Annual Report for the second year of implementation, April 2015 – 2016
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Advisory Council Workplan
Appendix 2: Mechanism for engagement
I am very pleased to welcome the publication of the second annual report for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. This report sets out the extensive work for children and young people carried out across Government Departments and agencies from April 2015 to April 2016.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures represents a fundamental change in the way we view children and young people. Our work is moving away from the failures of the past and making Ireland a country where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled, where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.

I am pleased with the progress that has been made in 2015. The first annual report (covering April 2014–2015) focused on the launch of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, the establishment of implementation infrastructure, the development of an implementation plan and the identification of cross-sectoral priorities. It also covered the development of Children and Young People’s Services Committees, the key infrastructure for coordination of services for children and young people at a local level, which has been further progressed in 2015–2016. In many ways, the first annual report represented the groundwork necessary to build the architecture to support what really matters: improving outcomes for all of our children and young people.

This implementation infrastructure has allowed us to progress many serious issues, and I am pleased to see the effectiveness of whole-of-government working evidenced in this report. Considerable progress has been made on the cross-sectoral priorities identified by the Sponsors Group, resulting in the publication of Get Ireland Active! The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland and the Inter-Departmental Group’s report Supporting Access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme for Children with a Disability. I look forward to further progress on the cross-sectoral priorities identified for 2016, which again represent some of the most intractable issues faced by children and young people.

I am heartened to see the role that the community and voluntary sector has played in the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. It is crucial that the five national outcomes for children and young people are not just outcomes towards which Government Departments and State agencies must strive, but are outcomes towards which all of society must work, together. The Advisory Council’s cross-sectoral work with Government Departments is an example of how this can be achieved. Particular credit must go to Dr Owen Keenan, Chair of the Advisory Council, for the leadership he has shown in promoting this collaborative effort. I encourage all Government Departments, State agencies and sectors which have a role and remit for working with children and young people to fully utilise the Council (and other Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures infrastructure) for advice on relevant issues. This collaborative process has been key to progress to date.

The new Programme for Government, agreed in May 2016, sets out a new programme of work to improve outcomes for children and young people, which is entirely in keeping with the five national outcomes. The Government is committed to honouring the commitments in Better Outcomes,
Brighter Futures, and will use its implementation infrastructure to achieve the five national outcomes.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for the work carried out by the previous Ministers for Children and Youth Affairs: Dr James Reilly, TD; Charles Flanagan, TD; and Frances Fitzgerald, TD. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures implementation infrastructure: the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium, Sponsors Group, Advisory Council, DCYA Implementation Team, and Children and Young People’s Services Committees National Steering Group. I would like to acknowledge the work carried out by my officials in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in their efforts to ensure an innovative and participative approach to the implementation of this policy framework. Continued engagement and effort from all parties will ensure that we achieve better outcomes for all of our children and young people.

Dr Katherine Zappone, TD
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
Part 2: Executive summary

2.1 Key points from Chairs

The Chairs of the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium, the Advisory Council, and the Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSCs) National Steering Group have highlighted a number of emerging issues, including:

- The effectiveness of interdepartmental working, particularly with regard to the cross-sectoral priorities. Interagency and community sector collaboration (particularly with respect to CYPSCs) has also been very effective.
- The Advisory Council has considerable experience and expertise, and should be used to its fullest potential when developing and implementing policy.
- There is a need to maintain, and in some cases improve, participation and engagement with the implementation infrastructure.
- More of a focus should now be placed on the impact that Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is having on children and young people’s lives, rather than on the processes behind this impact. The indicator set will be helpful in this regard, as it will reflect key trends in children and young people’s outcomes over time and across the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures domains, and this in turn will help inform Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures commitments, priorities and actions.
- The constituent strategies of participation, youth and early years are crucially important for the successful implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. The publication of the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020 and the National Youth Strategy 2015–2020 is very welcome; however, the development of the Early Years Strategy and the implementation of the National Youth Strategy must be progressed as a matter of urgency.
- The use of data- and evidence-informed approaches is of fundamental importance, and any policies should have regard to the available evidence. Communicating data and evidence to all sectors should be progressed by all elements of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures implementation infrastructure.
- Government Departments and State agencies should make use of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures implementation infrastructure for inputs regarding children and young people, and CYPSCs for activity at a local level.
- Communication and engagement between the constituent elements of the implementation infrastructure must be meaningful and ongoing.

The full comments from the Chairs are contained in Part 3 of this report.

2.2 Indicators

Development of a set of outcome indicators is ongoing within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). It should be finalised in the near future. For more information, see Part 4 of this report.
2.3 Cross-sectoral priorities

In order to generate momentum on intractable issues, and to model cross-government working, the Sponsors Group for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (led by DCYA) identified a series of priority commitments to be progressed in 2015. These were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Identified cross-sectoral priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Department of Social Protection | Child poverty reduction via:  
- policy target;  
- coordinating priority actions for social targets;  
- applying social investment approach;  
- addressing EU Country Specific Recommendations. |
| Department of Health | Complete and implement the National Physical Activity Plan. |
| Department of Children and Youth Affairs | Prevention and early intervention. |
| Department of Children and Youth Affairs (with Department of Education and Skills and Department of Health) | Inclusion of children with additional needs in Early Years education. |
| Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government | Cross-Government and interagency collaboration. |

Some of these were completed in 2015 and early 2016. However, given the multifaceted and complex nature of the Department of Social Protection and DCYA’s commitments, these have been carried over into 2016. New cross-sectoral priorities were identified by the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Identified cross-sectoral priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Social Protection</td>
<td>Reducing child poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td>Obesity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Children and Youth Affairs</td>
<td>Enhancing prevention and early intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education and Skills</td>
<td>Review of DEIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government</td>
<td>Homelessness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further detail on the 2015 and 2016 cross-sectoral priorities, as well as the logic models outlining the plans for achieving these priorities, is provided in the Sponsor Departments’ reports (Part 5 of this report).

2.4 National outcomes

The five national outcomes for children and young people, and the Departments responsible for leading them, are set out in the table below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of responsibility</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 1</strong></td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 2</strong></td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 3</strong></td>
<td>Department of Children and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and protected from harm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 4</strong></td>
<td>Department of Social Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic security and opportunity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 5</strong></td>
<td>Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected, respected and contributing to their world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational goals</strong></td>
<td>Department of Children and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Updates on progress on the commitments under each national outcome and the transformational goals are provided in Part 5 of this report.
2.5 Progress on commitments

Government Departments and State agencies were asked to account for their progress on commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The results are shown in ‘traffic light’ format below, where:

- Green = progressing well
- Amber = progressing, with some minor issues
- Red = significant issues relating to progress

![Traffic light format for national outcomes](image-url)

**NATIONAL OUTCOME 1**
Active and healthy, with physical and mental well-being

- Green: 12
- Amber: 3
- Red: 0

**NATIONAL OUTCOME 2**
Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development

- Green: 11
- Amber: 12
- Red: 0

**NATIONAL OUTCOME 3**
Safe and protected from harm

- Green: 17
- Amber: 7
- Red: 0

**NATIONAL OUTCOME 4**
Economic security and opportunity

- Green: 12
- Amber: 1
- Red: 1

**NATIONAL OUTCOME 5**
Connected, respected and contributing to their world

- Green: 7
- Amber: 5
- Red: 1
On the whole, the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is progressing well across Government; however, there are some areas that require a specific focus to ensure their advancement. These are dealt with in more detail in Part 5 of this report.

2.6 Advisory Council work plan and priorities

To ensure a strategic and structured approach to their work, the Advisory Council has developed a work plan for 2016, closely aligned with the cross-sectoral priorities of sponsor Government Departments. This sets out the following priorities:

1. **Human rights and equality**: being progressed with DCYA officials and others.
2. **Universality (education):** this is divided into 1) early years; 2) youth; and 3) review of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), and is being progressed with DCYA and Department of Education and Skills (DES) officials, and others as appropriate.

3. **Child homelessness:** being progressed with officials from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) and others.

4. **Early years care and education:** being progressed with DCYA officials and others.

5. **Prevention and early intervention:** being progressed by way of an Advisory Council subgroup, co-convened with DCYA officials.

6. **Mental health and well-being:** being progressed through Department of Health (DoH) structures, including links with the Healthy Ireland Council.

7. **Child poverty:** being progressed by way of an Advisory Council subgroup, co-convened with Department of Social Protection (DSP) officials.

8. **Community and voluntary sector participation on CYPSCs:** being progressed through the CYPSC National Steering Group, the Advisory Council, and DCYA.

The full work plan is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

### 2.7 Participation structures

Considerable progress has been made in 2015/2016 in terms of including the voices of children and young people in the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. This includes the involvement of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and the EU Structured Dialogue Group, as well as seldom-heard children and young people. More information is provided in Part 8 of this report.

### 2.8 Constituent strategies

*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* comprises three constituent strategies in the areas of participation, youth and early years. The *National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020* was published in June 2015, and the National Youth Strategy was launched in October 2015. Development of the Early Years Strategy is ongoing within DCYA.
Part 3: Comment from the Chairs of key implementation infrastructure

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

I am pleased to report good progress in implementing Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures in the past year.

Whole-of-government working is a key part of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. It is always a challenge to ensure that whole-of-government working is streamlined, efficient and effective at both the national and local levels. The Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium is the primary focus for inputs in respect of children and young people, and should be utilised as much as possible rather than establishing parallel structures. An open and responsive Consortium structure provides an effective and efficient forum for doing business as it relates to children and young people.

The Consortium seeks to create a culture which ensures that children and young people have a prominent status in the thinking of all Government Departments and agencies, particularly where there may not previously have been an immediate focus on this group. An important part of this is Government Departments and agencies taking a shared ownership of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. Consortium members are always encouraged to situate Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures in policy documents, statements of strategy and other relevant material. Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures should be seen as the key foundational document for one-third of Ireland’s population.

At a local level, CYPSCs are the focus of interagency and cross-sectoral work. They are intended to be the primary vehicle for planning, coordinating and integrating local service delivery for children, young people and families. I would encourage all Government Departments and agencies to utilise these structures to the fullest extent possible, and to ensure that any new local area initiatives have regard to them.

I am pleased with the progress that has been made on the cross-sectoral priorities. The launch of the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland and the development of the Interdepartmental Group’s report on Supporting Access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme for Children with a Disability are particular examples of a whole-of-government approach.

The work of the Advisory Council has been crucial to the successes achieved in 2015. In particular, considerable progress has been made on the areas of prevention and early intervention. The Advisory Council placed a particular emphasis on child poverty and on prevention and early intervention, an issue of huge concern as the economy strengthens. Both issues were examined by officials in DCYA and the Department of Social Protection in a very successful peer review on this theme in February. I look forward to continued engagement with the community and voluntary sector in 2016, in line with the Advisory Council’s work plan. I also encourage all Government
Departments and agencies to utilise the expertise of the Council when developing policies that affect children and young people.

Finally, I look forward to continuing to drive the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures across government, and to progressing the achievement of the five national outcomes for children and young people.

3.2 Dr Owen Keenan, Chair of the Advisory Council

The Advisory Council has continued to actively support the implementation of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Policy Framework over the past year. On the Council’s behalf, I would like to make the following comments:

– The practice of reviewing progress in the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, including through the production of this annual report, is very welcome. However, as suggested in my comments for last year’s annual report, there is a risk that we might satisfy ourselves that specific commitments are being met, without tracking what is actually happening to the lives of children and young people in the real world. In this respect the Council continues to have serious concerns about the worsening extent of child poverty and child and family homelessness, and hopes that the Government will make the reversal of these current depressing trends its top priority over the coming year.

– While progress is being made, there is a need for further action to redirect resources towards prevention and early intervention and to ensure that children from low-income families have improved access to quality supports and services.

– There is a continuing need to recognise the complexity and potential of Better Outcomes, Brighter Future’s implementation as a whole-of-government – and, indeed, whole-of-society – enterprise. The Council’s participation in the Policy Consortium has facilitated the building of relationships with colleagues from Government Departments and public agencies, which has led to increased collaboration. The collective expertise and experience of Council members is an asset that has potential for further mining in the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and we hope that this will be recognised increasingly over the coming year.

– While the Council has welcomed the publication of the National Youth Strategy 2015–2020, it is disappointed at the lack of progress to date in its implementation. Equally, the Council is concerned at the continued delay in finalising and publishing the Early Years Strategy. We hope and expect to see determined action on both of these important strategies in the near future. As previously outlined, Council members are prepared to contribute their insights and expertise as required.

– In spite of progress over the past year, some Sponsor Departments need to redouble their efforts to achieve real progress on their respective areas of responsibility, and in engaging other stakeholders towards this end. The Advisory Council is eager to provide support, if called upon.

– The Council is committed to supporting the participation of children and young people in expressing their views and in all decisions affecting their lives. We welcomed the opportunity to have presentations at our February and April Advisory Council meetings from representatives of young people involved in writing their report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and from a group of young people involved in the EU Structured Dialogue process. Both of these
presentations and the subsequent lively discussions were reminders of the importance of creating opportunities to hear the views and priorities of young people.

– It is inevitable that the Council will focus on gaps and shortcomings but we also want to acknowledge significant progress in a number of important areas, including the collaborative work that has produced the national child well-being indicators; cross-departmental collaboration that has developed a model for the inclusion of children with additional needs in early years settings, which had been identified by the Policy Consortium and the Advisory Council as an urgent priority; and the burgeoning joint engagement of key officials and civil society representatives in addressing several critical and complex policy issues, which reflects the whole-of-society emphasis of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

The Advisory Council met on a total of five occasions since the previous annual report: in September and November 2015 and in February, April and June 2016. The September 2015 occasion was a two-day residential meeting that produced the Council’s work plan for the year. A further two-day residential meeting is scheduled for September 2016. The Chair and three members of the Council participated in Policy Consortium meetings in June, October and March. The Council has also agreed on its general working arrangements, prepared a briefing statement on its role, and clarified the parameters of its external communications.

The Council submitted its advice on specific measures for inclusion in Budget 2016 to the Taoiseach and relevant ministers in September 2015. Among other developments, members of the Council participated in numerous subgroup meetings, most of them jointly with colleagues from Government Departments and State agencies. The Council was also represented at the EU Peer Review on Prevention and Early Intervention in February.

The main elements of the Council’s work plan include:

1. Human rights and equality
2. Universality
3. Child homelessness
4. Early years care and education
5. Prevention and early intervention
6. Mental health and well-being
7. Child poverty
8. Involvement of the community and voluntary sector on CYPSCs

Council members have volunteered to participate with statutory colleagues in joint subgroups on each of these issues. While the pace and progress of the groups has varied, recent months have seen increased engagement and the identification of common short-term goals. We look forward to strengthening this engagement and achieving tangible progress on each issue over the coming year.

In conclusion, the Council wishes to express its appreciation of the engagement of colleagues from various Government Departments and agencies and hopes to strengthen and develop these further during the remainder of its term of office.

Finally, on behalf of the members of the Council I would like to express our appreciation of the support received for our work from the Secretary General and staff of the Department of Children
and Youth Affairs and, in particular, of the assistance of colleagues from the Policy Innovation Unit who directly support the Council in its work.

3.3 Elizabeth Canavan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Chair of the Sponsors Group

As Chair of the Sponsors Group I want to thank my colleagues across the Government for their engagement with the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures processes and structures during 2015. Our aim in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is to support and facilitate other Government Departments in achieving their objectives through the mechanisms available to us under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

Once again, 2015 has demonstrated the challenging nature of some of the more ambitious and intractable issues which we have committed to address under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. In particular, tackling child poverty and achieving the shift to prevention and early intervention remain priorities in 2016, as they demand a multiannual and multifaceted approach. Nevertheless, work is well under way on both, and the support and input of the Advisory Council, who share these priorities in their own work programme, has been significant to the progress being made.

One of the challenges for the Sponsors Group is to ensure that in coming together in this way, we add significant value to work which would otherwise be undertaken by an individual Government Department. In this regard, there is some unevenness. While important projects such as the development of the implementation of the National Physical Activity Plan (Department of Health) and the Access and Inclusion Measures in the Early Years (led by DCYA with the Department of Education and Skills) have been advanced within the framework, there is a need to ensure that in identifying key priorities under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, Departments do not cede or diffuse responsibility for core activities.

The Sponsors Group is providing an important locus for collaborative workings with the Advisory Council. The debate and dialogue is, we believe, leading to shared ownership and prioritisation of the top issues facing children and young people. Co-development of the solutions is also critical to ensuring that they are realistic and implementable. This is particularly critical given the important role that civil society plays in delivering services directly to children, young people and families on behalf of the State. In this regard, strengthening the integration of services through the Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and CYPSC structures and their respective planning processes has been a key focus in 2015.

As we move further into 2016 it is clear that the top priorities facing children and young people are child poverty and homelessness. We will continue to focus on these with the input and support of the Advisory Council and the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium. In addition, we will work to embed prevention and early intervention as a central approach in the decision-making, planning and delivery of services for children and families. It is recognised by the Government and the Consortium that, in the long term, this shift provides the best opportunity to “turn the curve” for children and families with the highest levels of need.
3.4 Martina Moloney, Interim Chair of the Children and Young People’s Services Committees National Steering Group

The year 2015 saw considerable progress on advancing the work of the National Steering Group and the CYPSCs at local level. An important milestone for the Steering Group was the launch, in June 2015, by the then-Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, of the Blueprint for the development of Children and Young People’s Services Committees. The blueprint aligns the mandate for CYPSCs expressed via Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures to enhance interagency cooperation and to realise the five national outcomes. The blueprint also drives CYPSCs to ensure that their work comprehends the broader age range and remit of the policy domains which interact with and impact on the lives of children and young people aged 0–24 years.

Along with the reconfiguration of the CYPSC National Steering Group in early 2015, my predecessor, Dr Sheelah Ryan, and I, as Interim Chair, have worked with Steering Group members, DCYA and the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures infrastructure to ensure that CYPSCs have a clear, structured and achievable work programme. The Steering Group held a very useful workshop in December 2015 to help chart a meaningful work programme for the years ahead.

Through this work programme, we will ensure that CYPSCs are in the best possible place to support the drive to achieve the five national outcomes. We will do this through collaborative planning and coordination of services for children and young people in every county in Ireland towards our ultimate shared goal, which is to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Ireland through aligning the range of policy and operational domains which impact on the lives of children and young people. Our work programme has identified key areas of work, which we have progressed over the timespan covered by this report, as well as work to be carried out in future years. We are working to ensure that we:

1. Embed CYPSCs into national and local planning cycles and programmes
2. Strengthen CYPSC membership, engagement and participation
3. Develop CYPSC implementation and impact
4. Have clear reporting structures in place
5. Have improved communications between relevant groups
6. Oversee the preparation, quality assurance and implementation of the CYPSCs’ plans

All of these key areas require our engagement across Government Departments, agencies and sectors. The Steering Group has sought to engage with all levels of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures implementation infrastructure and we are working to ensure that when programmes at any level or in any sector that require a local interagency base are in development, CYPSCs are a first consideration as a vehicle to this key interagency pillar. Two-way communications with the Consortium is vital, in order to ensure that any barriers identified or opportunities arising are conveyed to the Government Departments in an effort to have them addressed. Items identified for consideration included appropriate-level representation on CYPSCs, potential resource sharing and an increased focus on the economic objective.

Interagency collaboration can be challenging and is vital to the success of all Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures strands, and we have our challenges in building a strong CYPSC structure throughout Ireland and drawing in all key stakeholders. One of the most welcome developments
that will contribute to the success of the CYPSCs relates to the employment of coordinators whose role is fundamental to the operation of the CYPSCs. The Steering Group welcomes the action taken by the DCYA and Tusla in providing increased investment in the local coordinator resources. In January 2016, they undertook a national recruitment campaign to fill current and future vacancies. It is imperative that these positions are in place, supported and resourced in order to maximise the return on this investment.

This influx, alongside the wealth of experience already in place across CYPSCs, provides an immediate opportunity to build on our experience to date and embed best practices across CYPSCs.

At the time of writing, 23 CYPSCs are in place, with three remaining to be established by the end of 2016; nine plans have been submitted and approved. With the impending appointments to vacant posts and the enhancement of resources, it is expected that the planning process will progress with greater alacrity across individual CYPSCs.

Part of the role of the Steering Group is to support the work of the CYPSCs. With this in mind, the Steering Group met three times during the period covered by this report. In addition, the Steering Group hosted a conference on 18 June 2015 with the overarching theme ‘Achieving Together for Children and Young People’; the conference considered the impact of national policy and the local implementation of plans under the five national outcomes. The conference was very well attended, with representation from CYPSCs, various agencies and the community and voluntary sectors, and showcased many examples of best practices that have been progressed. It received very positive feedback from those who attended.

As we move forward, the onus is on this Steering Group to ensure that CYPSCs are structurally sound and have the requisite skills and supports to underpin our aims and objectives around interagency working. But, more importantly, we must ensure that we do not lose focus on our mission, which is to ensure that all these structures and processes serve to improve children’s lives across the five national outcomes and transformational goals as described in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. Towards this end, it is important that we:

- Maintain our evidence-informed focus
- Make appropriate use of local knowledge and resources
- Ensure our plans are clear, focused, timely and shared

Furthermore, the system as a whole must ensure that accessible, usable, and timely data and research are made available to CYPSCs. This is the foundation on which plans are built.

It is also my hope that the cross-sectoral elements of CYPSCs are strengthened through the building of membership and engagement across local CYPSCs, including from the State and the community and voluntary sector, to an increased engagement between the CYPSC National Steering Group and the Advisory Council. The issue of representation of young people will need further consideration, together with a greater focus on the objective of economic security and opportunity.

Looking across the work of the Policy Consortium, the Advisory Council and all pillars of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures implementation infrastructure, it is clear to me that there is huge potential to draw on the CYPSC structures to support the delivery of a range of activities, strategies and policies across Government Departments. The National Steering Group will continue to include
in its membership key senior decision-makers who can use their influence to ensure that CYPSCs remain the key vehicle for interagency working at a local level for children and young people.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to offer a particular note of thanks to Dr Sheelah Ryan, former Chair of the CYPSC National Steering Group, whose contribution to the development of Children’s Services Committees, as they were originally called – now Children and Young People’s Services Committees – is inestimable. CYPSCs would not be what they are today without the work, dedication and particularly the drive of Dr Ryan over the years. The National Steering Group wishes Dr Ryan well in her retirement. I would also like to thank all those involved in CYPSCs throughout Ireland, the Chairs and Coordinators who give of their time and expertise to advance improvements in the lives of children. I wish to thank the National Steering Group members for their support, advice and valuable input to the work of the group, and I would also like to thank the National Coordinator and DCYA staff, without whose assistance we could not advance our work programme.
Part 4: National outcomes

4.1 Development of an indicator set

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures commits to the development of a set of indicators that will track progress for children and young people aged 0–24 years across the five national outcomes outlined in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. The five national outcomes for children (under 18 years) and young people (under 25 years) are:

NATIONAL OUTCOMES

Active & healthy, physical & mental wellbeing
Achieving full potential in all areas of learning & development
Safe & protected from harm
Economic security & opportunity
Connected, respected & contributing to their world

AIMS:

Children and young people are or have ...

1.1 Physically healthy and make positive health choices
1.2 Good mental health
1.3 Positive and respectful approach to relationships and sexual health
1.4 Enjoying play, recreation, sport, arts, culture and nature

2.1 Learning and developing from birth
2.2 Social and emotional wellbeing
2.3 Engaged in learning

3.1 Secure, stable, caring home environment
3.2 Safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation
3.3 Protected from bullying and discrimination
3.4 Safe from crime and anti-social behaviour

4.1 Protected from poverty and social exclusion
4.2 Living in child/youth-friendly, sustainable communities
4.3 Opportunities for ongoing education and training
4.4 Pathways to economic participation and independent living

5.1 Sense of own identity, free from discrimination
5.2 Part of positive networks of friends, family and community
5.3 Civically engaged, socially and environmentally conscious
5.4 Aware of rights, responsible and respectful of the law

Children and Young People have a voice and influence in all decisions affecting them
Background
The Research and Evaluation Unit is developing a national indicator set to track progress against the five national outcomes in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. This work will be overseen by a project team comprising experts and key informants.

Purpose
The purpose of the indicator set is to act as a barometer of progress on the five national outcomes in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and to inform future policy development. Outcome indicators will not explain how or whether a particular action or commitment on the policy framework gave rise to or caused a particular outcome, but they are important because they will:

- Help track progress towards outcomes
- Assist in identifying trends
- Contribute to priority setting or resetting
- Inform policy formulation and service provision
- Provide for international comparisons, where possible

The aim of the indicator development process is to agree on a final indicator set of approximately 60 indicators that are most relevant and important to the five national outcomes in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. A comprehensive final report from the project will systematically detail the various steps in the process.

Approach
The development of the indicators builds on previous work by DCYA in *The Development of a National Set of Child Well-Being Indicators*, published in 2005. These indicators, reported in the biennial *State of the Nation’s Children* reports, are focused on the well-being of children aged 0–17 years. There are, however, differences in purpose and scope between the two indicator sets – in the sense that *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* indicators are closely aligned to a policy framework and will cover a broader age range, up to 24 years. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that there will be some overlap and complementarity between them.

Work completed
The project has involved two main phases: data preparation and indicator selection. Work completed to date across these phases includes:

Data preparation phase

- **Indicator compilation**: this involved a literature review to provide a conceptual framework and the compilation of an inventory of 1,300 individual indicators based on a review of international indicator sets.

- **Indicator categorisation**: this involved the categorisation of potential indicators by type/area, and by *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* outcomes and aims.

- **Data sourcing**: this involved the identification and sourcing of Irish data and mapping these data across the indicators on the inventory.
• **Review of children and young people’s consultations:** this involved a review of a range of consultations carried out by DCYA to identify issues which children and young people regard as important in order to ensure that this informs the final selection of indicators.

• **Establishment of an Expert Advisory Panel:** an Expert Advisory Panel was established to provide advice and guidance on the indicator development process. During the data preparation phase, the Expert Advisory Panel reviewed the indicator inventory and categorisation and assisted with data sourcing. The panel includes 11 experts from across a variety of fields relevant to the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures outcomes; two of these experts also sit on the Advisory Council to the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures policy framework.

  - Professor Mark Morgan (St Patrick’s College)
  - Dr Áine McNamara (Health Service Executive)
  - Professor Michael Rigby (Dublin City University)
  - Dr Helen McAvoy (Institute of Public Health)
  - Professor Trevor Spratt, Trinity College Dublin
  - Professor James Williams (Economic and Social Research Institute and Principal Investigator of the Growing Up in Ireland Study)
  - Ms Claire Hickey (Centre for Effective Services)
  - Mr Jim Walsh (Department of Social Protection)
  - Dr Nicola Carr (Queen’s University Belfast)
  - Mr Cormac Halpin (Central Statistics Office)
  - Professor Dympna Devine (University College Dublin)

*Indicator selection phase*

• **Selection criteria:** this involved the development and agreement of selection criteria and a screening tool to help prioritise indicators on the inventory in consultation with the Expert Advisory Panel established to support the indicator development process. The selection criteria fall under two headings, one linked to whether they are policy centred and useful, and the other linked to issues of technical rigour and feasibility.

• **Feasibility exercise:** this involved the application of the agreed criteria and screening tool in a feasibility exercise to inform the prioritisation of indicators for inclusion using a Delphi process.

• **Prioritisation of indicators:** this involved a review of the outcome of the feasibility exercise by the Expert Advisory Panel to identify outstanding gaps and agree on priority indicator areas for inclusion using a Delphi process, as well as consultation with those involved in other indicator-development processes, to ensure complementarity where possible (e.g. the Healthy Ireland and the Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative).

• **Development and implementation of a Delphi process to inform the indicator selection:** it had been decided in the early stages of the process that the Delphi technique would be used to
inform agreement on the indicator set. The Delphi technique had been used effectively in developing the National Set of Child Well-Being Indicators, which were published in 2005. It was also used more recently by the Department of Health in the development of an indicator set for the Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative. Essentially, Delphi is a method of structuring group communications to reach a consensus using surveys, analysis and feedback. The advantages of using this methodology over others are outlined in *The Delphi Technique: A Methodology to Support the Development of a National Set of Child Wellbeing Indicators*.

Preparation for the Delphi process involved developing and piloting the survey instrument in consultation with the expert group. Just over 100 people, including those involved in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* governance structures and others working on children and young people’s issues across the five national outcome domains and across relevant sectors – statutory, voluntary and community, academic and research – were invited to take part. Fifty-five people participated in round one, and 45 in round two.

These two rounds of the Delphi process were carried out between February and May 2016. The first survey included approximately 135 indicator areas and asked respondents to rank and rate them and to provide qualitative feedback. The analysis and findings from round one were reported to participants in round two. In round two, participants were asked to rate and rank approximately 95 indicator areas that had been prioritised on the basis of the analysis of round one. They were also asked to review the indicator areas that had been de-prioritised following round one, as well as new indicator areas that were suggested through feedback from round one. During both rounds, there was a high level of consensus among participants regarding the importance of the indicator areas and a good degree of consistency over time. Round three will report the outcome to participants and seek their views on the process.

**Agreement on priority indicator areas**
A set of approximately 60 indicator areas have been prioritised by the Delphi process. The expert panel met in May for an initial review of the outcome of the Delphi process and to help begin the process of selecting indicator measures for these indicator areas.

The final step in agreeing on the priority indicator areas is currently under way and involves reviewing the indicator areas prioritised to date in the context of the findings of the review of children and young people’s consultations in order to ensure that their views are adequately reflected in the outcome.

**Selecting indicator measures**
The final step in the indicator development process is to agree on indicator measures for each of the prioritised areas. Work on this aspect of the process is currently under way and will be concluded by the end of June 2016.

This is being done in a final consultation with the expert panel and through bilaterals with key Government Departments and agencies, and with the Ombudsman for Children’s Office. These discussions will focus on revisiting the measures and data sources for each indicator area identified in the data preparation stage to reach agreement on what measures best capture the indicator areas.
agreed. Where limited data are available in prioritised areas, placeholder indicators may be included in the final set as a way of flagging the need to develop further data on some important issues identified through the process.

**Reporting on indicators**
A short report on the final outcome of the indicator development process will be circulated to the Delphi panel for information, and the final agreed indicator set will then be presented to all groups within the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* implementation infrastructure and will be made available on dcya.gov.ie.

An initial data report will be prepared, outlining the final set of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* indicators and the related set of aggregated data.

This will be followed by a more detailed data report, which will include disaggregated data, and a methodological report, which will outline the full process undertaken in the development of the set.

**Future annual reports**
Once finalised, the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* indicator set will feed into reporting on *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, providing insights into key trends across children and young people’s outcomes that can inform priorities and actions over time.

### 4.2 National outcomes
Each of the national outcomes has a Sponsor Department, with responsibility for that commitment. These are:

- Active and healthy, with physical and mental well-being: Department of Health
- Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development: Department of Education and Skills
- Safe and protected from harm: Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Economic security and opportunity: Department of Social Protection
- Connected, respected and contributing to their world: Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Part 5: Reporting on commitments

5.1 The reporting process
In the development of this report, Government Departments and agencies were asked to account for their progress against commitments contained in the implementation plan, having regard to:

- The overall commitment
- The specific actions for 2015
- The desired outcome for 2017

Departments and agencies were asked to complete a short form based on a ‘traffic light’ reporting mechanism, which used the following descriptor:

- Green – progressing well/no issues
- Orange – progressing with some minor issues
- Red – significant issues relating to progress

Government Departments were also asked to provide a statement on their activities for children and young people in the previous year. Mindful of how much progress has been made since the launch of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures in April 2014, and seeking to ensure that Government Departments and agencies were not constrained by this, the inclusion of material relating to activities that benefit children and young people beyond the commitments in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures was also encouraged.

This section outlines the work each Sponsor Department undertook in 2015 for children and young people, with a focus on the national outcomes and the cross-sectoral priorities. It should be noted that while each Sponsor Department has overall responsibility for its own outcome area, individual commitments under that outcome may still be the responsibility of other Departments/agencies. The status of commitments under each national outcome is presented under the commentary from the relevant Department.

This section is followed by the status of commitments under the six transformational goals, and an overall picture of commitments achieved or in progress. Finally, additional context is provided on whole-of-government working with commentary from other Government Departments and agencies.

5.2 Department of Health
The Department of Health is leading the implementation of National Outcome 1: Active and healthy, physical and mental well-being. The Health and Wellbeing Programme represents the Department of Health on the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Policy Consortium and works to ensure alignment between Department of Health policies and Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. During 2015, significant progress was made by the Department of Health across key areas, with enhanced working relationships and increased energy in the area making an important contribution to the work.
Under the Healthy Ireland banner, a number of important policy and legislative achievements were made during 2015. Ireland’s first National Sexual Health Strategy was published; this adopts a nationally coordinated approach to improving the sexual health and well-being of the population. One of the key measures in the Strategy aims to ensure that everyone who works with young people, including parents, teachers and youth workers, has access to proper training and back-up resources. The Strategy will run from 2015 to 2020, and an Action Plan for 2015 and 2016 has been drafted in order to ensure that work starts immediately (Commitment 1.11).

The publication of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 was a significant milestone. The Bill is the centrepiece of a package of measures aimed at reducing alcohol intake and addressing alcohol misuse in Ireland through initiatives such as minimum unit pricing; health and calorie labelling; reducing availability and visibility in shops; and restrictions on marketing, advertising and sponsorship. On tobacco control, regulations to implement the Protection of Children’s Health (Tobacco Smoke in Mechanically Propelled Vehicles) Act 2014 were published, and the legislation came into force on 1 January 2016. The Public Health (Standardised Packaging of Tobacco) Act 2015 was signed into law and regulations on the Act were published. In addition, the Department of Health continued to implement Tobacco Free Ireland, the key themes of which are de-normalising tobacco use and protecting children. Finally, from a legislative perspective, the Public Health (Sunbeds) (Health Information) Regulations 2015 and the Public Health (Sunbeds) (Notification) Regulations 2015 placed tighter controls on the use of sunbeds, in particular in order to protect children (Commitment 1.7).

The Healthy Ireland Council committed to making child health and well-being a primary focus of its work, and established a sub-group on children to explore, with DCYA and its Advisory Council, opportunities for collaboration on children’s and young people’s health and well-being through the Healthy Ireland Framework and Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. This emphasis on collaboration was also evident in the research field, where the Department of Health continued to work with DCYA and others on aligning the indicator sets of the outcomes framework with the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures indicators.

In primary care, a significant step forward was taken when universal GP care for all children under six years of age was commenced on 5 August 2015. Approximately 360,000 children under the age of six years can now access GP services without fees being charged. A new GP contract for services for children under six years, which also included preventive checks at age two years and five years, as well as an asthma cycle of care, was also finalised in 2015. Approximately 93% of GPs providing public general medical services have signed up to the new under-sixes service contract (Commitment G9).

The Department of Health continued to implement the principles and recommendations contained in A Vision for Change nationally. Jigsaw programmes for young people are currently delivered in 10 locations (Donegal, Galway, Roscommon, Offaly, Kerry, Meath, North Fingal, Dublin 15, Tallaght and Clondalkin), and in 2015 it was proposed that three additional Jigsaw hubs are to be developed in Dublin, Cork and Limerick during 2016. In addition, Connecting for Life: Ireland’s National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015–2020 was published in 2015. A Steering Group to oversee and monitor the implementation of the strategy was formed at the end of 2015. The implementation of the strategy
has been identified as a pilot project under the Civil Service Renewal Plan for better whole-of-government working, with a particular focus on youth mental health (Commitments G49 and 1.8).

During 2015, the HSE worked towards eliminating placement of 16- and 17-year-olds in adult facilities. New protocols for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) introduced in 2015 improved assessment and referral pathways, one result of which was reduced waiting times for those waiting over 12 months despite an overall increase in demand for CAMHS generally. The protocols helped clarify referrals to more appropriate services, such as primary care counselling or disability service provision, rather than inappropriate admission to a CAMHS specialist. The provision of additional CAMHS beds in the system, with more planned to open, helped improve access overall. The staffing of CAMHS teams is being improved as additional resources become available (Commitment 1.9).

On providing services for children with disabilities, further investment of €4 million (equating to €6 million in a full year) was provided in 2015 to support the implementation of the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People Programme, and full implementation of the programme is expected before the end of 2016. In relation to the integration of children with disabilities in mainstream pre-schools, there is now a major project under way, led by DCYA, that arose from the Inter-Departmental Group’s report Supporting Access to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme for Children with a Disability. Considerable progress has also been made regarding mainstream pre-schools; DCYA is now leading the implementation of a new model to support children with a disability in accessing the ECCE programme (Commitments G31 and 2.19).

On the area of patient safety and clinical effectiveness, specific focus and progress has been made in relation to children. In particular, the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee’s new National Clinical Guidelines have been put in place on clinical handover, early warning systems and sepsis management. These are critical paediatric care pathway initiatives for safe, quality care. In addition, patient safety work on clinical audit, open disclosure, serious reportable events and incident management now applies equally to children and adults. These initiatives are strongly supported by the HSE National Clinical Programme for Paediatrics and Neonatology Clinical Leads; they are also supported by acute hospitals, the Mental Health Commission and the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). They provide the essential patient safety and quality frameworks for care of children from ages 0–16 years in hospital services. These are unique national initiatives which have been viewed very positively and indeed are being replicated internationally (Commitments G27 and G28).

Substantial work on developing a new National Maternity Strategy was undertaken during 2015 and was launched in early 2016. The Strategy takes a health and well-being approach to ensure that babies get the best start in life and that mothers and families are supported and empowered to improve their own health and well-being. A final milestone achieved in 2015 was the submission of the planning application for the new National Children’s Hospital to An Bord Pleanála (Commitment 1.5).

Comment on 2015 cross-sectoral priority: National Physical Activity Plan
The Department of Health’s cross-sectoral priority for 2015 was developed around the implementation of the National Physical Activity Plan, which was expected to be published during 2015.

Get Ireland Active! The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland was developed in 2015; it was approved by the Government and was launched in early 2016. Children and young people are a key focus for the Plan, which recommends the development of new national guidelines for promotion of early childhood physical activity, as well as the promotion of healthy lifestyles and physical activity in primary and post-primary schools. In addition, it should be noted that activity with stakeholders in developing the Plan during 2014 and 2015, and engagement around the issues, has built a strong sense of collaboration and commitment to the agenda that augurs well for implementation. The 2015 logic model is still relevant for implementation in 2016.

The Department of Health supported the Department of Education and Skills with the development of circulars on the promotion of healthy lifestyles (healthy eating and physical activity) for post-primary and primary schools, which were issued in September 2015 and February 2016, respectively (Commitment 1.12).

Significant progress was made on creating a national Obesity Policy and Action Plan, during which the Department of Health, in conjunction with DCYA, conducted a comprehensive consultation process with adolescents and children on the issue of obesity, looking at determinants and how to address prevention. This marked an important step in including the voices of children and young people in the development of policy. In addition, the Department of Health is working on a Code of Practice for the food industry on advertising of food, sponsorship and product placement, and will work with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the County Councils Managers Forum to review current planning guidance with a view to tackling obesogenic environments (Commitment 1.1).

Comment on 2016 cross-sectoral priority: Child obesity

The Department of Health’s cross-sectoral priority for 2016 is Child obesity. A new Obesity Policy and Action Plan is currently at an advanced stage of development and is expected to be published in early 2016. The development of the policy included consultation with children and young people, facilitated by DCYA. There are strong links and synergies with the area of physical activity, and therefore an integrated logic model focusing on child obesity and incorporating key elements of the 2015 logic model for physical activity has been developed.

Logic model for new 2016 cross-sectoral priority
## Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures

**Description of cross-sectoral priority**

**Priority:**

Tackling obesity among children and young people through the implementation of a National Obesity Policy and Action Plan (OPAP)

**This 2016 priority will:**

- Align essential Healthy Ireland and Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures objectives on promoting prevention and early intervention
- Support children, young people and parents to make healthier choices – the policy will place particular emphasis on families and children
- Increase the number of people with a healthy weight in order to make healthy weight the norm

**Related commitments include:**

1.1. Tackle the issues of childhood obesity and obesogenic environments
1.2. Support children, young people and their parents to make healthier choices
1.6 Continue to support accessible and affordable youth and sports activities, which encourage young people’s overall personal and social development, including healthy behaviours
1.12 Complete and implement the National Physical Activity Plan; support the full implementation of the schools’ Physical Education Programme and encourage the Active School Flag initiative
1.15 Continue to develop play and recreation spaces for both children and young people

**Structures:**

- Healthy Ireland governance structures and processes, including Healthy Ireland Council and the Cross-Sectoral Group
- Department of Education and Skills and Department of Health partnership on Health and Well-being

**Programmes, initiatives and processes:**

- National Obesity Policy and Action Plan (specifics in the action plan to be finalised later this year)
- National Physical Activity Plan

**Policies:**

- Healthy Ireland
- National Physical Activity Plan
- National Breastfeeding Action Plan
- Obesity Policy and Action Plan (forthcoming)

**Information, research and evaluation:**

Health Behaviour in School-age Children survey
Lifeskills Survey 2015
WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative
Growing Up in Ireland (GUI)

**Key partners:**

- DES
- DTSS
- DECLG
- DCYA
- HSE
- Tusla
- GPs
- Schools
- Local government and youth sector (including CYPSCs)
- Community and voluntary groups

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

The Consortium will oversee implementation and agree priorities. The Sponsors Group will drive implementation, address challenges and propose priorities. The Children and Young People’s Services Committees National Steering Group will drive national to local implementation. The Advisory Council will guide and support implementation.

## 2016 activities/outputs will include

**Specific activities in 2016 will include:**

- Publication of Get Ireland Active! The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland
- Establishment of cross-sectoral implementation oversight structures for NPAP
- Extension of Active School Flag initiative and other priority actions in NPAP
- Primary schools circular on Healthy Lifestyles
- Publication of revised National Healthy Eating Guidelines
- Commencement of phased implementation of the HSE Action Plan for Breastfeeding 2016–2021
- Development of a service model for specialist care for children who are overweight or obese
- Development of improved community-based health promotion programmes on overweight and obesity for use at primary care level
- Recording of GP wellness checks for children under six years
- Development of a code of practice for food and beverages promotion, marketing and sponsorship, particularly to children and young people
- Focus on children and young people in communications on:
  - Physical activity
  - Obesity
  - Nutrition
- Development of Healthy Pre-Schools Policy (and Plan)
- Collaboration between Healthy Ireland and Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Councils on food poverty (tbc)

## Short/medium-term outcomes (2017)

**The total effort will lead to:**

- A sustained downward trend in the level of excess weight in children
- Increase by 1% per annum in the proportion of children undertaking at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day
- Decrease by 0.5% per annum in the proportion of children who do not take any weekly physical activity
- Improved understanding of benefits of regular physical activity
- Healthier, more active children as measured by Growing Up in Ireland and Health Behaviour in School-age Children surveys, etc.
- Children and young people actively involved in the development and implementation of programmes in all settings, including schools
- More effective sharing of best practice
- More schools supported in delivering physical activity and healthy eating policies and initiatives
- Families and communities empowered to be more active and to eat healthily

## Monitoring and evaluation

- Annual reporting on implementation and achievement of commitments
- Development of Outcome Indicator Set.
- Consortium structure to oversee implementation
5.3 Department of Education and Skills

The Department of Education and Skills has commenced the process of developing a new **Strategy for Education and Skills 2016–2018**.

This Strategy will be informed by the Government’s **Programme for a Partnership Government**, and aims to advance the transformation of the education system to support the principles of the Programme in developing a strong economy and, in turn, support a fair and compassionate society, most importantly, for the children, students and life-long learners who depend on State-funded services.

The Programme sets out the following eight areas of priority:

1. Prioritising early years
2. Tackling disadvantage
3. Diversity and choice for parents
4. Promoting excellence and innovation in schools
5. Promoting creativity and entrepreneurial capacity in students
6. Making better use of educational assets within communities
7. Special needs education
8. Meeting the skills needs of the future

Strategies currently developed by the Department of Education and Skills for children and young people include:

- Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011–2020
- Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019
- National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030
- Intercultural Education Strategy 2010–2015

The membership of the **National Council for Curriculum and Assessment’s (NCCA) Board for Early Childhood and Primary Education** has been extended with the addition of four new members representing the Early Childhood sector. The Board oversees the NCCA’s curriculum and assessment work for early childhood and primary education. The new members represent City/County Childcare Committees, Better Start, the National Voluntary Childcare Collaborative, and the Tusla Early Years (Pre School) Inspectorate. This stronger representation of the Early Childhood sector helps to strengthen connections between curriculum developments for pre-schools and primary schools.

The **Aistear Siolta Practice Guide** is available at [www.aistearsiolta.ie](http://www.aistearsiolta.ie) and includes Curriculum Foundations and six Curriculum Pillars on parents, the learning environment, play, interactions, planning and assessing using Aistear’s themes, and transitions.

A two-hour introductory session on the **Aistear Siolta Practice Guide** has been developed and circulated to Better Start, City/County Childcare Committees, and voluntary childcare organisations.
for use with practitioners. The development of additional support will begin in autumn 2016 with the appointment of an Aistear Coordinator to the NCCA. This new post is funded by DCYA.

The NCCA has commenced work on **supporting children’s transition from pre-school to primary school**. Reporting templates for transferring information on learning and development will be developed alongside practical supports, such as tip sheets for parents and podcasts on good practices. In time, this work can support greater continuity in children’s experiences as they move from pre-school to primary school, and help them progress in their learning and development.

Work on **revising the primary curriculum**, including the curriculum for junior and senior infants, has begun with the publication of a new language curriculum for junior infants to second class in December 2015 (www.curriculumonline.ie). The NCCA is currently working on a new maths curriculum and a new curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs and Ethics for junior infants to second class. Work is also under way on proposals for rethinking the structure of the infant part of the primary curriculum. The NCCA plans to begin consultation on these proposals later in 2016.

The NCCA provided a day’s training on the Practice Guide in June 2016 to the team leaders across Area Based Childhood Programme (ABC) projects.

There are two videos on the theme of well-being available in the Practice Guide at www.aistearsiolta.ie. These are: a video on supporting children from birth to three years, and a video on supporting children aged three to six years.

Materials that are available to support children’s well-being (physical, social and emotional), when implementing the recommendations set out in the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide include the following:

Videos in the **‘Interactions’ pillar** of the Practice Guide in the ‘Examples and Ideas for Practice’ section:

- Developing a consistent interactive style in your setting (birth–6 years)
- Playful routines and engaging interactions (birth–3 years)
- Using a key person system (birth–3 years)
- Important interaction strategies (3–6 years)

Tip sheets available in the **‘Interactions’ pillar** in the ‘Resources for Sharing’ section:

- Using a Key Person approach
- Supporting quality interactions during care-giving routines (Birth–3 years)

Information booklet in the **‘Play’ pillar** under ‘Resources for Sharing’:

- Nurturing young children’s physical well-being through Fundamental Movement Skills (3–6 years)
Comment on 2015 cross-sectoral priority: Inclusion of children with additional needs in early years education

The cross-sectoral priority identified by the Department of Education and Skills for 2015 was to progress the inclusion of children with additional needs in early years education.

DCYA led a major initiative on this priority, coordinating efforts from the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Skills. A work plan was agreed between the Secretaries General of DCYA, the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Skills. The Interdepartmental Group published its report *Supporting Access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme for Children with a Disability* in September 2015. This outlined a new model for inclusion, which was developed following extensive consultation across Government Departments and agencies and with parents of children with disabilities. The Interdepartmental Group also drew on national and international evidence and experience to develop the new model.

The model includes: the publication of updated *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education*; the development of a dedicated website; enhanced continuing professional development for early years practitioners; a new national service providing expert advice and support to early years practitioners on issues of inclusion and disability; grants for equipment, appliances and minor alterations; increased capitation for certain complex cases; and access to therapeutic intervention.

A cross-sectoral implementation group has been established to oversee implementation of the Access and Inclusion Model, and to monitor and review progress while the Model is in the process of being introduced and embedded across the system, to support the ongoing development of a pre-school sector that is truly inclusive.

Comment on 2016 cross-sectoral priority: Review of DEIS

A process to review DEIS, the Action Plan for Social Inclusion, is ongoing. The majority of the review work programme is scheduled for completion by the end of the 2015–2016 school year.

The overall scope of the review is to assess the existing DEIS programme, in the context of evaluations to date and any relevant policy and other developments, in order to inform future policy on educational disadvantage.

The review project involves a number of strands:

- **Stakeholder consultation** is a key component of the process and, at the outset, the education partners were invited for their views on both the current and future operation of the programme. Comprehensive submissions were received and are being considered as part of the review. Further stakeholder engagement with the Education Partners took place on 23 May 2016. Additional engagement with other stakeholders will take place over the coming weeks.

- An internal DEIS Advisory Group within the Department of Education and Skills is considering the make-up of the current DEIS School Support Programme in the context of the lessons learned from the implementation of the programme to date and the input of education stakeholders.

- An Interdepartmental Group is considering current and potential future supports to tackle educational disadvantage provided by other Government Departments and agencies (DCYA, Tusla, the Department of Health, and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government) in order to ensure greater cohesion and cross-sectoral cooperation for future service delivery.

- A Technical Advisory Group is examining available data sources in order to develop an improved identification process for the inclusion of schools in any future resource allocation framework to tackle educational disadvantage.

The Programme for a Partnership Government has committed to publish an updated DEIS Action Plan for Educational Inclusion within 12 months. Subject to Government approval, it is intended to start implementing actions arising from an updated plan in the 2017–2018 school year.

**Logic model for new 2016 cross-sectoral priority**
### Description of cross-sectoral priority

**Priority:**
Review of the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Programme

**This 2016 priority will:**
- Examine and provide proposals for future delivery of targeted supports to schools to address educational disadvantage under a renewed DEIS programme.
- Align DEIS objectives with Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures objectives on promoting prevention and early intervention.

**Related commitments include:**
- PFG Ministerial announcement to commence process to review DEIS including the establishment of an Interdepartmental Group to examine inputs to the current programme, external to the DES, and make proposals for future delivery of supports in schools.

### Inputs

**Structures:**
- DEIS Review Structures including Technical, Advisory and Interdepartmental Working Groups
- Department of Education and Skills, Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla Liaison Group on Educational Welfare
- Stakeholder consultation processes

**Programmes, initiatives and processes:**
- DEIS School Support Programme
- Tusla Educational Welfare Services, which includes Home School Community Liaison Scheme and School Completion Programme
- Area Based Child Programme interventions delivered in DEIS schools and related early years settings

**Policies:**
- DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Action Plan
- National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011–2020

**Information, research and evaluation:**
Educational Research Centre, DES Inspectorate, and Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) published reports.

**Key partners:**
Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Department of Social Protection
Department of Health

### 2016 activities/outputs will include

**Specific 2016 activities will include:**
- DEIS Review Technical Group will progress the development of a new identification process for the inclusion of schools in DEIS
- DES Advisory and Interdepartmental Groups will progress the review and assessment of current inputs to the DEIS Programme and development of proposals for a renewed programme, taking account of policy and programme developments across Government Departments and agencies
- Stakeholder consultation, including community and voluntary sectors’ input via the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Advisory Council and the voice of the child, will provide feedback on outline proposals for a renewed DEIS programme.
- Advisory Council Engagement in March/April 2016
- Education Partners Forum in April/May 2016
- Learners Engagement in May 2016
- Development of renewed DEIS programme proposals in the context of Budget 2017

### Short/medium-term outcomes (2017)

**The total effort will lead to:**
A renewed policy framework to address educational disadvantage, containing:
- a new identification process for the inclusion of schools in DEIS;
- a new DEIS School Support Programme to provide additional resources to schools to support pupils with identified educational needs;
- an implementation plan; and
- a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact of all interventions and inform future policy.

Formal departmental/interagency Service Level Agreements/Protocols to ensure greater cohesion and cross-sectoral cooperation for future delivery of initiatives.

**Monitoring and evaluation**
- Annual reporting on implementation and achievement of commitments
- Development of Outcome Indicator Set
- Consortium structure to oversee implementation
5.4 Department of Children and Youth Affairs

In addition to progressing *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, DCYA progressed a number of important initiatives for children and young people throughout 2015.

2015 was a hugely significant year for the development of *early years programmes and policies*. In January, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs convened the Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) on Future Investment in Early Years and School-Age Care and Education, which in July delivered a report that will help to guide policy for a number of years to come. The implementation of the recommendations of this group has already begun, and the delivery of additional resources in Budget 2016 represents a milestone for the Department and for the early years sector in particular. Plans are in train to expand the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme significantly to accommodate children with disabilities and to ensure that, from September 2016, children will be able to start in a free pre-school when they reach age three years, and to remain in a free pre-school until they transfer to primary school. In addition, the Community Childcare Subvention Programme was expanded to private providers for the first time, and the development of new qualification requirements for childcare workers was progressed significantly, with new rules for higher capitation and ECCE funding developed in order to ensure quality childcare for families.

The *National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020* was launched in June 2015. It is the first strategy on the participation of children and young people in decision-making in Europe. The goal of the strategy is to ensure that children and young people have a voice in their individual and collective everyday lives across the five national outcome areas of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Participation of children remains high on the DCYA agenda, and a particular highlight of the DCYA programme of events in 2015 was the participation of children in the selection process for the new Ombudsman for Children, appointed in February 2015.

The *National Youth Strategy 2015–2020*, another constituent strategy of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, was launched in October 2015. The Strategy identifies some 50 priority actions to be delivered by Government Departments, State agencies and others, including voluntary youth services. These actions are designed to address matters that are a high priority for young people themselves. They include issues such as access to online youth mental health services, a national Obesity Policy and Action Plan, opportunities for those young people furthest from the labour market, and youth entrepreneurship initiatives in schools and youth work settings.

Significant progress was made in relation to the development of legislative proposals to facilitate access to adoption information for adopted persons and birth parents. DCYA developed and the Government approved policy proposals and the drafting of an *Adoption (Information and Tracing)* Bill. The Bill will provide a statutory basis for the provision of information related to both past and future adoptions, including access to an adopted person’s original birth certificate. The Bill will operate on the basis of a presumption in favour of disclosing information insofar as is legally and constitutionally possible. It will provide clarity around the information that can be provided and the circumstances in which it can be provided.

The enactment of the *Children (Amendment) Act 2015* was a key piece of legislation underpinning significant initiatives and reforms that had taken place in children detention schools in recent years, which were developed with the overall goal of extending the childcare model of detention to all
children under 18 years. It also provided the necessary amendments to legislation to achieve the Programme for Government commitment to end the practice of detaining children in adult facilities.

The **Children First Act 2015** was signed into law on 19 November 2015. Its enactment met the commitment in the Programme for Government to put key elements of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* on a statutory footing. The Act represents an important extra protection in the child welfare and protection area, providing that child protection concerns are brought to the attention of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, without delay by mandated persons. In addition, the Act requires an organisation providing services to children to consider the potential for risk to children availing of its services and to demonstrate awareness and good practice in its Child Safeguarding Statement. The legislation will operate side by side with the existing non-statutory obligations provided for in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011*. The Guidance is currently being revised and updated to take account of the new legislative obligations, in order to provide a comprehensive, single reference resource for individuals and organisations. The legislation includes a provision to place the Children First Implementation Inter-Departmental Group on a statutory basis and to expand its membership to include all Government Departments.

The enactment of the **Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015** builds on significant developments made in the area of **aftercare**, which commenced with the *Leaving and Aftercare Services: National Policy and Procedure Document 2011*. The Act places a statutory duty on Tusla to prepare an aftercare plan for an eligible child or eligible young person who has been in the care of the agency, and it also provides for the circumstances in which a review of the plan may take place. The Act aims to facilitate consistent preparation in aftercare planning and identification of required services for young people leaving State care.

**Children and Young People’s Services Committees** have developed considerably throughout 2015. Of particular importance was the publication of the *Blueprint for the development of Children and Young People’s Services Committees*, and the provision of seed funding for local initiatives aligned with the five national outcomes towards the end of 2015.

**Comment on 2015–2016 cross-sectoral priority: prevention and early intervention**

**Prevention and early intervention** was identified as DCYA’s cross-sectoral priority for 2015. Apart from being a *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* commitment in its own right, prevention and early intervention is a key transformational goal necessary to achieve the five national outcomes. DCYA’s selection of prevention and early intervention as a priority reflects the considerable investment by government and philanthropic organisations in the area during the past 10 years, as well as the considerable policy, practice and organisational developments that have improved the focus on prevention and early intervention. In addition, there has been growing recognition of the importance of reliable, evidence-informed approaches.

This has led to the development of considerable expertise and experience in a range of areas working in prevention and early intervention for children and young people, such as parenting, child development and learning, and youth development.
Given the complex and multifaceted nature of prevention and early intervention, DCYA spent a considerable amount of time scoping the issues involved, and engaging with stakeholders. The Advisory Council also identified prevention and earlier intervention as a key priority, and established a subgroup to work with DCYA officials and scope ways in which this priority might be progressed.

In addition, DCYA, in collaboration with the Department of Social Protection and the European Commission, hosted an EU Peer Review, which examined how to mainstream learning in early intervention and prevention approaches to improve outcomes for children, particularly those at risk of poverty and social exclusion. This was attended by nine EU member states, independent experts, European non-governmental organisations (NGOs), officials from other Irish Government Departments and agencies, representatives of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Advisory Council and other relevant key stakeholders. For more information, please see the synthesis report on the peer review from Professor Hugh Frazer (National University of Ireland, Maynooth):

The learning from the peer review has informed the development of a Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) within DCYA. The purpose of the QCBI is to take a coordinated approach to enhance capacity, knowledge and quality in child and family services in a coherent way, based on a system-wide collaboration connecting sectors and stakeholders. For more information on the QCBI, please see dcy.gov.ie.

Given the scale and scope of the task, this priority has been carried over from 2015, and remains DCYA’s priority for 2016.

Logic model for cross-sectoral priority
Department of Children and Youth Affairs: 2016 cross-sectoral priority – Prevention and early intervention

**Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures** is the Government’s overarching National Policy Framework for children and young people (aged 0–24 years). This cross-government approach will run from 2014 to 2020 and will accommodate a number of constituent strategies. The Framework sets out common outcomes, policy commitments and key actions to ensure innovative and effective ways of working. The underpinning principles will ensure that policy and practice protect the rights of children and young people, are family oriented, promote equality, and are evidence informed and outcomes focused. The vision is to make Ireland the best small country in the world in which to grow up and raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard; and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.

**Description of cross-sectoral priority**

**Priority:** Enhancing effective prevention and early intervention to ensure better outcomes for children and young people

This 2016 priority will:

- Work towards rebalancing emphasis and resources from crisis intervention towards prevention and early intervention, while ensuring an effective crisis intervention response at all times

Related commitments include:

- **Interagency work and resource allocation** (G47, G48, G52, G66, G67 and G68, Implementation commitment 3)
- **Prevention and early intervention** (G1, G2, G7, G5, G6, G8 and G13)
- **Identification and assessment** (G12, G24 and G46)
- **Effective transitions** (G33)
- **Child protection and protocols** (G40, G55, 4.1, 4.2)
- **Planned, accessible, integrated and effective services** (G10, G22, G25, G26, G49, 1.6, 1.13–15, 3.20, 5.1 and 5.12)
- **Enhance antenatal and early childhood development** (G6)
- **Primary health and health promotion** (G9, 1.1, 1.7, 1.8, 1.11 and 1.12)
- **Reconfiguration and enhancement of disability and special needs services** (G31, 2.18 and 2.20)

* Overall implementation structures and supports

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

**Inputs**

**Structures:**

- Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures structures*
- ABC Interdepartmental Project Team
- ABC Areas
- Local CYPSCs
- Existing partner structures (e.g. Healthy Ireland Council, Social Inclusion Forum, etc.)

**Programmes, initiatives and processes:**

- Prevention and Early Intervention, ABC and DEIS Programmes
- National Early Years Quality Support Service
- Tusla’s Meitheal approach and the establishment of Child & Family Support Networks
- Philanthropic investment in prevention and early intervention initiatives

**Policies:**

- Existing commitments in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures
- Existing commitments in Healthy Ireland
- Early Years Strategy
- Youth Strategy and value for money on youth programme
- High-Level Policy Statement on Supporting Parents and Families

**Information, research and evaluation:**

- Development of county-level data sets
- Learning captured from evidence-informed approaches and best practices in prevention and early intervention

**Key partners:** DoH, DES, DfE, Tusla, HSE, Community and Voluntary Sector, Prevention and Early Intervention Network

**2016 activities/outputs will include**

**Structures:**

- Develop clear and effective connections and coordination between CYPSCs and LDCDs and constituent agencies (e.g. Tusla’s implementation of Meitheal), etc. to ensure a focus on prevention and early intervention for children and young people;
- Reconstituted CYPSC National Steering Group ensuring prevention and early intervention focus in the Blueprint for development of Children and Young People’s Services Committees and in all CYPSC plans;
- ABC Interdepartmental Project Team to give preliminary consideration of findings from the mainstreaming learning group;
- Interdepartmental Group on Future Investment in Early Years Care and Education.

**Programmes, initiatives and processes:**

- Implement quality frameworks and curricula in early years settings and sustained development of quality framework in youth sector;
- Establish mainstreaming group to examine the optimum transfer of learning in relation to evidence-informed prevention and early intervention approaches;
- DCYA to continue to collaborate with DPER, DoH and DECLG to develop guidance for commissioning better outcomes in the community and voluntary sector.

**Policies:**

- Progress prevention and early intervention commitments in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and Healthy Ireland and in the strategies of key partners, as below;

**Information, research and evaluation** to ensure prevention and early intervention-informed focus via:

- Update and refinement of county-level data;
- Develop Better Outcomes, Brighter Outcome Indicator Set
- Identify and disseminate available learning from ABC, PEI, PEN, NEYAI and DEIS;
- Publication of scoping exercise, re: estimate on cross-government expenditure on children.

**Key initiative: Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI):**

The above will inform the development and implementation of the QCBI in prevention and early intervention in four work packages:

- Enhancing the Information Base (Data)
- Enhancing the Evidence Base (Research and Learning)
- Enhancing the Capacity of the Workforce (Coaching and Development)
- Enhancing and Sustaining Quality (Delivery)

**Short/medium-term outcomes**

**Structures:**

- Better coordinated, coherent and connected policy and provision focusing on effective prevention and early intervention;
- Enhanced interagency working through national and local infrastructures focusing on key outcomes for children and young people.

**Programmes, initiatives and processes:**

- Greater alignment and connectivity in the implementation of prevention and early intervention policies;
- Enhanced capacity, knowledge and quality through the system;
- Greater alignment of the delivery system with known evidence-informed and outcomes-focused approaches;
- Improved coordination, collaboration and use of resources.

**Policies:**

- Mainstreaming learning from effective programmes and practices;
- Provision of effective, quality services that improve outcomes for children and young people in the five national outcome areas.

**Information, research and evaluation:**

- Enhanced evidence and knowledge base informing policy and provision in Ireland;
- Better-informed planning and targeting of resources;
- Funding aligned to the effective implementation of evidence-informed approaches.

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* * Overall implementation structures and supports

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

The forthcoming Social Inclusion Monitor will set out progress to date on key indicators in relation to poverty and social exclusion among children and young people. Eurostat data for 2014 – the most recent year for which data are available – show that social transfers reduced the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children from 44.6% to 17.1%, a poverty reduction effect of 61.7%. The impact of social transfers in Ireland on reducing child poverty is the second highest of all 28 EU member states.

In 2015, the combined value of Child Benefit and Qualified Child increases was €63 per child per week. This is in line with the commitment in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007–2016 to maintain the combined value of child income support measures at 33–35% of the minimum adult welfare rate (Commitment 4.1).

Budget 2016 increased expenditure on children by €93 million. This included an increase in Child Benefit of €5 per month, which, on its own, increases the average income of households with children by 0.24%, with a proportionally higher increase for lower-income households. A further €20 million was announced to introduce a Paternity Benefit scheme (Commitment G3, G4).

Altogether, the Department of Social Protection will spend €3 billion, the equivalent of 15% of the total Department of Social Protection annual budget, in providing income support for families with children through a range of universal and targeted benefits:

- **Child Benefit** increased by €5 per month at a cost of €72 million in Budget 2016. Expenditure on Child Benefit in 2015 was in the region of €1.9 billion and it was paid to approximately 610,000 families in respect of some 1.19 million children.

- Most weekly social welfare payments include an additional payment in respect of each qualified child up to age 18 years, known as an Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC), which is extended to encompass older school/college-going children to age 22 years under certain circumstances. It is estimated that the cost of IQCs in 2015 was in the region of €596 million, and that this supported approximately 430,000 children.

- In Budget 2016, Family Income Supplement income thresholds were increased by €5 for families with one child and €10 for families with two or more children. In 2015, the number of working families in receipt of Family Income Supplement increased by over 11% to approximately 56,000 families supporting over 120,000 children. Expenditure on Family Income Supplement was estimated to be in the region of €349.2 million in 2015 (Commitment 4.3).

- The Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) scheme continues to support people to take up employment. In 2015, there were 10,598 people in receipt of this payment, with an estimated out-turn of €14.4 million (Commitment 4.5).

- In 2015, more than 153,000 families with some 281,000 children benefitted from the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance scheme at a cost of €41.4 million.

- There is also provision for an increase of €3 million in the School Meals Programme in 2016, bringing total expenditure from €39 million to €42 million (Commitment 1.3).
The final phase of the **One-Parent Family Payment** reforms took place on 2 July 2015. Approximately 25,500 One-Parent Family Payment recipients transitioned to alternative income supports, including Jobseeker’s Allowance, Jobseeker’s Transitional Payment, and Family Income Supplement. Those moving to Jobseeker’s Allowance and Jobseeker’s Transitional Payment will receive enhanced activation supports (Commitment 4.4).

The **Pathways to Work** (PtW) strategy 2012–2015 was successful in contributing to a reduction of approximately 38% in the number of people unemployed over that period. An updated Pathways to Work 2016–2020, launched in January 2016, adopts a two-pronged approach:

- **Consolidation**: consolidating the recent reforms to the Public Employment and Welfare Services and optimising provision to maximise outcomes for its clients; and
- **Development**: gradually expanding access to activation services, as resources allow, to other non-employed people of working age.

Pathways to Work 2016–2020 commits to continuing to implement the actions set out in the **Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan** (Commitment 4.4).

The **Updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015–2017** was published in February 2016. It comprises 14 new goals, four of which reflect new and emerging issues for children (Commitment 4.1).

To support policy transparency, the Department of Social Protection has, since 2013, published an ex-post **Social Impact Assessment** of the welfare and tax budgetary measures. The Department published its **Social Impact Assessment** of Budget 2016 in November 2015. The assessment also takes account of the additional investment in childcare provision and the increase in the national minimum wage. The principal finding was that average household incomes increased by 1.6%. Households with children are the biggest beneficiaries of Budget 2016: earning parents with children have achieved average gains of 2% per year. Non-earning parents with children also fare above average, gaining around 1.8% per year. The Social Impact Assessment analyses the two main child-related measures in the Budget 2016: the extension of the free pre-school year scheme and the increase in Child Benefit. Households with children gain 0.5% in household income as a result of these measures (Commitment G.63).

**Comment on 2015/2016 cross-sectoral priority: Child poverty**

In conjunction with partner Departments, national and EU stakeholders, the Department of Social Protection continued to work towards the adoption of a whole-of-government, multidimensional approach to **tackling child poverty** as part of the **Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures** policy framework. In support of this process, an ad hoc group, comprising partner Departments and stakeholders from the **Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures** Advisory Council and the wider community and voluntary sector, was established and met twice during 2015. These meetings will continue in 2016.

**Tackling child poverty** remains a priority for the Department of Social Protection. However, despite Ireland’s exemplary record in terms of the poverty reduction effects of social transfers, which are consistently among the best in Europe, it is clear that only by adopting a whole-of-government...
approach can we hope to address the serious challenges posed in meeting the child poverty target (Commitment 4.2).

Given the scale and scope of the challenge, this priority has been carried over into 2016. The Department of Social Protection is presently developing an implementation plan for the child poverty target, in collaboration with the ad hoc group from the Advisory Council.

**Logic model for cross-sectoral priority**
Department of Social Protection: 2016 cross-sectoral priority – Child poverty

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is the Government’s overarching National Policy Framework for children and young people (aged 0–24 years). This cross-government approach will run from 2014 until 2020 and accommodate a number of constituent strategies. The Framework sets out common outcomes, policy commitments and key actions to ensure innovative and effective ways of working. The underpinning principles will ensure that policy and practice protect the rights of children and young people, are family-oriented, promote equality and are evidence informed and outcomes focused. The vision is to make Ireland the best small country in the world in which to grow up and raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard; and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.

**Description of cross-sectoral priority**

**Priority:**
- Implement a multidimensional, whole-of-government approach to tackling child poverty, building on the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPSI)

**This 2016 priority will:**
- Lift 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level. Rising levels of child poverty during the crisis means this figure is now 97,000.
- Ensure every child has access to sufficient resources, supports and services to nurture and care for the child (NAPSI)
- Build a fairer Ireland by reducing inequality and improving poverty outcomes, with particular emphasis on child poverty (MTES)
- Improve the effectiveness of overall expenditure on children in achieving better child poverty outcomes (Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures)
- Tackle low work intensity of households and address poverty risk of children (ES/CSR 4)

**Related commitments include:**
- Food poverty and school meals (1.2 and 1.3); educational disadvantage (2.16); child and family income supports (4.3 and 4.4); affordable childcare and after-school care (4.6 and 48), social inclusion of Traveller, Roma, migrant and asylum seeker children (2.22, 4.8 and 4.9), ABC Programme (667); health outcomes for vulnerable groups (1.4)

**Inputs**

- Ad Hoc Group on Child Poverty
- European Platform for Investing in Children
- European Semester
- Social Inclusion Forum
- Senior Officials Group on Social Policy and Public Sector Reform
- DEIS review
- Regular and ongoing stakeholder engagement including the Pre-Budget Forum
- Technical advisory group on poverty indicators and data
- Research on child poverty (SILC and GUI)
- Departmental activities (e.g. Project Leadership Team on Child Poverty)
- Cross-departmental childcare investment group
- Human and financial resources

**Key partners:**
- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, DoH, DES, DCYA, HSE, Tusla, Advisory Council, children’s organisations, European Commission

**2016 activities/outputs will**

**Specific 2016 activities will include:**
- Reporting on implementation in the National Reform Programme 2016;
- Monitoring child poverty target and indicators in the Social Inclusion Monitor
- Improving cross-departmental working on provision and delivery of services and income supports to families with children
- Implementing Budget 2016 proposals including increases to Child Benefit and Family Income Supplement thresholds, fuel allowance, and changes in the Jobseekers Transitional Payment means test
- Monitoring levels of engagement with Intreo among families with children
- Assessing social impact of Budget 2016 on children

**Monitoring and evaluation**

- Annual reporting on implementation and achievement of outcomes against agreed indicators
- Reports will go to the Consortium through the Sponsors Group

**Short/medium-term outcomes (2017)**

The total effort will lead to:

- Reduction in child poverty in line with child poverty target
- More lone parents engaged in employment, training and education
- Increased take-up of affordable childcare places
- Better social, educational and health outcomes for all children
- Greater integration of children from Traveller, Roma and migrant groups

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

The Consortium will oversee implementation and agree priorities. The Sponsors Group will drive implementation, address challenges and propose priorities. The Children and Young People’s Services Committees National Steering Group will drive national to local implementation. The Advisory Council will guide and support implementation. Comhairle na nOg National Executive and the EU Structured Dialogue Working Group will guide implementation and ensure youth participation and active input.
5.6 Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government

Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) (Commitment G51)

Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government set out reforms to:

- Improve the delivery of services for the citizen
- Deliver greater efficiency and effectiveness; and
- Give local government a more central role in local development and community development

This represented a significant change in government policy in relation to local government for the purposes of placing local government as the “main vehicle of governance and public service at local level – leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably”.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014, enacted on 27 January 2014, gave legislative effect to the commitments in Putting People First, including the establishment of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in each local authority administrative area.

LCDCs have now been established on a statutory basis in all 31 local authorities for the purpose of bringing a more coordinated and joined-up approach to local/community development at a local level. Membership includes local authority elected members and officials; State and non-State local development agencies; community and voluntary organisations; and other representatives of civil society, including business interests, farming interests, etc.

LCDCs draw on the expertise and experience of public and private actors within the relevant local authority area to provide effective and efficient services to citizens, particularly to those more in need of such services. LCDCs are now working with all relevant stakeholders, including Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSCs), and they will commence implementation of the community element of the Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs). A key function of the LCDCs is to prepare the community elements of a six-year LECP and to work with partners in the implementation of the plan. LECPs are developed as part of an integrated local, regional and national planning process. During 2016 and into 2017, a more coherent and unified approach to the delivery of community and local services by all relevant stakeholders, including CYPSCs, will be a key objective, in order to ensure that service needs are identified and addressed and that duplication is reduced.

The First Report of the Convention on the Constitution included a recommendation that the Constitution should be changed to provide for voting at age 16 years in Ireland. The Government accepted the recommendation and committed to holding a referendum on the proposal. No date has yet been set.
Comment on 2015 cross-sectoral priority: Development of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs)

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government’s (DECLG) cross-sectoral priority for 2015 was the development of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs). This reflects a number of commitments in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: G47, the national roll-out of CYPSCs in a coordinated fashion, connecting them with local government and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency; G51, the establishment of new LCDCs in each county/city, bringing a more strategic, unified approach to local and community development; G52, streamlining planning and decision-making structures at the local level, including Children’s Services Committees [since renamed Children and Young People’s Services Committees], to be consistent with the Government’s public sector reforms and, specifically, the alignment of local government and LCDCs.

As noted above, LCDCs have now been established on a statutory basis in all 31 local authorities. This is of particular importance given the link between LCDCs and CYPSCs. Mechanisms for engagement between LCDCs and CYPSCs have been developed between DCYA and DECLG, covering both the local and national level, and a guidance document relating to same is forthcoming.

The relationship is shown in the diagram below:

Comment on 2016 cross-sectoral priority: Homelessness

Following discussion with the Advisory Council and review of the Advisory Council Work Plan for 2016, DECLG identified homelessness as its cross-sectoral priority for 2016. This is being progressed via:

- the Homelessness Policy Implementation Team, which is composed of senior officials from key State organisations, is responsible for delivering the Government’s Implementation Plan on the State’s Response to Homelessness; and
• the National Homelessness Consultative Committee, which provides for consultation and information sharing on homelessness issues with representation from a wide range of statutory and non-governmental stakeholders.

DECLG officials met with members of the Advisory Council in April 2016 to discuss homelessness, specifically how it relates to children and young people, and with a particular focus on issues such as the scale of homelessness, family support services, the suitability of emergency accommodation, and legislation.

Logic model for new 2016 cross-sectoral priority
Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is the Government’s overarching National Policy Framework for children and young people (aged 0–24 years). This cross-government approach will run from 2014 until 2020 and accommodate a number of constituent strategies. The Framework sets out common outcomes, policy commitments and key actions to ensure innovative and effective ways of working. The underpinning principles will ensure that policy and practice protect the rights of children and young people, are family oriented, promote equality and are evidence informed and outcomes focused. The vision is to make Ireland the best small country in the world in which to grow up and raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard; and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.

**Priority:**
DECLG has taken a lead/coordinating role in relation to the Governmental response to homelessness, including a range of measures to secure a ring-fenced supply of accommodation for homeless households. Roll-out of the actions is reflected in the Implementation Plan on the State’s Response to Homelessness and in the Action Plan to Address Homelessness.

These Plans represent a whole-of-government approach to dealing with homelessness and the associated issues of housing, welfare, healthcare, etc. Progress on implementation is reported to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy on an ongoing basis, including formal quarterly reports.

**Description of cross-sectoral priority**

**Homelessness Policy Implementation Team**
- Composed of senior officials from key State organisations and responsible for delivering the Government’s Implementation Plan on the State’s Response to Homelessness.

**National Homelessness Consultative Committee**
- This grouping provides for consultation and information sharing on homelessness issues with representation from a wide range of statutory and non-governmental stakeholders.

**Key partners:** DCYA, DSP, DoH, HSE, Tusla, local government sector, NGO service providers

**Specific activities in 2016 will include:**
- Prioritisation and focus on delivery of housing for families through implementation of the Social Housing Strategy 2020, including family- and children-appropriate emergency accommodation;
- Implementing and embedding arrangements for newly designated Homelessness Liaison Officers in 2016;
- Prioritisation of children in homeless families for services such as breakfast and homeless clubs, including through School Completion Programmes;
- Implementing child protection and welfare protocol; this protocol, agreed between Tusla and the Dublin Region Homeless Executive, is designed to ensure appropriate responses to the child protection and welfare issues that may arise within the homeless population;
- Explore with Tusla the role prevention and family support initiatives might play in homelessness prevention; and
- Publication of Guidance for Home School Community Liaison Coordinators & School Completion Programmes

**Short/medium-term outcomes (2017)**
- Increase in the level of housing available for families, and reduction in the number of homeless families;
- Provision of suitable and appropriate accommodation for families;
- Enhanced homelessness liaison arrangements for families and children;
- Increase in level of services provided for homeless families and children;
- Enhanced child protection arrangements through the implementation of protocols agreed at local authority and Tusla level; and
- Enhanced educational liaison arrangements and engagement with children in families experiencing homelessness.

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

**Inputs**

**2016 activities/outputs will include**

**Monitoring and evaluation**
- Reporting to be maintained within existing structures, i.e. DCYA/Tusla to report to Homelessness Policy Implementation Team for onward reporting to Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform

**Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government: 2016 cross-sectoral priority – Homelessness**
5.7 Overall progress on National Outcomes

The two commitments highlighted in red in the graphic above (requiring whole-of-government attention) are:

4.2 Set a national child-specific social target to lift over 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level. This target will include reducing the higher consistent poverty rate for households with children as compared to non-child households (8.8% compared with 4.2%) and for children as compared to adults (9.3% compared with 6%) (DSP, DCYA, DoH, DES, Tusla, HSE).

5.4 Hold a referendum before the end of 2015 on a proposal to amend the Constitution to reduce the voting age to 16 (DECLG).
5.8 Transformational goals

In order to deliver better outcomes for children and young people, and thus increase the number of children and young people who achieve the five national outcomes (as shown in the diagram below), a number of cross-cutting themes that require whole-of-government attention have been identified. These transformational goals are key to ensuring that policies and services are made more effective in delivering better outcomes.

Achieving these goals will lead to improvement in the quality and timeliness of support to children and young people and to the effectiveness and responsiveness of policy and services provision. Some of these goals require cultural change, some require rebalancing of resources, and some require better planning and communication; however, all are required to strengthen the support systems around the child and young person to achieve better outcomes.

The individual commitments that make up the transformational goals are the responsibility of numerous different departments and agencies. DCYA has responsibility for the transformational goals at the Sponsors Group.
5.9 Overall commitments achieved

It should be noted that while a number of the commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* have already been achieved, the framework runs until 2020. Given the intractable nature of some commitments and the complexity of others, it would be unrealistic to expect that they would be achieved in the second year of an eight-year framework.

It is also becoming clear that many of the commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* are, by their nature, commitments that will always be ongoing, and it will never be possible to say that they have been achieved. This is reflected in the diagram above.

The key strategy in achieving collaborative and concerted progress on commitments has been the DCYA initiative to identify the annual cross-sectoral priorities. This approach clusters a range of commitments under key themes, such as prevention and early intervention, addressing child poverty, etc. Such a strategy ensures that key issues are addressed and advanced in a collaborative fashion, in line with the cross-government and cross-sectoral principle underpinning *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. 
Part 6: Cross-governmental progress

6.1 Department of Justice and Equality

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

Further progress has been made in relation to all of the commitments, including G4, “evaluate current policy in relation to maternity and parental leave with a view to giving consideration to the introduction of paid paternity leave”; a scheme of two weeks’ paternity leave accompanied by a social paternity benefit equivalent to the maternity benefit was announced in Budget 2016.

In terms of commitment 3.17, with the enactment on 6 April 2015 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, the purpose of the Act is to:

- Modernise the law regarding children living in diverse family forms
- Establish that the best interests of the child are paramount in decisions on custody, guardianship and access
- Set out how parentage is to be assigned in cases of assisted reproduction
- Extend automatic guardianship to non-marital fathers who have lived with the child’s mother for at least 12 months, including at least three consecutive months during which both the mother and the father have lived with the child.
- Enable civil partners or cohabiting couples to be eligible to jointly adopt a child
- Allow civil partners, step-parents, those cohabiting with the biological parent, and those acting in loco parentis for a specified period, to apply for guardianship and custody
- Enable members of the wider family to apply for access to the child
- Enable a donor-conceived child, born through assisted reproduction, to trace his/her identity. A mandatory National Donor-Conceived Person Register will be established. Hospitals and clinics will be required to provide details of donors and of donor-conceived children born through assisted reproduction. Anonymous donations will be prohibited.

On commitment 4.9, the Department of Justice and Equality undertook the first of three phases of consultation with a view to drafting the new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. The strategy involves development and implementation of a range of cross-cutting policy issues in order to address the issues facing the Traveller and Roma communities. This process provides the opportunity to focus on priority areas for attention, the goals that should be set, the specific actions that need to be undertaken within specified timelines, and allocation of responsibility for delivery.

The Government also approved the General Scheme of a Reformed and Consolidated Domestic Violence Bill in July 2015. It includes a provision to ascertain the views of the child in proceedings when an order is being sought on behalf of the child, depending on the child’s age and maturity.

The Department of Justice and Equality’s remaining commitments for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures are on track for 2016.
6.2  Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

A key element of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is ensuring cross-government and interagency collaboration and coordination. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) has a key role in this through the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

- During 2015 new performance review processes for Secretaries General and Assistant Secretaries were developed; these were rolled out in January 2016.
- Under Action 11 of the Civil Service Renewal Plan, a new two-point rating system replaces the five-point rating scale for PMDS 2016 End Year Reviews.
- A Learning and Development Centre was established to develop customer service training resources for departments and offices.
- The number of high-quality data sets on the Open Data portal (data.gov.ie) continues to grow, making data more accessible for citizens and assisting the evidence bases for policy-making.
- Development of policy analysis and evaluation capacity within the public sector, as well as training and guidance on the Public Spending Code Performance Budgeting Initiative were both ongoing in 2015.
- The scheme of the Data-Sharing and Governance Bill is with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for drafting.
- The Public Service ICT Strategy, which was approved by the Government and published in January 2015, would benefit children indirectly given that its aims include delivering more user-centric and innovative services for citizens (and businesses) generally, and also providing a much higher user experience and quality of service for citizens, businesses and public servants.

In terms of working directly with and for children and young people, the OECD Ministerial Meeting on Public Governance for Inclusive Growth, held in Helsinki in October 2015, included a major Youth Dialogue event as part of its programme. This Youth Dialogue gathered together a number of Ministers and youth representatives from countries involved in the Ministerial meeting. The Dialogue offered an informal, open and dynamic environment for Ministers and youth to work together to discuss policy solutions that matter for building stronger, fairer and more inclusive societies. The goal was to form key messages to feed into and inform discussions at the Ministerial meetings. The discussion at the Youth Dialogue was informed by the results of youth engagement activities, including activities carried out in Ireland, from all participating countries. DPER, with substantial support from DCYA, facilitated the attendance and participation by two young Irish people, who were drawn from the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, at the Youth Dialogue, which was attended by the Minister.

6.3 Department of Finance

The income tax measures for Budget 2016 included an increase in the Home Carer Tax Credit from €810 to €1,000, and an increase in the Home Carer’s income threshold from €5,080 to €7,200. A Home Carer Tax Credit can be claimed when a couple are jointly assessed for tax and one spouse works in the home, caring for dependent persons who include children for whom the Child Benefit is payable.
The research briefing *Social impact assessment of the welfare and income tax measurement in Budget 2016*, which was published in November 2015 by the Department of Social Protection and contributed to by the Department of Finance, examined the impact of budgetary measures on a number of family types including a variety of household types with children. (This relates directly to measure G63 in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*: “Develop integrated Social Impact Assessments as a feature of policy development and policy impact analysis, ensuring a focus on the impact of policy on children.”)

### 6.4 Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

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

All 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) produced *Local Enterprise Development Plans* (LEDPs) in 2015, their first full year of operation. Each year, the LEDPs set out the range of activities that the LEOs will be pursuing within their functional areas to support businesses and entrepreneurial development, including young people, by setting out strategic objectives, actions and initiatives with key metrics and associated impacts and outputs.

**Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur competition** was initiated in 2014. It attracted more than 1,000 participants across the 31 LEOs. This is an entrepreneurship support measure aimed at encouraging young people to start their own business and it caters for a wider age range (from 18–30) than is commonly applicable to youth schemes. It is aimed at attracting young people who may have an outstanding idea or commercial venture for a start-up or existing business. In 2015, this competition saw a 40% increase in the number of participants, to about 1,400, and had an allocation of €2.2 million.

The **Student Enterprise Awards programme**, run by the LEOs, is an enterprise programme that gives second-level students the opportunity to experience all the realities of entrepreneurship – from coming up with their business ideas and writing a business plan to creating the product, researching the market, promoting the business and managing the books. From the 17,000 secondary students who took part in the 2015/2016 competition, teenagers from 76 student enterprises won a place at this year’s National Final. The Student Enterprise Awards programme is in its 14th year and brings the world of business into the classroom, helping students to develop enterprise and management skills. With the support of their schools and their LEOs, students research, set up and run their own real-life businesses.

The **Low Pay Commission** is currently examining minimum pay issues that relate to younger workers. The *National Minimum Wage Act, 2000* introduced sub-minimum rates of the national minimum wage, which affects people under the age of 18, those in the first and second year of employment and trainees. The Low Pay Commission is currently reviewing the appropriateness of these current sub-minimum rates with regard to their impact on youth unemployment rates and participation in education. The Commission expects to report its findings in October 2016.

The **Workplace Relations Commission** (WRC), established in October 2015, has responsibility for enforcing the provisions of the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act, 1996. This Act seeks
to protect the health of young workers and ensure that work undertaken during the school year does not put a young person’s education at risk. The provisions of the Act encompass arrangements that are differentiated by reference to the age of young persons concerned, their school-going status and whether school holidays are in effect. In the course of every inspection, WRC inspectors undertake checks to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Act. Both daytime and night-time inspections are undertaken to check compliance with the Act. The number of inspections undertaken by inspectors and the number of employers convicted in recent years for offences under the Act are set out in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Combined day and night inspections</th>
<th>Employers convicted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>5,591</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>5,185</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 (Quarter 1)</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The breach rate detected by inspectors in relation to compliance with the Act is quite low, with less than a 1% breach rate detected. However, compliance checks to ensure compliance with the Act are an everyday aspect of the work of WRC inspectors.

### 6.5 Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources

The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) continues to support efforts to limit exposure of children to age-inappropriate material (including material of a sexual or violent nature, online gambling, etc.) on the Internet, including via smartphones.

Following the publication of the *Report of the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group* (ICGAG) in 2014, an implementation group was established to progress its recommendations. Work in this area is ongoing.

At the EU level there are a number of developments, including the REFIT review of the *Audiovisual Media Services Directive* (AVMSD) and the potential review of the e-Commerce Directive, which may have an impact on the governance of online content. DCENR is engaging in discussions with a view to finding practical solutions to allow and facilitate safe and secure use of the Internet.

DCENR also continues to promote **best practice by social media providers** with respect to privacy controls and reporting mechanisms for abuse/bullying so as to better protect children online. The Department has continued to engage with Internet service providers, including social media providers, to promote continued evolution of terms of service and community guidelines.
6.6 Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

The first National Physical Activity Plan was launched on 14 January, 2016, under the Healthy Ireland Framework. The Plan was developed by a cross-sectoral working group jointly chaired by the Department of Health and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and also included representatives from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills. The Plan includes 60 actions across a range of areas, including children and young people, to promote increased levels of participation in physical activity. Its aim is that children and young people will learn the necessary skills for confident engagement with physical activity and will have opportunities to adopt an active way of life. The overarching target of the National Physical Activity Plan is to increase the proportion of the population undertaking regular physical activity by 1% per annum until 2020. Targets have been set for the different population groups, including children. A cross-sectoral oversight and implementation group will be established shortly, jointly led by the Department of Health and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, to oversee implementation of the Plan.

The Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport has also worked to involve children and young people in decision-making, in line with the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020:

- **Sport Ireland** is working with a number of sports organisations in developing a programme of engaging young people in decision-making in their sports.
- The views of children and young people will be sought on the activities included in National Bike Week Ireland 2016 (local authorities have been reminded of their obligation).
- The next Green-Schools Ireland programme will take place in 2018, and the inclusion of children and young people in the consultation process will be incorporated as a qualifying criterion.
- The views of children and young people will be sought when the mid-term review of the National Cycle Policy Framework takes place later in 2016.
- IRCG Coast Guard Volunteer Units conduct water safety campaigns for primary schools under a school visit programme. The programme has been in place for a number of years and the content has been updated following feedback from the presenters, based on their own experiences in terms of classroom response. The programme includes instruction on basic water safety, wearing of life jackets and how to raise the alarm if there is an emergency. Other organisations that may be involved in similar programmes include Irish Water Safety (IWS) which comes under the remit of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and RNLI, an independent charity.
- Comhairle na nÓg was part of the consultation process for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport’s last Statement of Strategy and will be for the next.
- The next fare review about changes to public transport fares, including LEAP, will take place in July/August 2016 and will involve young people. Opportunities will be sought to include children in the consultation phase when reviewing child/scholar public transport fares and other changes in fares for young people.
6.7 Tusla – The Child and Family Agency

The actions in the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures framework which are the responsibility of Tusla – Child and Family Agency are progressing as planned.

Tusla is strongly committed to the whole-of-government approach to working for children and young people set out in the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures framework. In Tusla’s Corporate Plan 2015–2017, we are building on the progress to date in bringing together the key services of child welfare and protection; family support services, including the Family Resource Centres and domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services; and education welfare services to further develop quality services for children and families.

The key to Tusla’s success to date has been the willingness and capacity to work in a collaborative way with all stakeholders, which is at the heart of the commitments under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and, in particular, Tusla’s role in the development of the CYPSCs. With the child at the centre, Tusla’s mission is to design and deliver supportive, coordinated and evidence-informed services that strive to ensure positive outcomes for children, families and communities.

Key achievements for 2015 include:

Tusla’s child protection processes and systems are responding to children at risk in a timely manner

- National Child Care Information System (NCCIS) Project Manager appointed. Pilot system operational in the Mid-West and evaluation ongoing.
- Child Protection Notification System (CPNS) database developed and access to relevant external agencies provided. National audit of Child Protection Notification System CPNS conducted.
- National Emergency Out of Hours Service (EOHS) was established, including foster care placement service and on-call social work service.
- Children First toolkit developed. Training Standards developed and Children First Training provided to funded organisations. Safeguarding Guidance Document developed.
- Tusla complaints and incidents management policies developed for roll-out in 2016 and electronic reporting system for both.
- Working group responded to DCYA proposals to reform the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) system.

All processes and systems underpinning children and family policy and services are evidence-informed

- A policy catalogue is now in place and a National Policy Oversight Group has been established.
- All areas have Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Managers in place.
- An evidence-informed practice project has been developed with the Centre for Effective Services.
• Quality Assurance Framework drafted and quality audit methodology developed. Learning reports regarding Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) inspections and complaints developed.
• Five national quality reviews conducted. Learning reports regarding HIQA inspections and complaints developed.
• Research strategy developed and the first meeting of the Research Advisory Group has taken place.
• The implementation of a Participation Strategy has advanced and all staff have been circulated with participation documentation and leaflets.
• Rationalisation and development of new metrics completed. Outcomes-based metrics project commissioned.

A targeted range of family and parenting supports
• CYPSCs were enhanced with additional coordinator posts.
• A Tusla/HSE Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) National Operations Group was established. Therapeutic plans in place for all young people in special care;
• Establishment of a national governance structure for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and consolidation of a national budget and grants register. Additional staff recruited.
• Implementation of Meitheal, resulting in increased interaction between Family Resource Centres and local child and family services, and establishment of National Counselling Programme.
• Parenting Support Strategy developed and published. Parent Participation supports developed.
• Implementation of Meitheal and staffing structure in place. Performance Indicators and definitions for Meitheal established. National Training Strategy progressed with 130 trained trainers.
• National Working Group on Participation established. Participation documentation developed.
• Forums for children in care established.

Attendance, participation and retention in full-time education is embedded in service delivery for all children
• Home School Community Liaison oversight strengthened through annual plan. New integrated management structure designed. Additional educational welfare staffing in place.
• National governance structure established in respect of Early Years Inspection registration. Recruitment of additional management posts. New models of inspection introduced. Inspection rates increased by 68%.

6.8 Health Service Executive
The development of the revised child health programme (Commitment G6) continued under the Healthy Ireland – Policy Priority Programme Healthy Childhood. The revised programme will work
from an updated evidence base and uses an integrated approach to service planning and delivery to improve health and well-being outcomes for children.

The HSE continues to work with the Katherine Howard Foundation and The Centre for Effective Services to develop The Atlantic Philanthropies-funded Nurture Programme – Infant Health and Wellbeing. Nurture focuses on the 0–2 years age group and is a key enabler for the implementation of the revised child health programme. One of the work streams includes the development of training and resources for professionals delivering the child health programme (Commitments G6 and G29), along with developing knowledge and communications; specific antenatal to postnatal services and resources; health promotion messages and resources; infant mental health and supporting parents; and standardised health records for parents and professionals.

Under Children First, (Commitment G28) a training needs analysis has been completed and a compliance checklist has been developed and implemented. The e-learning module has also been developed and confirmation of a launch date is awaited. Following discussions with Tusla, e-learning will form the core of the training programme.

The Healthy Ireland Smart Start Health Promotion Programme for Pre-School Services continues to be expanded (Commitment G29). In addition, the reach of the QUIT smoking cessation programme among young people continues to be extended and, in conjunction with Foróige, the National Youth Development Organisation, we continue to train approximately 150 youth workers to engage with teenagers on sexual health and crisis pregnancy issues (Commitment 1.13).

In relation to children with disabilities, we continue to reconfigure services into multidisciplinary teams, and there will shortly be a renewed focus on respite care services, particularly host family respite services. At a local level, many of the Local Implementation Groups associated with the development of children’s disability services have established forums designed to enable cooperation and collaboration with the education sector (Commitments G25 and 2.20).

6.9 Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

2015 saw the introduction of the new Basic Payment and Greening schemes under CAP. Ireland’s Rural Development Programme was formally adopted by the EU Commission on 26 May, 2015. 2015 saw the launch of GLAS, the Organic Farming Scheme, the Burren Farming for Preservation Programme, the full suite of TAMS II measures, the collaborative farming measure, and the Beef Data and Genomics Programme, and saw payments issued under the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme, which has replaced the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has also targeted supports for young farmers wishing to invest in their farms in the form of the Young Farmer Capital Investment Scheme. In relation to the National scheme, payments commenced in December 2015.

Assisting succession and the transfer of farms has been a central part of the Government’s agri-taxation policy, and Budget 2015 included a number of measures to maintain and strengthen that support; specifically, the retention of Agricultural Relief from Capital Acquisitions Tax, Retirement Relief from Capital Gains Tax and the current stamp duty exemptions on transfers of land.

Teagasc continues to develop its agricultural education and training programmes.
The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine launched the successful **ACORNS Programme for Early Stage Female Rural Entrepreneurs in Rural Ireland** as a national but targeted programme to select 48 women who have recently started, or who have taken the first steps towards starting, their own business in rural areas in 2015. The programme will run until March 2016.

### 6.10 An Garda Síochána

The **Garda Schools Programme** is being delivered in each Garda Division, with specific emphasis on **Respectful Online Communication** training for 5th and 6th Class students in primary school and the Connect with Respect pack for first- and second-year students in secondary school. This year, at ‘**Safer Internet Day**’, a resource specifically on the subject of self-generated nude images was launched by the Department of Education and Skills; the resource was developed with the support of An Garda Síochána.

### 6.11 Local Government Managers Association

**Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020** has many commitments set out across the six transformational goals that require the involvement and input of the local government sector in order to achieve the five national outcomes.

A key component in this regard is the establishment and resourcing of **Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSCs)** throughout Ireland. During 2015, the local government sector played an active role in facilitating the establishment and continuation of CYPSCs in each agreed area; as a result, 22 CYPSCs are now active. In each case, Local Authority employees play a key role on each CYPSC, holding the position of Vice-Chairperson, often at the level of Chief Executive or Director of Services (G47, G48 and G49).

In addition to the above and as part of the **Local Government Reform Programme (2014)**, a **Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)** has been established in each city/county (G51). The main focus for each LCDC in 2015 was the preparation and development of the **Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)** for their respective area. This was to facilitate the streamlining of the planning and decision-making structures at the local level, including CYPSCs (G52). The preparation of these plans was advanced significantly during 2015 and, in some cases, adopted by their respective Local Authorities. It is envisaged that each Local Authority will complete this process in early 2016, and that LECPs will include direct reference to the five national outcomes for children and young people as set out in **Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures**.
Part 7: Implementation infrastructure

This section provides a short overview of the work of the key pieces of implementation infrastructure for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* during 2015.

### 7.1 Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium

The Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium represents the keystone in the implementation infrastructure for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. It comprises high-level representation from Government departments and agencies and Chairs of the respective groupings, including key experts and representatives from a range of sectors and settings working with children and young people.

The Consortium is tasked with overseeing and driving the effective implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* within its respective spheres of responsibility – across Government Departments, agencies and sectors. The Consortium is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, with a Deputy Chair from the Department of the Taoiseach.

The Consortium met in March, April and October 2015, and March 2016.

### 7.2 Sponsors

The Sponsors Group is a subgroup of the Policy Consortium and is chaired by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It comprises six sponsors: one sponsor for each of the five Government
departments that are the leads for the five national outcomes of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, plus one sponsor for the transformational goals. Each sponsor has been assigned an 'outcome' area, as presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of responsibility</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 1</strong></td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 2</strong></td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 3</strong></td>
<td>Department of Children and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and protected from harm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 4</strong></td>
<td>Department of Social Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic security and opportunity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 5</strong></td>
<td>Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected, respected and contributing to their world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational goals and Chair of the Sponsors Group</strong></td>
<td>Department of Children and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Sponsors Group plays an integral role in ensuring the realisation and success of the vision underpinning Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures through active collaboration to drive and enhance cross-departmental and cross-sectoral engagement to realise the five national outcomes for children and young people.

### 7.3 Advisory Council

The Advisory Council provides a forum for the community and voluntary sector and independent experts to actively inform and support the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and its constituent strategies. The Council comprises four constituent groupings:

- The first three groups comprise representatives drawn from the early years, children, and youth voluntary sectoral pillars. Nominations are drawn from umbrella organisations representing each of these constituencies. In addition, the first three groups are supplemented by the appointment of a Ministerial nominee to each, bringing the total to four nominees per constituent grouping.
- The fourth group comprises Ministerial nominees involving key individuals with experience and expertise in themes and trends impacting on the lives of children and young people.
Membership

The Council is chaired by Dr Owen Keenan.

Early years (nominating body: National Voluntary Childcare Collaborative)
1. Teresa Heeney (Early Childhood Ireland)
2. Fergus Finlay (Barnardos)
3. Ciarín de Buis (Start Strong)
4. Ministerial nominee: Tom Costello (personal capacity)

Children (nominating body: Children’s Rights Alliance)
1. Tanya Ward (Children’s Rights Alliance)
2. Caroline O’Sullivan (ISPCC)
3. Karen Kiernan (One Family)
4. Ministerial nominee: Professor Dympna Devine (University College Dublin)

Youth (nominating body: National Youth Council of Ireland)
1. Michael Barron (BeLonG To) replaced by Séan Campbell (Foróige) in November 2015
2. Mary Cunningham (National Youth Council of Ireland)
3. John Lawlor (Scouting Ireland)
4. Ministerial nominee: Dr Nicola Carr (Queen’s University Belfast)

Independent group: Ministerial nominees
1. Dr Tony Bates (Headstrong)
2. Fiona Coghlan (personal capacity)

Developments in 2015
For more information on the work of the Council, please see the material from the Chair on page 14. The Council may be contacted at advisorycouncil@dcya.gov.ie, and is on Twitter @BOBFcouncil. The Advisory Council’s Work Plan for 2016 is provided at Appendix 1 of this report.

The 2015 meetings of the Council were held in January, February, June and November, as well as a two-day residential meeting in September. The Council also met in February and April 2016. Minutes of Council meetings are available on the DCYA website.

As noted above, the Council has also formed subgroups, co-convened with officials, to progress particular issues affecting children and young people. The prevention and early intervention
subgroup met in June, July and September 2015 and February 2016, and the child poverty subgroup met in September and November 2015 and April 2016. A further meeting was held in April 2016 with officials from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, in order to progress the issue of tackling homelessness and its effects on children and young people.

7.4 Children and Young People’s Services Committees National Steering Group

Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSCs) bring together a diverse group of agencies in local county areas to engage in joint planning of services for children and young people. They are firmly embedded in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures as an important vehicle for implementing the framework at a local level and driving local interagency work.

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

The first meeting of the reconstituted CYPSC National Steering Group was held in April 2015, and subsequent meetings were held in September 2015 and February 2016.

The development and publication of the Blueprint for the development of Children and Young People’s Services Committees in June 2015 is of particular importance. This aims to chart a blueprint for the development of CYPSCs from 2015 to 2017, in order to ensure coordinated, comprehensive, evidence-informed and outcomes-focused policy, planning and provision of services for children and young people. The blueprint also seeks to bring a specific focus to many of the key strategic and structural issues that need to be addressed in the development of CYPSCs. The blueprint is available from the DCYA website (www.dcyad.gov.ie).

7.5 DCYA Implementation Team

The Implementation Team project manages reporting on implementation and coordinates the work in and across the implementation structures for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. It also assists in identifying emerging themes and trends relating to implementation, and ensures knowledge transfer across the implementation infrastructure.

The Implementation Team’s focus for 2015 was on progression of cross-sectoral priorities, supporting the Advisory Council in the development and implementation of a work plan, and in making connections with officials across Government Departments to progress the priorities in the work plan. In addition, the Implementation Team has also been working with the Participation Unit and the Youth Affairs Unit to progress ways in which the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and the EU Structured Dialogue Working Group can link with the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures implementation infrastructure. Considerable progress has been made in this regard; a mechanism for engagement has been developed and it is expected that both groups will have the opportunity to present to the Consortium on issues of concern to them during 2016.
The Implementation Team, which is located in the DCYA Policy Innovation Unit, has also been working on developing links between Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and other initiatives for children and young people, in particular CYPSCs, and their alignment with the five national outcomes in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and the development of the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative.

The Implementation Team can be contacted at policyinnovation@dcya.gov.ie

### 7.6 Enhancing effective implementation

**Leadership, coordination and collaboration**

The implementation infrastructure for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures has operated very effectively in 2015 and early 2016. Key developments include strong engagement with the Advisory Council from departments, such as the subgroups established to progress the issues of prevention and early intervention (with Department of Children and Youth Affairs officials) and child poverty (with Department of Social Protection officials). There has also been engagement between the Advisory Council and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government on homelessness, and with the Department of Health and the Healthy Ireland Council on mental health and well-being. Engagement between the Advisory Council and the Department of Education and Skills on the review of DEIS and with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on children’s rights are planned for the near future. The Advisory Council will also be working with the Children and Young People’s Services Committees National Steering Group to develop guidance for the community and voluntary sector on local CYPSCs.

**Communications**

The DCYA Policy Innovation Unit (where the Implementation Team for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures is located) has developed an e-zine to communicate with stakeholders about progress on Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and related areas of work – such as CYPSCs, the ABC Programme – and the development of the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative, as well as constituent strategies. Contributions from across government or from the wider community and voluntary sector would be welcome in future issues (email policyinnovation@dcya.gov.ie). The first edition is available on the DCYA website.

The Implementation Team also produced pro forma briefings and presentations on Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures for the groupings in the implementation infrastructure to utilise and disseminate. This is crucial in developing sectoral ownership and knowledge transfer on the ground.
Part 8: Participation structures

Children and young people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. With the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC in 1992, Ireland, like almost all other countries in the world, committed to ensuring that the voices of children and young people are heard and that their opinions are given due weight in matters that affect them.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and the constituent National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020 commit to giving children a voice in decisions that affect their lives. In terms of the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, this is achieved primarily through the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and the EU Structured Dialogue Working Group. DCYA is also working to ensure that the voices of seldom-heard children and young people inform the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

8.1 Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg are child and youth councils in the 34 Local Authorities in Ireland that give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies. As shown in the implementation infrastructure diagram (above), the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive works with the Policy Consortium.

At Dáil na nÓg (the national parliament for young people aged 12–18 years) one representative from each Comhairle na nÓg is elected to the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, which follows up on the recommendations from Dáil na nÓg and tries to make changes for young people in those areas. The National Executive, which has a term of office of two years, meets once a month and is facilitated and supported by DCYA, which ensures that they get the opportunity to engage with appropriate Ministers, policy-makers, Oireachtas Committees and other decision-makers.

The topic identified at Dáil na nÓg in November 2015 was ‘what happens in the classroom’. The National Executive will be progressing this for their term of office. It is intended that the National Executive will meet with the Consortium in June 2016 to present on this issue, in line with the mechanism for engagement developed between the DCYA Policy Innovation Unit and Citizen Participation, Play, Recreation and Culture Unit, provided as an appendix to this report.

8.2 EU Structured Dialogue

Structured dialogue with young people serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection on the priorities, implementation, and follow-up of European cooperation in the youth field. It involves regular consultations of young people and youth organisations at all levels in EU countries, as well as dialogue between youth representatives and policy-makers at EU Youth Conferences.

Structured dialogue is also a key part of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures implementation infrastructure (see diagram above) and, along with the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, is one of the primary mechanisms for the voices of children and young people to inform implementation. There has been considerable progress made recently in developing the links between Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and the structured dialogue process.
Firstly, the **EU Youth Conference** was held in Amsterdam from 4-7 April as part of the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This was attended by a member of the DCYA Implementation Team for **Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures**, a member of the DCYA Youth Affairs Unit and three young Irish people. The theme of the conference was ‘Enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe’, and this included many issues relevant to **Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures** and its constituent **National Youth Strategy 2015–2020**, such as youth employment, education, mental health, groups at risk of marginalisation and active citizenship. A guiding framework was developed to address the issue in advance of the next structured dialogue conference in Košice.

In addition, the latest Advisory Council meeting on 6 April was attended by young people involved in structured dialogue through the Young Voices National Working Group, as well as Jean-Marie Cullen and Dermot O’Brien from the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI). The Advisory Council received a presentation from the young people on the importance of structured dialogue and the role that **Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures** has in NYCI’s **National Implementation Project**.

It is intended that young people involved in the EU Structured Dialogue process will attend the September 2016 meeting of the Consortium to discuss issues of concern to them. The DCYA Implementation Team and NYCI are working together to prepare for this.

### 8.3 Seldom-heard children and young people

‘Seldom-heard’ is a term used to describe children and young people who have fewer opportunities to participate and/or who encounter more obstacles when attempting to participate, including, but not limited to, seldom-heard children and young people who are:

- bullied
- in care
- experiencing domestic violence
- from a minority ethnic background
- homeless or at risk of losing their home/living in temporary/unsuitable accommodation
- in hospital (including those with mental health issues)
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT)
- living in poverty
- living in rural isolation
- living with mental health issues
- living with parental addiction
- living with strained family relationships
- not in school
- persons with physical and intellectual disabilities
- refugees and asylum seekers
- Travellers
- unemployed
- young carers

The inclusion of seldom-heard children and young people in the implementation of **Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures** will be progressed further by DCYA in 2016, in line with **A Practical Guide to Including Seldom-Heard Children and Young People in Decision-Making**, published by DCYA in 2015.
Part 9: Constituent strategies

9.1 National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020

The National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making, 2015–2020 was launched in June 2015. The priority action in the strategy for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is the establishment of a Children and Young People’s Participation Hub as a national centre for excellence (Action G21.1). The Hub will support Government Departments and other organisations in implementing the strategy through providing training, developing good practice toolkits and supporting organisations to effectively involve children and young people in decision-making. The following actions have been taken to progress the development of the Hub:

- A scoping exercise was conducted to explore the needs of stakeholders and inform the establishment of the Hub. This included consultations with children and young people and other key stakeholders. The report of this exercise is being used to inform the development of the Hub.
- A database of practice and research publications on children and young people’s participation in decision-making was launched in January 2016. The database includes a wide range of national and international practice and research publications and articles, including good-practice guides on how to engage children and young people in decision-making. This database is available on www.dcy.gov.ie.
- A national audit has been commissioned of education and training on children’s rights and children’s and young people’s participation in decision-making in all third-level, further education, and continuing professional development programmes in Ireland.

9.2 National Youth Strategy

Background


One-third of Ireland’s population is under the age of 25 years, with young people between the ages of 10 and 24 years representing 18.3% of the total population of 4.59 million. The National Youth Strategy focuses on this age cohort and on the youth-specific commitments in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. The Strategy sets out the contribution of current and emerging policies and services to the national outcomes for young people aged 10–24 years. It details priority actions to be advanced between 2015 and 2017, drawing on existing commitments and to be delivered within existing resources.

Development

A National Youth Strategy Task Group, convened by DCYA, provided oversight to development of the new Strategy. This Task Group comprises representatives of eight Government Departments,
statutory agencies, youth-focused voluntary agencies, and organisations working with young people. This Task Group met five times between July 2014 and March 2015. An Advisory Group, established by the National Youth Council of Ireland and comprising some 18 national voluntary youth organisations, also informed its development.

A comprehensive consultation process was carried out with young people and other stakeholders. It involved more than 4,600 people, of whom almost 4,000 were young people under age 25 years. This process included young people, the youth sector, NGOs working with young people, Education and Training Boards, Government Departments, agencies, business and academia, and other youth interests.

National Youth Strategy

The National Youth Strategy 2015–2020 sets out the Government’s aims and objectives for young people aged 10–24 years, so that they may be active and healthy, achieve their full potential in learning and development, be safe and protected from harm, have economic security and opportunity, and be connected and contribute to their world. It is a universal strategy for all young people. It provides for the needs of young people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, the poorest outcomes.

The aim of the Strategy is:

To enable all young people to realise their maximum potential, by respecting their rights and hearing their voices, while protecting and supporting them as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

The National Youth Strategy comprises five sections:

- Section 1 outlines the basis and purpose of the Strategy.
- Section 2 details the socioeconomic situation of young people in Ireland today, considers ‘youth’ as a period of development, discusses the supportive factors in young people’s lives and reviews the youth/youth-related policy environment.
- Section 3 summarises the findings from the National Youth Strategy consultation process regarding priorities for inclusion in the Strategy.
- Section 4 sets out the Strategy’s aims and objectives and identifies some 50 priority actions to be delivered by stakeholders, including Government Departments, State agencies and the NGO sector, over the period 2015 to 2017.
- Section 5 sets out the implementation framework.

These priority actions include:

- Reform of the youth funding programmes in line with the recommendations in the Value For Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes to ensure improved outcomes for young people and to better align state funding for youth services (some €50 million in 2015) in line with the aims of the National Youth Strategy.
- Promoting quality-assured online youth mental health services among young people and within youth work and education settings.
Developing a national Obesity Policy and Action Plan, which will focus on prevention, treatment and research, and will include consultations to ensure that the views of young people are heard.

Developing a national system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning in line with the 2012 EU Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Supporting compliance with the current Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and the Children First Act (2015), including embedding mandatory reporting in work practices and publication of Child Safeguarding Statements by providers of relevant services as required under the legislation.

Promoting and developing opportunities for those young people furthest from the labour market through initiatives, such as a Youth Employability Initiative, that can be delivered by youth services.

Promoting and supporting youth entrepreneurship initiatives in schools and youth work settings.

Rolling out the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making (2015–2020).

Promoting developmental and volunteering opportunities for young people across the EU and internationally through programmes such as Erasmus+, Youth on the Move and the United Nations Youth Delegate Programme.


**Implementation**

DCYA is in the process of setting up a National Youth Strategy lead team to support the coordination, progression and monitoring of its implementation. The structures established by DCYA under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures will oversee the roll-out of the National Youth Strategy’s implementation into the future. In the period since publication of the National Youth Strategy 2015–2020, significant progress has been made in implementing a wide range of commitments to support achievement of the strategy objectives. Examples of this include:

- Establishment of a fund to support young people to develop employability skills through the Youth Employability Initiative
- Commencement of the implementation of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes;
- Support for the implementation of Connecting for Life: Ireland’s National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015–2020
- Undertaking a review of the National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work.

In addition, progress has been made under each of the enablers, identified in the National Youth Strategy, which cross over the five outcome areas.

**Measuring progress and review of the Strategy**
Implementation of the priorities in the National Youth Strategy will be assessed by tracking progress over time. Key indicators relevant to the youth cohort being developed in the context of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures will be utilised in order to track progress in young people’s lives over the lifespan of the Strategy. Progress on implementation of the National Youth Strategy will be included in the annual reports for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

9.3 Early Years Strategy

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures contains a commitment to produce Ireland’s first-ever National Early Years Strategy. This is one of a number of constituent strategies promised under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, including the National Youth Strategy and the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making, 2015–2020, both published in 2015. The intention is to deliver a cross-cutting strategy that will take a unified, whole-of-government approach to early years (0–6 years) issues. DCYA is currently working with a view to supporting the Government to publish the strategy by the end of 2016.
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS AND WORK PLAN OCTOBER 2015 – OCTOBER 2016

Council Terms of Reference

1. Advise the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures and the constituent strategies of participation, youth and early years;
2. Support the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures in and across the community and voluntary sector, and in wider society;
3. Ensure that the specific expertise and perspectives from respective areas of children and young people’s services inform the work of the Council;
4. Generate support for change among stakeholders and sectors;
5. Provide an enabling forum in which to support implementation and address challenges in a solution-focused manner;
6. Ensure that the views and voices of children and young people inform the work of the Council.

Council operational arrangements

1. Meetings of the full Advisory Council will take place at least four times a year and more often if required. Over the coming year, meetings will be held on:
   – Tuesday 24 November 2015
   – Wednesday 10 February 2016
   – Wednesday 6 April 2016
   – Wednesday 8 June 2016
   – Wednesday and Thursday 21 and 22 September 2016 (residential)
   – Wednesday 23 November 2016
2. In the interests of building and maintaining cohesion among members and promoting the effective functioning of the Council, it is not possible to accept substitutes/alternatives to members. However, membership of subgroups of the Council is open to colleagues with a responsibility or expertise in the relevant area.
3. Vacancies arising on the Council from the sectoral nominees are to be filled by the relevant sector, subject to Ministerial approval. Vacancies arising from Ministerial nominees will be filled by Ministerial appointment. Generally, vacancies will be filled as soon as possible following their arising, and it is the intention to seek the broadest representation of perspectives amongst the Council membership as a whole.
4. Where the Council is consulted on any issue, document, etc. it is the intention that a minimum period of three weeks will be provided in order to allow for effective consultation, especially by the membership bodies represented on the Council.
5. The membership organisations represented on the Council have a particular role in promoting awareness and disseminating information about *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and in promoting and supporting its implementation in and across the community and voluntary sector.

6. All Council members agree to promote and support the implementation of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Framework and to positively engage as the Advisory Council in community and voluntary sector events. DCYA will develop pro forma briefings and presentations for promotion of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* within the community and voluntary (C&V) sector.

**Key tasks**

In addition to the specific commitments in the Work plan, the Council has identified the following priority tasks over the coming year and beyond:

- Support implementation of the constituent strategies.
- Contribute to the development of Sponsor Departments’ logic models and the identification of cross-sectoral priorities.
- Develop mechanism for responding to regressive policies and activities. Identify progressive approaches and responses that can improve outcomes for children and young people.
- Influence and advise on key budget priorities that will enhance outcomes for children and young people.
- Use *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* implementation infrastructure (Sponsors Group and Policy Consortium, having regard to DCYA use of the Senior Officials Group) to promote issues of concern to the Advisory Council through reporting, agenda and attendance.
- Use the influence, brand and voice of the Advisory Council, judiciously focusing on intractable, inter-departmental issues.
- Provide advice on project-specific items and issues; e.g., inform the development of outcome indicators for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*; inform development of Commissioning work being led by DPER, DCYA, DoH and DECLG.
- Routinely access and use the voices and views of children and young people.
- Collaborate with DCYA on Child Summit in 2016–17 to be promoted as a *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* event.
- Develop a one-page briefing on the Council’s role and work.
- Contribute to the development of the annual report.

**Council Work Plan October 2015 to October 2016**

The Work Plan outlined below will provide the basis of the Council’s work over the coming year. Individual members or groups of members will take responsibility for leading on specific issues. Progress will be monitored at each meeting of the full Council. It is also envisaged that the Council will need to respond to emerging issues of importance as they arise.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advisory Council 2015–16 work plan</th>
<th>Human rights and equality</th>
<th>Universality</th>
<th>Child homelessness</th>
<th>Early years care and education</th>
<th>Prevention and early intervention</th>
<th>Mental health and well-being</th>
<th>Child poverty</th>
<th>C&amp;V sector participating in CYPSCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>Prioritised and sequenced action plan to implement commitments in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</td>
<td>Early Years Strategy</td>
<td>Child protection, education and family support. Children in vulnerable housing situations are safe and have access to education and other supports.</td>
<td>Inclusion of children with special needs in pre-school settings</td>
<td>Development of QCBI Government Departments, agencies and sectors having a focus on PEI</td>
<td>Development of activity plan</td>
<td>Implement plan to meet the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures child poverty target</td>
<td>Increased and structured participation of C&amp;V sector on local CYPSCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
<td>Progress with officials from DCYA and relevant stakeholders as required (DIE, OCO, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission)</td>
<td>1. AC to advise and inform draft of Early Years Strategy</td>
<td>AC to advocate on this issue with Policy Consortium</td>
<td>Monitor the implementation of a plan following the IDG report</td>
<td>Continued development of the QCBI informed by Advisory Council PEI subgroup</td>
<td>Contribute to activity plan for children and young people under Healthy Ireland Mental health services review</td>
<td>Ongoing work in Advisory Council subgroup.</td>
<td>Development of guidance on participation of C&amp;V sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeline</strong></td>
<td>To be scoped</td>
<td>1. Q1 2016</td>
<td>Through 2016</td>
<td>Timelines to be defined</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>To be defined</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>March 2016, complete by June</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Mechanism for engagement

MECHANISM FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BETTER OUTCOMES, BRIGHTER FUTURES IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURES

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and the Structured Dialogue Working Group are named as the mechanism for engagement of children and young people in the implementation structures for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

1. Engagement between the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Implementation Structures and the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive

The engagement between the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Implementation Structures and the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive will primarily focus on supporting the young people in making policy change on the top issue identified at Dáil na nÓg. The Policy Consortium, Advisory Council and Children’s Services Committee National Steering Group will also engage with the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive when they need the views of young people.

This engagement will be achieved through the process outlined below:

a. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs will invite minister and department officials and members of the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium relevant to the topic under discussion to attend the biennial Dáil na nÓg.\(^1\)

b. A lead official from the Department responsible for this issue will be appointed to work with DCYA officials in supporting the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive over its two-year term of office.

c. The officials from the DCYA and other facilitating Departments will establish a steering committee of policy-makers to support the work of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive over its two-year term of office.

d. The officials from DCYA and other facilitating Departments will report in writing to the Policy Consortium on an annual basis.

e. Direct engagement between the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Policy Consortium and the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive will take place once every two years.

f. Direct engagement between the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Advisory Council and Children’s Services Committee National Steering Group and the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive will take place, as required.

g. Appropriate financial and human resources to support the work and outputs of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive will be committed by both DCYA and other facilitating Departments.

2. Engagement between the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Implementation Structures and young people from the EU Structured Dialogue Working Group

Engagement between Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Implementation Structures and the young people on the EU Structured Dialogue Working Group will follow a similar approach to that proposed

\(^1\) The discussion topic for Dáil na nÓg 2015 was ‘the need for young people to have a stronger voice in their education, including on policy, curriculum, subject choice and in the running of schools’, which took place on 27 November 2015 in Croke Park, Dublin.
for the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, adapted to suit the working arrangements of the EU Structured Dialogue cycle.

3. Engagement between the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Policy Consortium and Advisory Council and children or young people involved in other national initiatives

From time to time, the views of children and young people are sought or participation initiatives are undertaken on issues of national importance that are not linked to the Comhairle na nÓg or EU Structured Dialogue structures.

For example, the outcomes of the consultations with children and young people for Ireland 2016 will be compiled in a report to be presented to Ministers and decision-makers at a major children’s event in April 2016. The Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Policy Consortium and Advisory Council should be involved in this event.