will be supported by implementation plan from 2026.

Centralised Digital Solution

- A centralised digital solution to facilitate the Department planning process was launched in November 2025 for Planning 2026. The new platform streamlines data collection and reduces manual collation errors.
- The system facilitates quarterly reporting by units on the progress of their business objectives and for Management Board to report quarterly on the progress of the Department's Key Department Deliverables.
- Crucially, the new system provides for greater analysis of how the Department allocates its staff resources across its work programme and supports informed discussion at Management Board-level on the Department's organisational structure and strategic priorities. The new Departmental Planning Tool will be further developed in 2026 to integrate the financial reporting process by business units.

Corporate Governance

- Risks associated with the performance of the Department's functions continued to be managed during the year. The Risk Committee as a sub-committee of the Department's Management Board met four times during 2025. The High-Level Risk Report and the Departmental Risk Register were reviewed in advance of each meeting and updated as appropriate including with appropriate mitigations.
- In Q4 2025, the Department commenced updating its Corporate Governance Framework which provides assurance that good governance policies and practices are embedded in the Department. The focus of the Framework is to set out the governance procedures, processes and principles that underpin the work of the Department.
- The Department ensures that arrangements are in place to continuously monitor compliance by bodies under its remit with governance requirements arising from relevant legislation and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This incorporates oversight agreements in place with each body, assurances on compliance to the Department at year end by each body as well as the Chairperson's comprehensive report to the Minister.
- There is regular engagement throughout the year with these bodies including at governance meetings. 14 appointments were made in 2025 to State Boards under the aegis of the Department.

We will commit to being recognised as a high performing organisation where our people are valued, supported and motivated to deliver our Vision.

Public Sector Duty

- Under section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, public bodies have a duty and legal responsibility to demonstrate equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers and service users in the delivery of their functions.
- The Department acknowledges the positive duty imposed on it by section 42 to have regard to human rights and equality in all its work. The Department's Statement of Strategy 2023–2025 set out the Department's vision of achieving a fair, equal and inclusive society where rights are respected and where everyone can achieve their potential. **(For further updates, please see appendix 2).**

Climate Action Mandate

- The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate requires Government Departments and public bodies to lead by example in implementing climate related goals. The Department published its Climate Action Roadmap in 2025 setting out its targets and achievements in reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions and improving energy efficiencies.
- The Department tracked progress in terms of its targets through the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's (SEAI) Monitoring and Reporting system and continued to offset carbon emissions from official air travel through annual payments to the Climate Action Fund.
- The Roadmap also sets out the steps the Department is taking to promote awareness and inform behaviours of Departmental staff so that climate action and sustainability are embedded in the way we work.
- In 2025, the Department's Climate Action Unit and Green Team led the following initiatives:
 - Climate Action training delivered to all senior managers and introductory training on climate issues made available for all staff;

- a smarter travel survey for staff to inform further travel measures (expected to result in the Department being awarded the Smarter Travel Mark);
- a communications programme for staff on energy efficiency in the home;
- continuation of our annual step challenges, Marchathon and Walktober which occurred in March and October 2025 respectively; and
- further recycling initiatives, including the continuation of the Deposit Return scheme collection point in Miesian Plaza to support a number of children's charities.

Ministerial Support

- Throughout 2025, the Department provided strong, responsive, and high-quality support to the Minister and Minister of State in the fulfilment of their official duties. This included the preparation of comprehensive briefing materials, policy and strategy proposals, responses to parliamentary requests, and stakeholder engagement support.
- The Department ensured that the Ministers were equipped with timely, accurate, and evidence-based information to support decision-making and effective participation in Government business. Particular emphasis was placed on anticipating emerging issues, ensuring cross-Government cooperation and the advancement of the Programme for Government Commitments.
- This comprehensive support contributed to the effective delivery of Ministerial priorities and the successful advancement of the Department's overall strategic objectives.

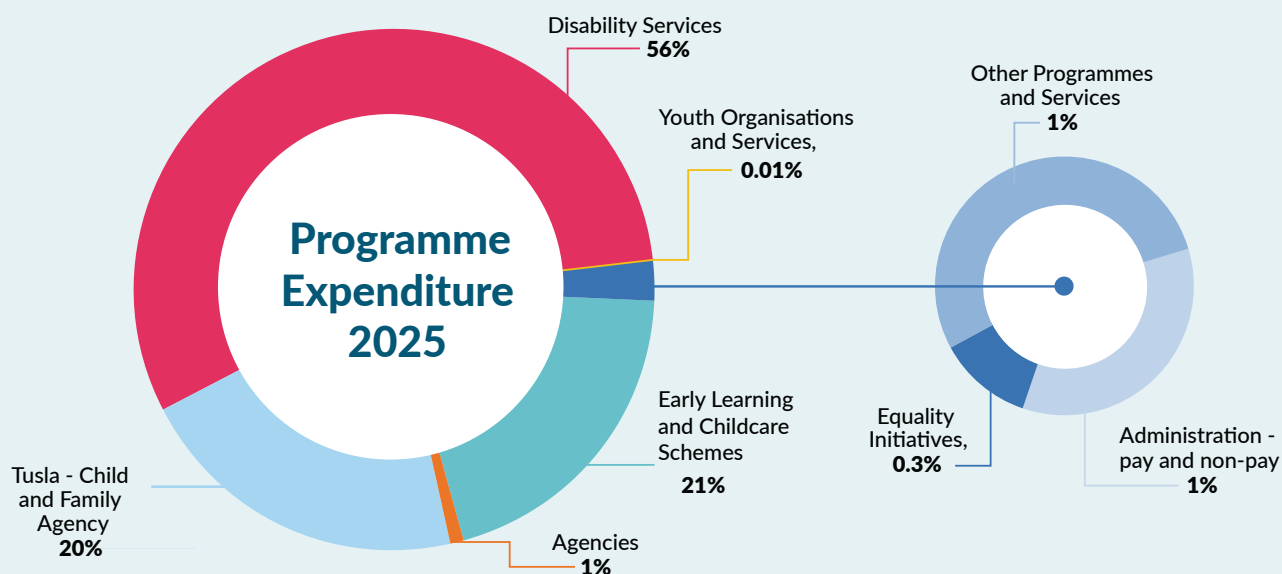
Additional information

Human Resources

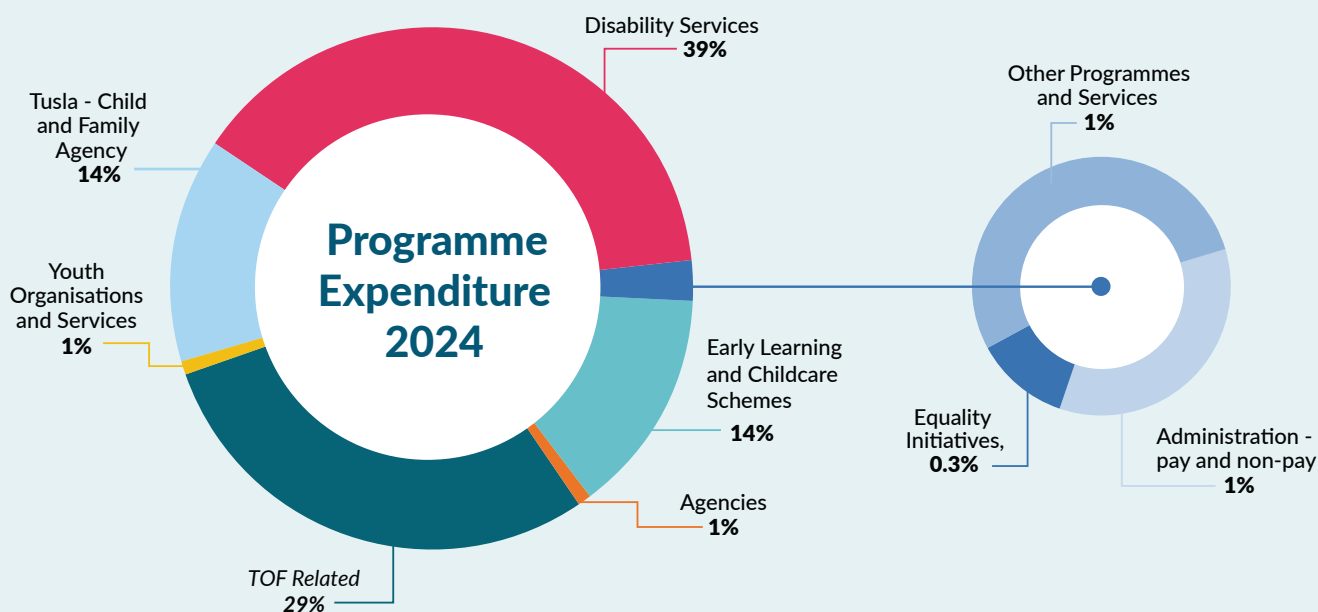
- The Department welcomed 67 new staff in 2025, and the staffing numbers as of 31 December 2025 was 628. This is a decrease of 358 from 986 from the end of 2024. The driving factor behind the decrease in staff was the transfer of functions to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and the Department of Education and Youth that took place in May 2025.

Division	Number of Staff at end of 2025
Child Policy and Tusla Governance	57
Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare	125
Equality, Rights and Participation	54
Disability	70
Mother and Baby Homes, Finance and Research Division	130
Organisation and Strategy Development	180
Office of the Secretary General	12
Total	628

Programme Expenditure in 2025 (percentage of total)



Programme Expenditure in 2024 (comparative)



**The 2025 balance relates to B06 Youth Organisation and Services - Play and Recreation. The remainder of Youth services moved to the Department of Education and Youth as part of the transfer of functions. This may be best reflected in Other Programmes and Services.*

The 2025 gross funding provision for the Department, under Vote 40, was €6.342 billion. This followed one supplementary estimate in late 2025 and comprised €6.265 billion for current expenditure and €76.9 million for capital expenditure.

The provisional 2025 gross expenditure outturn of the Department was €6.297 billion.

As a result of the 2025 transfer of functions, the 2024 figures are not directly comparable. To enable comparability, estimated restated 2024 figures are provided. These are a restated gross funding provision of €5.599 billion and restated outturn of €5.559 billion.

The expenditure in 2025 enabled a significant level of services to be delivered across four programme areas.

Programme Expenditure*		Outturn €000
A	Children and Family Support Programme	1,297,528
B	Sectoral Programmes for Children and Young People	1,345,593
C	Policy and Legislation Programme	90,288
D	An Equal and Inclusive Society	3,563,946
Gross expenditure		6,297,355
Deduct		
E	Appropriations-in-aid	27,765
Net expenditure		6,269,590

* Please note, the values are based on the provisional outturn and may be subject to change, until the publication of the 2025 Appropriation Account for the Vote on 30 September 2026

Overview of Energy Usage in 2025

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 Public Sector Climate Action Mandate to achieve a 50% improvement in energy efficiency and a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (measured in kgCO₂) by 2030.

In May 2025, the Department's accommodation footprint reduced significantly following the transfer of integration functions to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. As a result, the Department's operations for the remainder of 2025 were wholly accommodated in its headquarters in Miesian Plaza. This consolidation had a significant impact on the level of greenhouse gas emissions for which the Department is responsible.

In 2025, the Department's greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel sources (for example, gas) decreased by approximately 57.5% compared to 2024 levels. In terms of greenhouse gas emissions from non-fossil fuel sources, such as electricity, there was a reduction of approximately 57.0% compared to 2024.

In 2025, the Department achieved an improvement of 67.6% in the energy efficiency indicator compared to baseline levels, which surpasses the public-sector target of improving energy efficiency by 50% by 2030. This progress reflects, in part, the higher occupancy levels within the Department's remaining accommodation during the year, which provided economies of scale in terms of energy use per member of staff.

Agencies under the aegis of the Department reported their energy consumption directly to the SEAI and, as a result, their energy usage is not covered by this overview.

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

Sustainable Development Goals (including Green Public Procurement)

SDGs

Consistent with its commitment to contribute to progressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Department provided inputs and continued its ongoing reporting on achievements and progress made in meeting the SDG targets under its remit in 2025.

Green Public Procurement

In 2025, the Department continued to embed Green Public Procurement (GPP) principles into its procurement planning and governance arrangements, in line with the Buying Greener: Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan 2024–2027, and Circular 17/2025 on Green Public Procurement. These frameworks require public bodies to consider and apply GPP criteria in a proportionate and structured manner, having regard to the nature of the contract and the potential environmental impact.

For reference year 2025, the Department had 4 new contracts under the ICT Products and Services priority sector for GPP, of which 1 applied GPP criteria. Of those not applying GPP criteria, 2 were mini-competitions under a framework which had not used GPP initially and as such were not in scope, and the other was a continuation of a service contract that predated the identification of the sector as a priority. Details for these contracts were included in the annual report to the Environmental Protection Agency on the implementation of GPP by the Department.

Official Languages Act

The Department continued to fulfil its Irish language responsibilities. Actions taken in 2025 included:

- operating and managing a dedicated mailbox for all matters relating to compliance with Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúl/ Official Languages Act - ATO@dcde.gov.ie;
- providing services to members of the public through the medium of Irish. The Department provided public services through Irish in response to telephone calls to the Department and to email queries through the Department's primary contact mailbox for those wishing to correspond with the Department in Irish;
- publishing strategic publications in both Irish and English. A total of 110 Departmental documents were translated to Irish in 2025, including the Statement of Strategy 2025-2028 and the 2024 Annual Report;
- providing Irish language training opportunities to staff. 15 staff availed of Irish language courses during 2025;
- submitting details of its advertising activities for 2025 to Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga in compliance with section 10(a) of the Act. The Department's indicative average was: 25% of all advertising undertaken was in the Irish language and 9% of annual advertising spend was allocated to Irish language media;
- publishing the Department's logo and stationery headings in Irish with English translation present;
- maintaining guidance on Irish translation requirements on the Department's Intranet for Departmental staff to access and apply as relevant;
- ensuring the Department's website can be accessed in Irish by switching to the Gaeilge option.

Protected Disclosures

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 requires the publication of an annual report by public bodies about the number of Protected Disclosures received in the preceding year and of actions taken in response.

For the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025, the Department received thirteen protected disclosures.

Two disclosures were assessed as warranting further follow-up.

In a further two cases, an initial assessment was conducted, and in both cases the report was closed as not warranting further follow up following assessment.

One disclosure was received relating to functions transferring under the transfer of functions to the Department of Justice which ultimately transferred to that Department.

Eight reports of alleged wrongdoing were received under external reporting channels and were transmitted directly to the Office of the Protected Disclosures Commissioner (OPDC) in accordance with the protected disclosures legislation.

In line with requirements under section 22(1) of the Act, the Department provided detailed statistical information on protected disclosure activity to the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation.

Communications

In 2025, the Department strengthened how it communicates with the public through clear, accessible and reliable information about its policies and services. The Communications Unit responded to 847 media queries and issued 93 press releases, supporting accurate reporting across early learning and childcare, disability, equality and international protection and Ukraine (until 1 May).

Following the transfer of functions of the Ukraine and International Protection divisions in May, reactive press queries fell significantly from 2,449 in 2024. This period also marked a shift from managing high volumes of reactive media queries to developing a more proactive approach to media.

The unit also introduced integrated communications planning. This aligned bespoke web campaign pages, social media tiles, targeted advertising campaigns, and a suite of accessible publications with comprehensive media engagement. This approach was activated for the launches of The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030, The National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028 and the National Strategy for Women and Girls.

The team provided event management expertise for 12 major events, ensuring the public received timely, consistent information on important policy developments. A strong focus on accessibility and quality underpinned all work from the rollout of a new visual identity to the publication of accessible versions of major strategies. Internally, the unit produced 11 staff newsletters and over 170 intranet updates, strengthening communication and connection across the organisation.

Digital campaigns continued to expand, helping the Department to reach wider and more diverse audiences. Social media channels grew by 23 per cent, driven by strong engagement across LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The team also managed a significant volume of website updates, completing over 2,100 to the year end. This included the realignment of content and webpages following the Transfer of Functions.

In addition, the unit delivered nine national public awareness campaigns throughout the year, promoting initiatives in areas such as early years supports, disability inclusion, gender equality, and family resources. Across all communications channels the Department delivered modern, transparent and accessible communications that supported public understanding of its work in 2025.

Appendix I:

Bodies under the aegis of the Department on 31/12/2025



Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
National Disability Authority

National Disability Authority

25 Clyde Road
Dublin 4
www.nda.ie



An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Tusla, Child and Family Agency

The Brunel Building
Heuston South Quarter
St. John's Road West
Kilmainham, Dublin 8
www.tusla.ie



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

The Adoption Authority of Ireland

Shelbourne House
Shelbourne Road
Dublin 4
www.aai.gov.ie



Coimisiún na hÉireann
um Chearta an Duine
agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and
Equality Commission

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

16-22 Green Street
Dublin 7
www.ihrec.ie



ombudsman
do leanaí
for children

Office of the Ombudsman for Children

Millennium House
52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1
www.oco.ie



Oifig an Stiúrthóra um
Idirghabháil Údaraithe, Tuaim
Office of the Director of
Authorised Intervention, Tuam

Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam

Customs House, Flood Street, Galway,
H91XV2C
www.odait.ie



OBERSTOWN
CHILDREN
DETENTION CAMPUS
CARE
EDUCATION
HEALTH
WELLBEING

Oberstown

Oberstown, Lusk, Co. Dublin,
K45 AY66
www.oberstown.com

Appendix II:

Public Sector Duty

Under section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, public bodies have a duty and legal responsibility to demonstrate equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers and service users in the delivery of their functions.

The Department acknowledges the positive duty imposed on it by section 42 to have regard to human rights and equality in all its work. The Department's Statement of Strategy 2023–2025 set out the Department's vision of achieving a fair, equal and inclusive society where rights are respected and where everyone can achieve their potential.

The Department's work to deliver its mission to 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, embodies proactive consideration of equality and the human rights. The Department's Public Sector Duty Assessment and Implementation Plan outlines various measures that the Department committed to delivering to meet its public sector duty obligations.

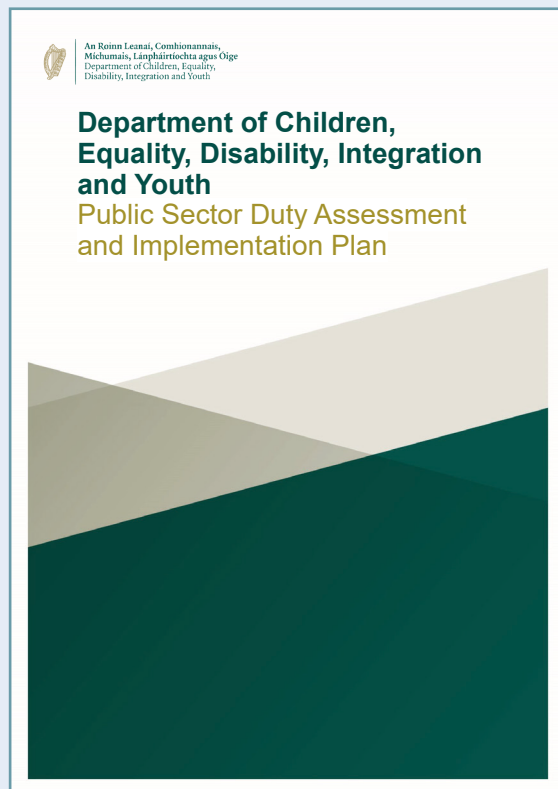
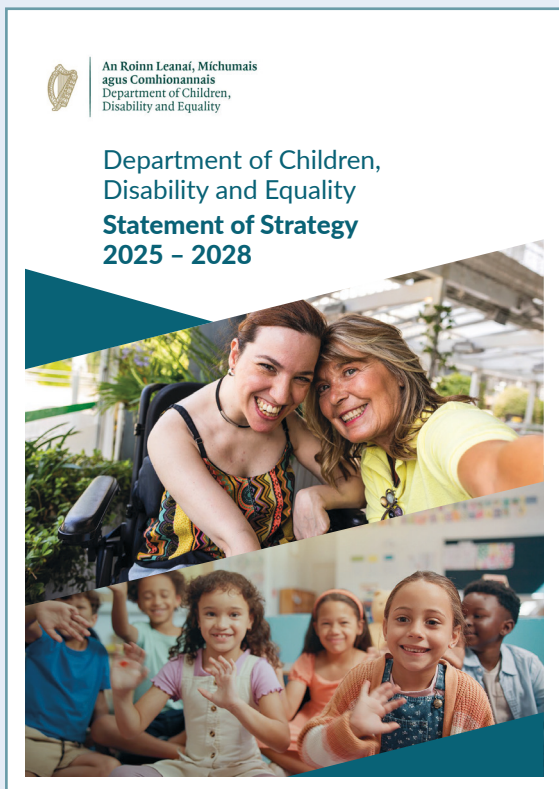
The Department is fully committed to delivering both a strong customer service and equality of treatment for all our customers. This includes providing our customers at all times with a professional, efficient and courteous service and continuously doing our best to improve the standards of the service provided. The Department's Customer Service Action Plan 2022–2025 and the associated Customer Charter affirmed the Department's commitment to the delivery of services incorporating equality and human rights obligations to all our customers.

The Department is also committed to protecting the human rights of staff of the Department. The Department endorses and implements the Civil Service Dignity at Work Policy, which aims to promote respect, dignity, safety, and equality in the workplace. Key actions during the year to deliver on the Department's obligations to its staff under the Public Sector Duty included:

- The Department's People Strategy 2024–2026 incorporates a commitment to champion diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation, via an ambitious Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group was established in 2025 to support the development of this Strategy which will be delivered in 2026.
- In line with its obligations under the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021, the Department published its annual Gender Pay Gap Report in June 2025. The Department's overall mean Gender Pay Gap is 3.49% in favour of women. This gap is driven primarily by the higher proportion of women in the Department, particularly in the Assistant Principal grade.
- The Department has a dedicated Disability Liaison Officer ('DLO') who assists and supports staff with disabilities, in confidence, and their line managers by providing necessary information, appropriate contacts, guidance, suggestions and advice. The Department complied with its obligations under Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 in submitting the required annual Part 5 returns which includes the number of employees reporting a disability as of 31 December 2025. The Department is committed to creating an equal, inclusive and diverse work environment that supports all employees and promotes and supports the increased recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities.

- In November 2025, the Department published a new Statement of Strategy 2025 – 2028 ('the Strategy') and the Public Sector Duty is also embedded throughout the Strategy. The Strategy includes an action to deliver on our statutory obligation under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 so that we eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights as it applies to the Department's staff.

A report on the actions taken more broadly across the Department during 2025 to meet its public sector duty obligations in line with commitments in the Public Sector Duty Assessment and Implementation Plan will be available on the [Department's website](#).





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