

What is the link between the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group and Children's Services Committees?

The National Children's Strategy Implementation Group (NCSIG) believes that the development of Children's Services Committees should be locally determined and led within a flexible framework, devised and agreed at national level. Key organisations within each Children's Services Committee are represented at national level in the NCSIG. To date, the NCSIG has agreed a framework for advancing the work of the four multi-agency Children's Services Committees already established (i.e. Dublin City, South Dublin, Limerick City and Donegal – *details below*).

Interagency working in Dublin City

Dublin City Children's Services Committee has brought together a number of agencies that deliver children's services. We have taken a small catchment area in the City and have had the opportunity to test interagency cooperation. This process has shown us that by sharing the understanding of what we want to achieve, we are building trust, respect and cooperation, working towards improved coordination and better outcomes for children.

Gerry O'Neill (Chair of Dublin City Children's Services Committee and HSE Manager, Local Health Office, Dublin South City) and **Ciaran McNamara** (Vice Chair of Dublin City Children's Services Committee and Assistant City Manager, Dublin City Council)

Where have Children's Services Committees been established?

The National Children's Strategy Implementation Group decided to set up the Children's Services Committees on a phased basis. Initially, four multi-agency Children's Services Committees have been established – in South Dublin County Council, Limerick City Council, Donegal County Council and Dublin City Council. In addition, six to eight new Children's Services Committees are in the process of being established. The learning from the set-up and early operation of these committees is helping to inform the most effective way of establishing the other Children's Services Committees in the remaining City and/or County Development Boards.

What is the progress of the present Children's Services Committees?

Each of the four Children's Services Committees established have identified shared priorities and produced plans for children's services in their areas. They are now commencing implementation of these plans.

When will there be a Children's Services Committee in my area?

The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is currently talking to agencies in other areas so that they can prepare for setting up a Children's Services Committee in their county.

What steps will Children's Services Committees take to begin to make a difference for children and young people?

- As a first step, they will assess what all the agencies are doing in the area.
- As a second step, they will access information on the well-being of children, young people and their families in the area.
- As a third step, they will identify the most important priorities and ensure that agencies coordinate their efforts and develop shared responses, which will effect the improvement of specific outcomes for children and families in the area.

Limerick City Assessment of Need System

Limerick City Children's Services Committee is developing a Limerick City Assessment of Need System (LANS), based on the Hardiker Model of identifying need. The purpose of this system is to ensure that the needs of children are assessed accurately and that appropriate and integrated supports are put in place to meet those needs.

The LANS will involve both an early warning system and a common assessment framework. This system has been developed with the Data Protection Commissioners. The members of the Children's Services Committee, together with representatives from the sectors of health, justice and education, have been driving the development of LANS and are linking with local multi-agency groups of practitioners to further develop and implement this system. A LANS Project Manager will soon be in position to support this development.



- Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
- National Children's Strategy Implementation Group
- Children's Services Committees

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What is the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs?

The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) is part of the Department of Health and Children. The key role of the OMCYA is to support the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in improving the lives of children under the National Children's Strategy and in bringing greater coherence to policy-making for children. This is achieved by:

- implementing the National Children's Strategy (2000 – 2010);
- implementing the National Childcare Investment Programme (2006 – 2010);
- developing policy and legislation on child welfare and child protection;
- implementing the Children Act 2001;
- implementing the Child Care Act 1991;
- implementing the commitments in *Towards 2016* in relation to children's services.

What is the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group?

The national social partnership agreement *Towards 2016* outlines a framework on the needs of children and young people, and the establishment of the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group (NCSIG). This high-level group is chaired by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

'The National Children's Strategy Implementation Group is a serious effort at national level, on the part of senior public servants in charge of the organisations responsible for social services, to provide the leadership and management support necessary so that their staff can work effectively for children and families in each city and county in Ireland and consequently can point to the evidence that they have done so.'

Sylda Langford, Director General,
Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

'We have been working on the development of new models of integrated public service delivery in County Donegal over the past several years. The establishment of a pilot Children's Services Committee in the county provides a new impetus for this work at local level. In addition, the links to central government structures through the OMCYA facilitates the creation of a national context to support effective interagency collaboration that is focused on the needs of children and their families.'

Michael McLoone, County Manager, Donegal

What is the vision of the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group?

The vision of the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group is that children, young people and their families will receive the support and services they need to create better futures for children through all local agencies and organisations working together.

Who is in the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group?

All Government departments and State agencies that develop policies or deliver services that affect children and young people are represented in the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group. These are:

- Department of Health and Children
- Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
- Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Department of Education and Science
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism
- Health Service Executive
- Local authorities
- Education sector
- Family Support Agency
- Irish Youth Justice Service
- Probation Service
- National Education and Welfare Board
- An Garda Síochána
- Pobal
- Irish Sports Council

Why are these departments and agencies in the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group?

These particular Government departments and State agencies have the power to ensure better coordination of services for children and families. By their working together, this avoids duplication of effort, supports sensible collaboration in service delivery and provides an opportunity to assess the gaps sometimes caused by agency or service boundaries.

How will the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group achieve its vision?

The National Children's Strategy Implementation Group will establish a **Children's Services Committee** under each of the 34 City and/or County Development Boards in the country. These local committees will be chaired by the Health Service Executive in each City and/or County Development Board area.

How will Children's Services Committees make a difference for children and young people?

All major organisations and agencies working locally on behalf of children and young people will be represented on the Children's Services Committees. These committees will be responsible for improving the lives of children and families at local and community level through integrated planning, working and service delivery. They will also ensure that professionals and agencies work together in order that children and families receive better and more accessible services.

Working together for children in Tallaght West

The Mac Uilliam Child and Family Centre has been developed by Barnardos, in partnership with Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative (TWCDI) and South Dublin County Council, under the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme of the OMCYA and the Atlantic Philanthropies.

It will deliver a quality early years programme of 2-years' duration to pre-school children in Mac Uilliam in West Tallaght. Barnardos will also deliver parenting support to the parents of these children. The approach will be subject to rigorous external evaluation as part of the TWCDI Early Years Programme.

It is hoped that the Centre, provided by South Dublin County Council, will also serve as a resource and catalyst for other developments for children and families in this new housing estate.

