

# BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES

The national policy framework  
for children & young people  
2014 - 2020

Annual Report for the  
fourth year of implementation,  
April 2017 – December 2018



Active &  
Healthy



Achieving



Safe



Economic  
Security



Connected  
& Respected

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## Part 1: Minister's foreword

There has been a lot of progress under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020*. I welcome the fourth Annual Report and wish to thank all of those who have worked to make our country a better place for children.

Many of our children and young people do not live the happy, healthy lives that we would wish for them.

They do not have the supports that young people need to grow into strong young adults.

Achieving better outcomes and brighter futures for them is the job of the Government and society.

Child poverty continues to be the shackle which keeps children locked in a life that should and could be better. Lifting children out of poverty is the single, most effective and most impactful way of improving their lives and their futures.

We need collective and cross-sectoral action to free them of child poverty. This is not beyond us. As this report states, through the Advisory Council, we now have a great deal of shared learning and a common understanding of the complexities involved in addressing this issue.

It remains the top priority for 2019.

I am pleased that later this year we will be launching the National Childcare Scheme. All families at or below the relative income poverty line will benefit from the highest subsidy rates. I am confident that the scheme will improve children's outcomes, support lifelong learning and help to reduce child poverty.

As we move into the final phase of the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, we will continue to work collaboratively and constructively to make our country better for our children.

**Dr Katherine Zappone, TD**  
*Minister for Children and Youth Affairs*



## Part 2: Comment from Secretary General

I am very pleased to welcome the publication of the fourth 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 2017 to December 2018.

As we are now in the second phase of implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* progress is evidenced through the fact that many of the 163 commitments in the framework are completed or on the way to completion.

I am also pleased with the progress that has been made on the cross-sectoral priorities such as child poverty. The work of the National Advisory Council has been crucial to the continued successes achieved in 2017 and 2018 with a 2.1% drop in the consistent child poverty rate for 2017, the second largest decrease in the child poverty rate since data was first collected in 2004.

The ongoing success of inter-agency work through the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) initiative is clear with full national rollout achieved in 2017, increased funding year-on-year since 2015, and the collaborative work between this Department and Tusla.

In 2018 we undertook a Mid-Term Review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. This mid-term review is intended to indicate the status of and the advances made on both the deliverables and the processes associated with the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, as well as signposting clear direction in the second phase of implementation.

One key message arising from the review is the need to take a more targeted focus on top priorities such as child poverty, child homelessness, mental health and wellbeing, amongst other important issues. This review afforded us the opportunity to establish whether the implementation structures such as the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, Sponsors Group and Advisory Council are fit for purpose, and to decide if change is needed. I am glad to say positive feedback has been received on the effective mechanisms involved for delivering on the commitments and priority actions contained in the framework. I know that this good work will continue.

Overall, the key conclusions and recommendations that are included in the review will further strengthen momentum. We have taken the key messages on board and will make improvements to the implementation process where necessary.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone involved in the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, and I know that this collaborative work will continue to yield clear benefits for our children and young people.

**Dr Fergal Lynch**  
*Secretary General*  
*Department of Children and Youth Affairs*

## Part 3: Introduction

### 3.1 Key points from Chairs

**Elizabeth Canavan, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach and Deputy Chair of the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium**

I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the annual report. I want to congratulate the team on the ongoing programme of work and the completion of the mid-term review which is an important milestone to inform us as we move to the latter stages of implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

As the mid-term review suggests, there is much to be proud of in terms of how structures have developed and evolved to contribute to implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. However, the review also highlights that we have not yet achieved continuity of purpose or effort across the board with all Government Departments and agencies. As the strategy moves into the latter stages of implementation, the work programme for the Consortium should ensure that proactive, rather than reactive engagement is achieved from all members as many challenging commitments remain to be implemented.

The review also identifies a lack of awareness of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Again, as we move into the latter phase of the implementation of the Strategy, and presumably begin to think of future plans, consideration might be given to if, why and how the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Consortium wants to communicate and engage with a wider audience for this all-encompassing programme of work.

There is considerable work underway across Departments, agencies, providers, and academia aimed at adding to our understanding of children's lives and the services we all provide for children, young people and their families. There are number of important initiatives coming to fruition including the National Indicator Set, State of the Nation's Children Reporting, the emerging Outcomes for Children Data Hub and Evidence Matrix. The Consortium might consider how it can act to proactively support, promote and communicate relevant data and knowledge across all State and non-State actors in a structured way so that the services we develop and invest in are informed by our shared knowledge.

Finally, I am struck by the fact that child poverty has been a priority of the programme since the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* structures were established. There is no doubt that it is an intractable issue which requires commitment and investment across a number of Government Departments. There have been many good processes and discussions between State and non-State actors on the issues which underlie child poverty. The Consortium might consider how, beyond the shared analysis, it can contribute as a collective to supporting Cabinet Committee B and Government to accelerate achievement of this commitment.

## **Éimear Fisher, 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 in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and across Government and the NGO Sector for their engagement with the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures structures*. 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*.

The Sponsors Group is an important part of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure and is helping to ensure that we progress our cross-sectoral priorities and the five national outcomes. We have developed a very strong relationship through our engagement with the community and voluntary sector through the Advisory Council. This is an invaluable forum with considerable expertise which we need to continue to fully utilise.

The debate and dialogue is, I believe, leading to shared ownership and prioritisation of the top issues facing children and young people and co-development of solutions to these complex issues is critical.

One of the recommendations in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Mid-Term Review published in 2018 is that the high level structures such as the Sponsors Group should be maintained. I welcome this and am determined that we continue to strengthen the Sponsors Group mandate in collaboration with our partners.

It is also crucial that we continue to promote the “brand” of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and ensure that children and young people have a more visible focus in Departments and Agencies, particularly where this has not traditionally been the case.

As we move further into 2019 it is clear that the top priorities facing children and young people range from child poverty and homelessness to health and wellbeing.

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.

## **Tanya Ward, Chair of the national Advisory Council for Children and Young People**

I was appointed as Chair of the Advisory Council in April 2018 by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone, to build on the successful chairmanship of Dr Owen Keenan. Following a period of review, a Business Sub-Committee was formed to operationalise and plan the work of the Council. Two Vice Chairs were also appointed by the Minister: Mary Cunningham, Chief Executive, National Youth Council of Ireland, and Teresa Heeney, Chief Executive, Early Childhood Ireland. Other appointments were made to cover vacancies and add expertise on specific areas (art/culture, homelessness and LGBTI+) and include: John Church, Chief Executive, ISPCC; Catherine Cosgrave, Senior Solicitor, Immigrant Council of Ireland; Aideen Howard, Chief Executive, the Ark; Catherine Maher, former Head of Services, Focus Ireland; and Olivia McEvoy, Director of Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Services, Ernst and Young.

Recognising the scope of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, the Advisory Council prioritised over the year cross-sectoral themes impacting on children and young people across the lifecycle. The Council

also identified pressing issues where its intervention could make a difference for children and young people.

*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, includes a target to lift over 100,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020. The work of the Council is driven by a Sub-Committee and in 2018 the Council updated its major paper – Actions to Achieve the Child Poverty Reduction Target – which helped inform Budget 2019. Highlights from the Budget include: an additional €61 million for the National Childcare Scheme/Special Measures; targeted weekly increases of €5.20 per child over the age of 12 and €2.20 per child under the age of 12 in the Qualified Child Increase payment; funding for a new Hot School Meals to provide for 7,000 children and an increase in the earnings disregard for the One Parent Family Payment and Jobseekers’ Transitional Scheme by €20 per week.

In 2018, the Council provided advice on the development of the *First 5*, youth justice reforms, *What Works* (formerly the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative) and on mental health and wellbeing in education. The Council, with the support of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, also commissioned Professor Ursula Kilkelly and Professor Laura Lundy to conduct a review of commitments under Outcome 5 (connected, respected, contributing to our world) in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and their implementation.

#### **Dr Noelle Spring, Chair of the Children and Young People’s Services Committees National Steering Group**

As Chairperson of the Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSC) National Steering Group, I am delighted to report on further progress during this fourth annual reporting period from mid-2017 to end 2018.

The work of CYPSC is very much relevant to the progression of the five national outcomes under *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and in achieving the best outcomes for children and young people in CYPSC local areas.

National leadership and communication was strengthened through the holding of bi-annual meetings between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the CYPSC Co-ordinators. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla was signed which further strengthens relationships, communication and collaboration.

The National Co-ordinator for CYPSC continued to organise ongoing network events, which have supported the local coordinators in their role. The CYPSC national website ([www.cypsc.ie](http://www.cypsc.ie)) was further developed to provide a focal point for information on CYPSC and as a gateway to information on individual county-level committees.

The profile of CYPSC has been raised substantially and this has been complemented by increased financial resourcing. A very welcome development was the introduction of an annual funding stream under the Healthy Ireland/CYPSC initiative in 2017 which has seen many positive projects undertaken by CYPSC around the country in relation to the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

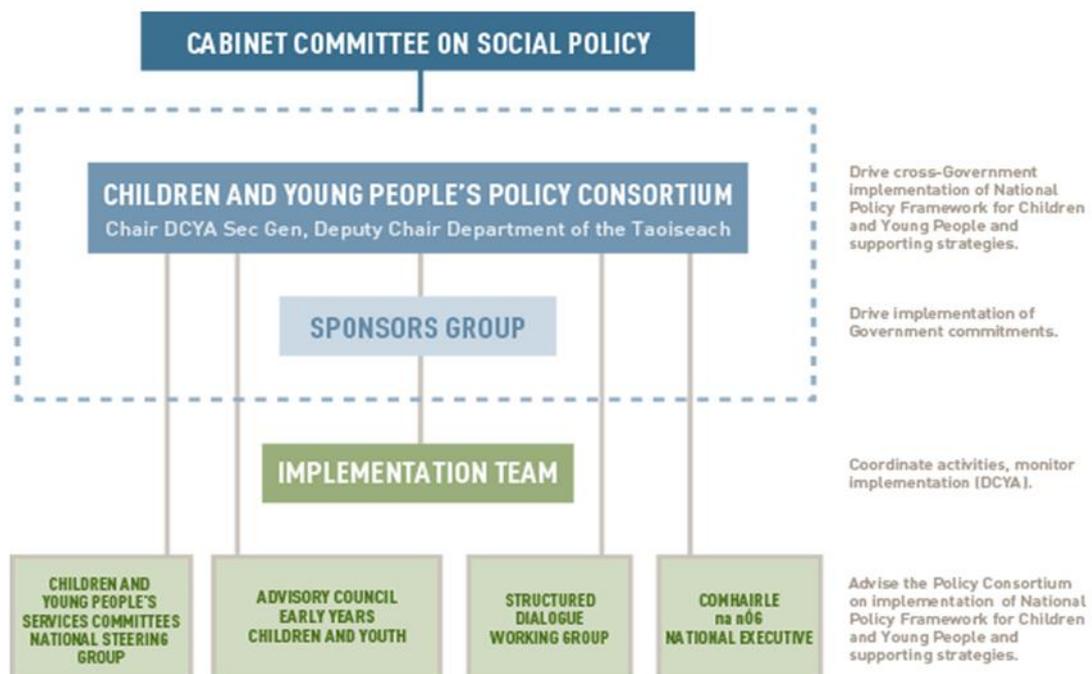
Participation of children and young people is central to the work of CYPSC and it was pleasing to see that a [Guidance document](#) for CYPSC on the participation of children and young people was issued by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

A successful [National CYPSC conference](#) was held in 2018 under the theme ‘Enhancing child and youth wellbeing’ and was attended by Minister Zappone. CYPSC had the opportunity to showcase their local projects which were wide and varied. This event highlighted the myriad of valuable projects being undertaken by CYPSC and also the level of inter-agency collaboration involved.

The membership of the National Steering Group was refreshed with new appointments and the Steering Group focused on many key central and emerging issues.

The process for the publication of a new Blueprint for CYPSC commenced with the establishment of a working group to advance this work. This new policy document, *Shared Vision: Next Steps*, covering the period 2019 – 2024 will provide a succinct roadmap for the further development of the CYPSC initiative.

Much has been achieved to date. We now need to take stock of progress and identify the most immediate actions that need to be addressed. I am confident this will assist CYPSC to further develop in a strategic, integrated and sustainable manner and I know that this momentum will be maintained.



**Implementation Infrastructure of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures***

## 3.2 Indicators

Since the publication of the [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Indicator Set](#) work has been on going in compiling disaggregated data for each of the indicators. This data will be published in an easy to access open data format on the Department of Children and Youth Affairs website later in 2019.

Work is nearing completion on the modernising and transforming of the delivery of the [State of the Nation's Children](#) Report, changing from the production of a static PDF report to an electronic dynamic version of the report, linking to the data. The 2018 report will be available in the coming months and will be subsequently updated on a periodic basis.

## 3.3 Cross-sectoral priorities

In order to generate momentum, address key intractable issues and model whole-of-Government working, the Sponsors Group identify a series of priority commitments each year to be progressed. These are:

Sponsor	Priority 2017	Priority 2018
Department of Health	Child Obesity	Healthy Ireland
Department of Education and Skills	Review of DEIS	Wellbeing in education
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Prevention and early intervention	Prevention and early intervention
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection	Child poverty	Child poverty
Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Homelessness	Homelessness

## 3.4 National outcomes

The five national outcomes, and the Departments responsible for leading them, are set out below:

Area of responsibility	Sponsor
<b>Outcome 1</b> Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing	Department of Health
<b>Outcome 2</b> Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development	Department of Education and Skills
<b>Outcome 3</b> Safe and protected from harm	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
<b>Outcome 4</b> Economic security and opportunity	Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

<b>Outcome 5</b> Connected, respected and contributing to their world	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
<b>Transformational goals and Chair of the Sponsors Group</b>	Department of Children and Youth Affairs

### 3.5 Advisory Council workplan and priorities

The National Advisory Council harnesses expertise and experience from the community and voluntary sector, from academia and from independent experts and individuals who have specific expertise in working with and for children and young people. The Advisory Council brings into one forum a diverse range of interests from sectorial stakeholders in the domains of children and young people’s policy and provision. These sectors connect with and mobilise communities, families and individuals, and as such are seen as essential groups in the implementation infrastructure seeking to ensure the achievement of the five national outcomes for children and young people.

The Council provides a platform for the community and voluntary sector to engage with the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium and its constituent elements to actively inform and support the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

The Advisory Council continued to advance the priorities identified in their workplan for 2017 and 2018. A revised workplan for 2019 was developed at the Council’s strategic planning meeting in September 2018.

Priorities 2017	Priorities 2018	Priorities 2019
Child Poverty	Child Poverty	Child Poverty
Child Homelessness	Child Homelessness	Housing, Homelessness and Community
Education	Learning and Development	Learning and Development
Rights and Equality	Rights and Equality	Rights and Equality
Prevention and Early Intervention	Monitoring of constituent strategies	Prevention and early intervention
Mental Health and Wellbeing		Monitoring of constituent strategies
Implications of UK’s decision to leave the EU		
Monitoring of constituent strategies		

The Advisory Council continue to engage with issues such as child homelessness, learning and development, prevention and early intervention while also having a particular focus on child poverty. Under the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* framework, child poverty was identified as a pressing priority, and in conjunction with the Advisory Council, the Department Employment Affairs and Social Protection formed an ad hoc group in 2017 with the objective of working with key officials

from other relevant Government Departments and NGOs towards the adoption of a whole-of-Government, multi-dimensional approach to tackling child poverty.

The group was co-chaired by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Children's Rights Alliance. This working mechanism has resulted in a great deal of shared learning and to a common understanding of the complexities involved in addressing this issue. This working relationship led to the publishing of two papers; ['A whole-of-government approach to tackling child poverty'](#) by Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and ['Submission on Actions to Achieve the Child Poverty Reduction Target'](#) by the Advisory Council. This working model between the Council and Government Departments was seen as an exemplar of collaborative working that was efficient and effective in terms of policy and responses.

In June 2017 the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in conjunction with the Advisory Council hosted a roundtable event on child poverty. This closed event brought together all the relevant stakeholders, both statutory and non-statutory to discuss the way forward in reaching the child poverty target. This event also gave the Advisory Council an opportunity to launch their NGO paper on child poverty. The Advisory Council has identified child poverty as the single biggest concern that impacts across all aspects of children's lives, denies them their rights and limits their life chances in many ways. Child Poverty remained a top priority for the Council in 2018 and is included in their workplan for 2019.

## Part 4: Mid-Term Review

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs sought to take a strategic and sustainable approach to the implementation of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Policy Framework. In doing so, it was decided early in the implementation process to carry out a mid-term review to ensure adequate progress and appropriate monitoring be put in place so that the framework is implemented in a real time and responsive manner.

The [Mid-Term Review of \*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures\*](#) aimed to take a take a holistic approach to reviewing the implementation, effectiveness and impact of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

The Mid-Term Review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* served as a general progress and process check on the implementation of the first national children and young people's policy framework and was directly informed by the views and perspectives of key groupings in this area. The main aim was the delivery of review that focused on the status of the framework and the progress made on its implementation, while offering learning to inform the next phase of the implementation process. This included the following:

- A review of the process and implementation structure.
- A review of awareness and visibility amongst stakeholders.
- A review of engagement amongst stakeholders.
- A review of outcomes to date.
- An identification of learning and innovative practices.
- The need to determine the content and course of action for Phase 2 of implementation 2018 – 2020.

It also considered progress in terms of the development and implementation of the three constituent strategies of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*:

- National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making 2015 – 2020.
- National Youth Strategy 2015 – 2020.
- First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019 – 2028.

This review was informed by a number of key evidential sources:

- Surveys held with stakeholders involved in the implementation infrastructure to assess engagement and impact, as well as to identify emerging issues.
- Case studies on particular initiatives within *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (e.g. Prevention and Early Intervention, Child Poverty), provided by the Sponsors Group.
- Perspectives from key informants, focus groups and submissions.
- A desk review involving an analysis of other Departments' statements of strategy, policy documents and other relevant material.
- A focus on data outlined in An Indicator Set for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* developed by the Research and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

- Perspectives from the Implementation Team in the Tusla Programme Development and Cross Government Framework Unit (formerly the Policy Innovation Unit).

## Key Messages

- The implementation structures have worked well and have provided a solid platform for cross-collaboration and interdepartmental working, with the work on addressing the child poverty issue identified as particularly noteworthy.
- The *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* framework is complicated, with a huge range of commitments contained within it. There is a need to focus on particular priorities such as child poverty and child homelessness.
- Some Government Departments and Agencies need to be held more accountable for their own commitments and their level of engagement.
- There is a need for strengthened Government leadership to act as a key driver in implementation.
- There is a low level of awareness and visibility of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* across some sectors, with children and young people and the general public.
- Engagement via the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* implementation structures is positive, although some Departments and Agencies need to improve in this regard.
- There has been some good learning and innovative practices such as addressing child poverty and childhood obesity.
- There is a need for discernible impacts/outcomes to be communicated to a wider audience.
- For the second phase of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* 2018 – 2020 there should be a renewed, succinct approach focusing on important priorities such as child poverty, child homelessness, mental health and wellbeing, prevention and early intervention and the progression of *First 5*, amongst other issues. The Annual Reporting process should be revised to take account of this.

## Determining the Course of Action for Phase 2 of Implementation 2018 – 2020

The recommendations and learning referenced frames and focuses the implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and the work programmes of the relevant groups in the implementation structure. This is now being done in conjunction with stakeholders, with an emphasis on the key themes identified for actions going forward.

The list below represents a range of key emerging priorities as requiring action or further advancement in this new phase of implementation. These have been considered and are being advanced by the respective groups in the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* infrastructure. Having regard to alignment with the existing commitments in the framework, this will ensure that these are prioritised and responsive to emerging issues and take account of current initiatives being advanced in these respective areas, which may have been developed subsequent to the launch of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* in 2014.

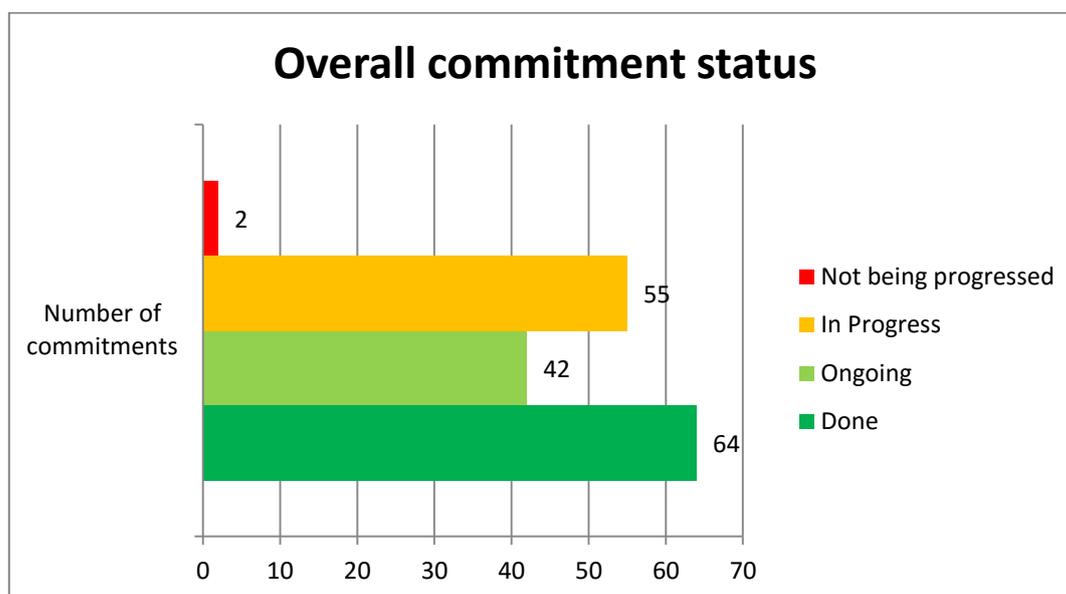
1. Child Poverty
2. Child Homelessness
3. Prevention and Early Intervention

4. Mental Health and Wellbeing (personal and communal)
5. Progression of *First 5*.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is now working with the relevant stakeholders with regard to these recommendations, with a particular focus on the themes of communications, awareness, engagement and impact within *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

The full list of recommendations along with key learning from phase 1 implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* can be found in Appendix 1.

## 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 as follows:

- **Done:** These commitments are considered to have been achieved.
- **Ongoing:** These commitments, by their nature, will not have a point at which they would be complete. These are commitments whose work will continue. An example is Commitment G3: *Continue to support parents financially with the costs of rearing children through the provision of Child Benefit.*
- **In Progress:** Commitments that are expected to be achieved by the end of the framework's timeline.
- **Not being progressed:** These commitments are facing serious issues that hinder their completion, where the timeframe for achievement has passed, or where other developments have superseded the action

It should be noted that while many commitments are either time bound or task bound, there are some which are ongoing actions without a definitive end.

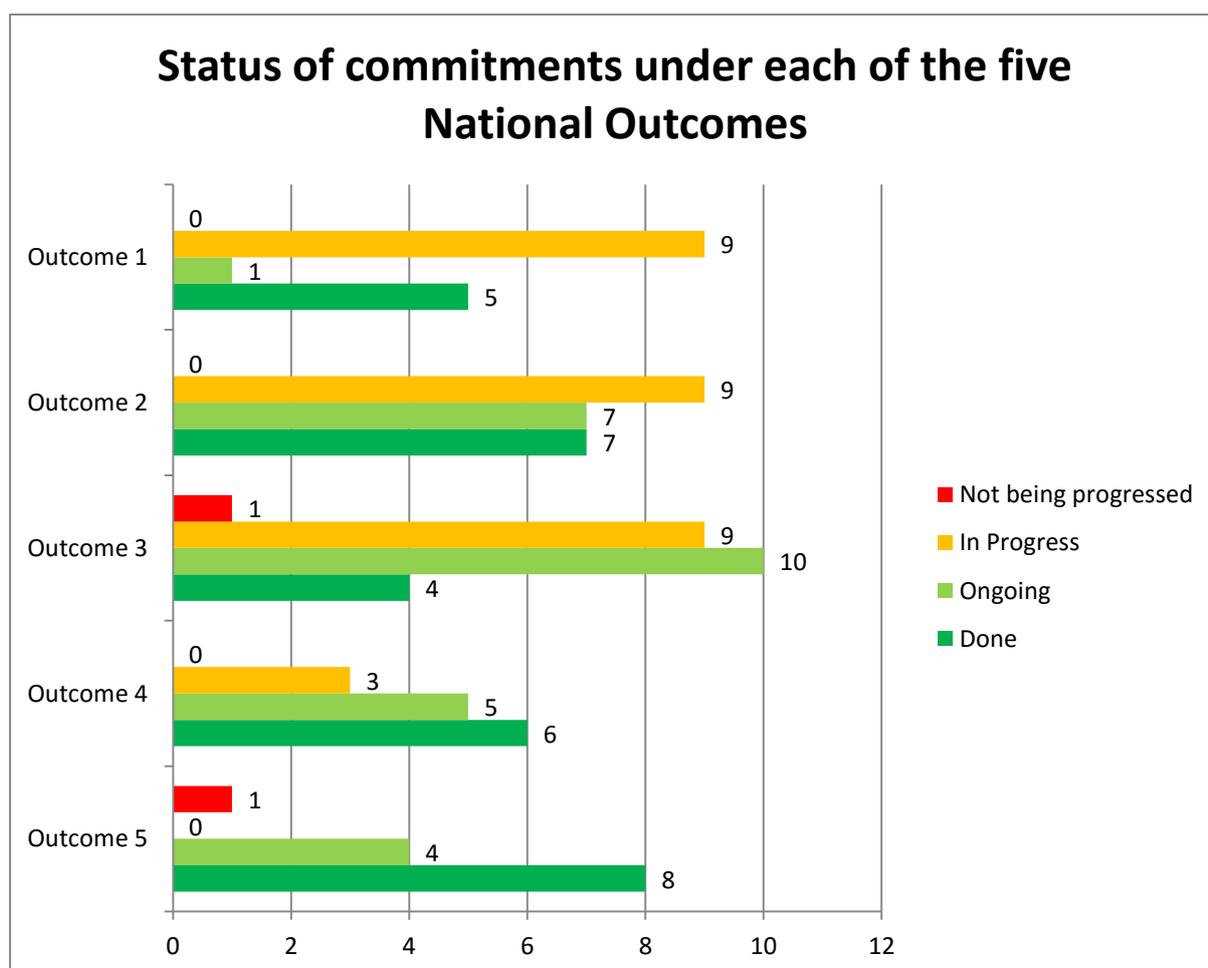
This section of the report also outlines the work each Sponsor Department undertook in 2017 and 2018 for children and young people, with a focus on the national outcomes and the cross-sectoral priorities. It should be noted that while each Sponsor Department has overall responsibility for its own outcome area, individual commitments under that outcome may still be the responsibility of other Departments or agencies. This section is followed by the status of commitments under the six transformational goals.

Overall, strong progress has been made towards the completion of the commitments as we are nearing the end of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* implementation.

The two commitments marked as not being progressed are:

**3.18** Develop a National Framework for Anti-Bullying, taking a community-wide approach to tackling bullying from childhood through to adulthood. (DCYA, All)

**5.4** Hold a referendum before the end of 2015 on a proposal to amend the Constitution to reduce the voting age to 16. (DHPLG, Referendum Commission)



## 5.2 Department of Health

### Comment on cross-sectoral priority: Healthy Ireland

[Get Ireland Active](#) - National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland was launched in 2016, and a sub-group focussing on children and young people established in 2017. There has been a continued roll-out of the [Active School Flag programme](#) in primary schools; as of the end of February 2019, 752 primary schools and 26 post primary schools hold a current Active School Flag. 1214 schools have held a Flag at some point since inception in 2009.

The *Children’s Sport Participation and Physical Activity study (CSPPA)* assesses participation in physical activity, physical education, extra-curricular and extra-school sport among 10-18 year olds.

The last study was published in 2010. Sport Ireland and Healthy Ireland commissioned a second CSPPA study in 2017; fieldwork was completed in 2018 and the study is scheduled to be published in 2019.

Implementation of the [National Sexual Health Strategy 2015-2020](#) is continuing. A new *Sexual Health Training Strategy* was developed in 2018 to support consistent training for all relevant professionals working in the wider youth sector, including those working with key at-risk groups (e.g. young people in care). In June 2018, the HSE launched a sexual health resource aimed at parents and children aged 4–9 Years, *Talking to Your Young Child about Relationships, Sexuality and Growing Up*. It consists of two booklets; a parents' guide, and a story booklet, *Tom's Power Flower, a gentle explanation of how babies are made*. A new website [www.sexualwellbeing.ie](http://www.sexualwellbeing.ie) was launched in 2018.

In September 2017, the [Nutrition Standards for School Meals](#) were published under the auspices of Healthy Ireland. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection runs the School Meals Programme, which has a budget of almost €57 million and benefits more than 250,000 children across Ireland, with priority being given to those in designated disadvantaged schools.

A new *Obesity Policy Implementation Oversight Group* was established in October 2017, with representatives from a number of Government Departments and Agencies. Two sub-groups have been established on healthy eating and reformulation of food. A [Code of Practice for food and beverages promotion, marketing and sponsorship](#) was published in February 2018, and a *Sugar-Sweetened Drinks Tax* commenced in May 2018. New *Healthy Eating Guidelines, Food Pyramid* and supporting resources were published, disseminated and communicated in 2017. Work has also commenced on developing healthy eating guidelines for the 1-5 year old age group.

A five-year public health awareness campaign – “[START](#)” - to set families on the path to a healthier future, was launched in November 2017. The campaign from safefood, the HSE and Healthy Ireland was developed with the input of parents, health professionals and community leaders, and acknowledges that the solutions to tackling overweight and obesity are multiple and that every sector has a role to play in this major health issue.

Through the *Healthy Ireland Fund*, and in partnership with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Health have match-funded a contribution to the *Children and Young Persons Services Committees (CYPSC)* to implement actions to achieve Outcome 1: Active and Healthy. The Fund approved allocations of €1 million in round 1 (2017/18) and a further €1million in round 2 (2018/19).

A number of *Tobacco Free* initiatives were supported by the Fund in 2018, including *Tobacco Free Limerick*, which supports the de-normalisation of smoking and protection from smoke, with a focus on outside public places and spaces which children and young people frequent.

The *Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018* was signed into law on 17 October 2018. Among the primary policy objectives of the Act are deferral of the initiation of alcohol consumption by children and young people, and regulation and control of the supply and price of alcohol. The Act includes provisions for restrictions on the advertising and marketing of alcohol, the regulation of sports sponsorship and restrictions on certain promotional activities.

[Mychild.ie](http://Mychild.ie) was launched by the HSE in December 2018. The site is designed to be a one-stop-shop where parents can access accurate and trusted information and advice on pregnancy and through the first three years of their child's life.

The [Healthy Ireland Outcomes Framework](#) was published in December 2018. The Framework includes three indicators taken from the *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures Indicator Set*: Condom Use, Screen Time and Feeling Safe. A process with cross-sectoral governance will be constituted to oversee the development and use of the Framework, and an annual report on the Healthy Ireland Outcomes Framework will be prepared and presented to Government.

## 5.3 Department of Education and Skills

### Comment on cross-sectoral priority: Wellbeing in education

The Department of Education and Skills has a key role to play in the promotion of the wellbeing of children and young people in Ireland, in collaboration with other Government Departments and Agencies, predominantly the Department of Health and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The promotion of wellbeing in the education community is a priority for the Department of Education and Skills. A wellbeing Steering Committee has been put in place recognising that wellbeing promotion is an element of the work of many divisions and requires internal coordination to promote internal clarity and coherence and to facilitate interface with the external partners.

The Department of Education and Skills Action Plan for Education (2016-2019) set out a number of objectives and proposed actions specifically targeting the promotion of wellbeing and positive mental health in school communities. In the period from mid-2017 to the end of 2018 the following actions were achieved in relation to Wellbeing Promotion:

- The Department of Education and Skills *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (2018-2023) was launched in July 2018, providing an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in the area of Wellbeing Promotion. The policy outlines a multicomponent, whole school preventative approach to the promotion of wellbeing with interventions at both universal and targeted levels. This policy requires that a Wellbeing Promotion Process is developed and implemented, through the use of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process, in all schools by 2023. A briefing was provided for the Sponsors Group in October 2018.
- Circulars were issued also to all schools in July 2018 providing more comprehensive and strengthened guidance on the effective use of external programmes and facilitators relating to Wellbeing Promotion.
- The Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme was introduced to post-primary schools in July 2017. Ongoing support for implementation is provided by the Junior Cycle for Teachers team. In addition, the Lifeskills Survey was published, providing information on how primary and post-primary schools cater for the wellbeing of their students. The data, on topics such as healthy eating, physical activity, substance misuse, relationships and sexuality education (RSE), bullying, enterprise in schools, and education for sustainable development is expected to inform future priorities and policies on wellbeing.

- Continued support for implementation of the Social Personal and Health Education curriculum was provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers.
- A Review of the Senior Cycle Curriculum and the relationships and sexuality education curriculum was initiated by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
- Enhanced support was provided for learners to manage their educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices enabling them to reach their full potential, through the implementation of an enhanced Guidance Counselling Framework to maximise the benefits from the restoration of 500 guidance posts.
- In 2017 National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) staffing numbers were expanded by ten posts, specifically to provide enhanced support to children and young people in DEIS schools, with particular emphasis on the provision of early intervention and prevention programmes to support the development of social and emotional competence. In 2018 the recruitment was commenced of a further ten NEPS psychologists to enhance access to the NEPS service and increase the range of NEPS in-school supports to build school capacity to support the wellbeing and the personal, social and educational development of all children.
- In this period NEPS psychologists provided support and development in the delivery of the following initiatives:
  - 678 teachers completed the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management programme, and a further 683 teachers commenced that programme, for completion in 2019. This programme is an evidence-based programme for teachers, partnering with parents, which strengthens social and emotional competence and reduces behavioural challenges for primary school-age children, delivered over six days.
  - 860 teachers completed training in the delivery of the Friends programmes. These programmes support the reduction of anxiety and the promotion of coping and resilience in children and young people from 4-18 years and can be delivered by teachers, universally or to targeted smaller groups of pupils. The evidence base for these programmes has been established internationally and in Ireland by NEPS and the National Behaviour Support Service.
  - 17 schools completed the Student Support Team project in 2017 and 22 schools commenced Phase 2 of the Student Support Team project, which supports post-primary schools to have effective and sustainable structures in place to support Student Wellbeing.
  - 401 post-primary schools were provided with training on the revised *NEPS Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resources for School (2016)*.

During this period the Department of Education and Skills:

- Continued to collaborate in the implementation of *Healthy Ireland 2013-2025*, and *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures 2014-2020 strategies*.
- Worked closely with the Department of Health and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and other Departments on supporting the implementation of Connecting for Life Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide (2015-2020)
- Participated in the National Youth Mental Health Taskforce
- Continued to support the Pathfinder Youth Mental Health Project.

## 5.4 Department of Children and Youth Affairs

### Comment on cross-sectoral priority: Prevention and early intervention

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has continued to lead on the development of innovations in the area of strengthening policy and organisation of provision in the area of prevention and early intervention. This has involved the continuous implementation and development of the infrastructure through *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and CYPSC and the harnessing of innovations through the *What Works* Initiative and engagement with Tusla's Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme. Advancements in these areas mutually reinforce and strengthen outcomes based responses for children and young people.

#### What Works Developments

The Tusla Programme Development and Cross Government Framework Unit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs has developed the *What Works* Initiative (formerly the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative) as a co-ordinated quality and capacity building initiative to enhance capacity, knowledge and quality in prevention and early intervention policy, service and practice. It aims to maximise the impact of prevention and early intervention to improve outcomes for children and young people living in Ireland. At the core of the initiative is a desire to foster persistent curiosity amongst those working to improve the lives of children and young people.

Four key strands have been identified to embed and enhance prevention and early intervention in children and young people's policy, service provision and practice. These strands are focussed on information and knowledge, professional development and quality in children and young people's services.

Over this reporting period, the governance group was established and a number of important outputs have been progressed under this initiative:

- The first phase of the Outcomes for Children Data Hub was completed and rolled out to 11 pilot CYPSC and Tusla personnel along with training on Results Based Accountability. This data hub is an online interactive area based geo mapping system developed in collaboration with Tusla utilising published administrative data to illustrate status of indicators from the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Indicator Set. A consultation forum will be held in 2019 to gather feedback on the developed hub and identify future developments for the hub.
- An organisation was procured to develop the Evidence Matrix - an open access online guide which will provide details and rated assessment of the costs and standards of evidence of impact of prevention and early intervention evidence based programmes globally and in Ireland under each of the five national outcomes for children and young people. Using an interactive, searchable database, people working to improve the lives of children, young people and their families will find detailed information about the impact, costs and implementation requirements of effective and promising intervention programmes which have been shown to have an impact globally and in Ireland. The Evidence Matrix will help stakeholders identify, select, and implement the right evidence-based programmes to address one of the five national children's outcomes identified under the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* framework

- Both the hub and evidence matrix will be hosted on the [What Works Website](#) which began development in Q4 2018. This website will, alongside the matrix, give in depth information on the use of data and evidence in designing and delivering services for children, young people and their families, encouraging policymakers, service providers and practitioners to use the information provided as a conversation starter as they innovate to improve outcomes for children. The website will include an account of the story so far on prevention and early intervention in Ireland to provide context and a frame for the next steps the initiative wishes to support.
- In 2018, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs commenced work on developing a *What Works Learning Framework*. The Learning Framework identifies the range and type of investments that might be made as part of *What Works'* mission to enhance knowledge of, and skills in, prevention and early intervention at the levels of policy, practice and provision. Initial projects that were delivered to meet the objectives of the Learning Framework included:
  - The Department of Children and Youth Affairs developed and commenced a pilot Executive Leadership Programme for leaders in Dublin's North East Inner City in collaboration with the University of Limerick. The first session of this innovative programme took place in November 2018 and concluded in January 2019.
  - On 22 June 2018, under the Innovation Funding Measure, awards of over €2,000,000 were distributed to 51 organisations across the country to support implementing diverse and innovative projects aimed at improving the lives of children, young people and their families in local communities and nationally.
  - 51 organisations from the 51 Innovation Fund grantees attended an Introduction to Action Learning Workshop by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on 9 November 2018, with a view to enhancing inter-organisational working, helping organisations to share learning from the Innovation Funding initiative. It is intended to tender for a facilitator to provide up to 25 sessions for 5 Learning Sets in 2019.
  - 2018/2019 Network Support Funding awards were announced by Minister Zappone on 28 November 2018 to support networks promoting evidence informed approaches to prevention and early intervention services, so that those working with and for children, young people and their families are supported in doing the right things, in the right way and at the right time. This funding award scheme will continue in 2019.

### **Tusla Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme and the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme**

In November 2017, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs initiated a process with stakeholders to consider options for sustaining the work of the ABC Programme within a new vision for a community based prevention and early intervention programme from 2019 and beyond. Following these consultations, the decision was taken to transfer the current ABC Programme to Tusla, as part of the national Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme.

The end of August 2018, marked the end of the current 2013-2018 ABC Programme, managed by both Pobal and the Centre for Effective Services (CES). In September 2018, the programme of work transitioned into Tusla as part of the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme funded entirely by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, with a budget of €9.5m in 2019. A working

group comprising of key stakeholders was formed to guide the transition and development of the programme within Tusla. The ABC Programme transitioned to Tusla oversight on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018. It is expected that it will also enhance local connectivity and ensure the local consortia and ABC managers are in a position to inform the national programme and the development of the PPFS Strategy.

A series of research workshops to identify needs and develop the local and national objectives and plans for the programme are taking place in each of the 13 areas in Spring 2019. The local and national measurement framework will be agreed by end of 2019. By embedding the programme as part of the Tusla PPFS Programme, the learnings can be applied across all communities across Ireland, through the PPFS local and national structures.

## 5.5 Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

### Comment on cross-sectoral priority: Child poverty

In 2014, as part of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* the Government set an ambitious and challenging child poverty target: to lift 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two thirds on the 2011 level. To achieve this target the Government undertook to adopt a multi-dimensional, whole-of-Government approach which would build on the lifecycle approach employed in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion)* and be informed by the European Commission's Recommendation on 'Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage', as part of the Social Investment Package.' The latest data from the 2017 Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) show a significant reduction of over 2 percentage points in the consistent poverty rate for children, the second highest reduction in the rate since the collection of SILC data began in 2004.

The full benefit of the growing economy and the increases introduced in more recent Budgets has yet to be seen. Budgets 2018 and 2019 included Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection measures specifically aimed at supporting families on low incomes through raising income thresholds for the Working Family Payment, increasing qualified child rates, increasing earnings disregards for One Parent Family and Jobseeker Transition payments, and increasing the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance. These improved supports along with increasing employment rates suggest that we can expect further reductions in the poverty rates once the 2018 figures become available.

However, the challenge Ireland faces in trying to achieve the child poverty target needs some perspective: at the height of the economic boom in 2008, when the consistent poverty rate for children was its lowest, there were 68,000 children in consistent poverty. So, in order to meet the target, Ireland will have to be more than twice as effective as our best ever performance to date.

Furthermore, while social transfers play a crucial role in alleviating poverty and Ireland is among the best performing EU States for reducing poverty through social transfers, tackling child poverty is not just about income supports and welfare. Rather, it is also about supporting parents to make the transition into employment and assisting families through the provision of quality affordable services in areas such as education, health, housing and childcare.

## **The Ad-Hoc Group on the Whole of Government Approach to Tackling Child Poverty**

Under the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* framework child poverty was identified as a priority, and, in conjunction with the Advisory Council, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection formed an ad-hoc group with the objective of working with key officials from relevant Government Departments and NGOs towards the adoption of a whole-of-Government approach to tackling child poverty. The group was co-chaired by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA). This way of working has resulted in a great deal of shared learning and led to a common understanding of the complexities involved in addressing the issue of child poverty.

### **A Successful Model for Future Engagement**

The recent Mid-Term Review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* found that its implementation structures have worked well and have provided a solid platform for cross-collaboration and interdepartmental working, with the work on addressing the child poverty issue identified as particularly noteworthy.

The ad-hoc group on child poverty met several times over the course of 18 months and was crucially important to the success of a process which ultimately led to the publication of two documents. The first was drafted by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in conjunction with partner Departments and details the whole-of-Government approach to tackling child poverty; emphasising the need for a combined approach to tackling child poverty in Ireland, involving both income supports and services.

The second paper, produced by the NGOs – including Barnardos, the CRA, the National Youth Council of Ireland, One Family and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul - follows the format of the EU Recommendation on Investing in Children and was intended to provide policy advice to *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* on the approaches which should be taken in relation to tackling child poverty.

The active co-operation of partner Departments was hugely important in making a success of the process, and the willingness of the NGOs to engage in frank and open discussion was particularly useful in helping the parties to gain new perspectives on the issues under discussion and in assisting them in the identification of priority actions. The co-chairing arrangement was very successful in giving the group a shared sense of ownership of the process and encouraged the openness and willingness to engage which characterized the work of the Group. Indeed, at the Child Poverty Roundtable convened by the Advisory Council in June 2017 a number of contributors explicitly suggested that the approach undertaken in the ad-hoc group should be replicated or evolved across other Departments.

### **Next Steps**

Solutions to the problem of child poverty do not lie with any one Government Department or agency. Nor can effective and sustainable solutions be arrived at in one simple step. Only when we have identified the problem in ways where each stakeholder can see clearly where their responsibilities lie, can progress begin to be made toward developing and implementing sustainable solutions. The extension of the Ad-Hoc model, or a similar process, would be a useful next step. The

purpose of such process would be to further embed a shared sense of responsibility for improving outcomes in relation to child poverty across all Departments, while also providing space within which members of the group might reach some consensus on the most effective and appropriate types of policy responses necessary.

## 5.6 Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

### Comment on cross-sectoral priority: Homelessness

#### Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness

Significant progress was made during 2017 and 2018 in delivering on the objectives of Rebuilding Ireland, the Government's Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness. Under the plan, over 72,000 households had their housing needs met by the end of 2018. It is expected that a further 27,000 solutions will be delivered during 2019, which will see almost 100,000 social housing solutions delivered under the Plan. By the end of 2018, Rebuilding Ireland has increased the active social housing stock by over 27,000, with 8,420 of these homes delivered in 2018.

The level of progress being made is reflected in social housing waiting lists, which have reduced by 22%, from 91,600 households in 2016 to 71,858 in 2018

#### House Building Totals

In 2018, over 18,000 new homes were built, a 25% increase on the previous year and the highest number of newly built homes any year this decade. In addition, more than 2,500 homes were brought out of long-term vacancy, and almost 800 dwellings in unfinished housing developments were completed, meaning the number of new homes available for use increased by almost 21,500 in 2018. This does not include the 3,742 bed spaces completed in the student sector in 2018.

#### Family Hubs

Rebuilding Ireland includes the objective that hotels will only be used in limited circumstances as emergency accommodation for families. During 2017 and 2018, the Government worked with local authorities to increase the supply of family hubs to minimize the use of hotels and has been delivering family hubs, to provide a more suitable form of accommodation for families. By the end of 2018, there were 26 hubs in operation nationally, offering over 600 units of family accommodation. Further such facilities are being planned for delivery in 2019.

Family hubs provide a greater level of stability than is possible in hotel accommodation, with the capacity to provide appropriate play-space, cooking, laundry and storage facilities, communal recreation space, while move-on options to long-term independent living are identified and secured. The setting also allows for more intensive supports to be provided where they are needed in areas such as welfare, health and housing services. The intensive Placefinder engagement that is possible in a hub environment allows for swifter transition into independent tenancies.

#### Homeless HAP Placefinder Service

During 2018, the Homeless HAP Placefinders service, which had been introduced on a pilot basis in Dublin and Cork, was made available to all local authorities. This service supports families

experiencing or at risk of homelessness to identify and secure a property in the private rented sector. By the end of 2018, in excess of 6,100 households had been supported nationally via HAP on foot of referrals from homeless units.

HAP is a flexible and immediate housing support that is now available to all eligible households throughout the State. It plays a vital role in housing eligible families and individuals. The total number of active HAP tenancies at the end of 2018 was 43,443.

### **Supporting an all of Government approach to homelessness**

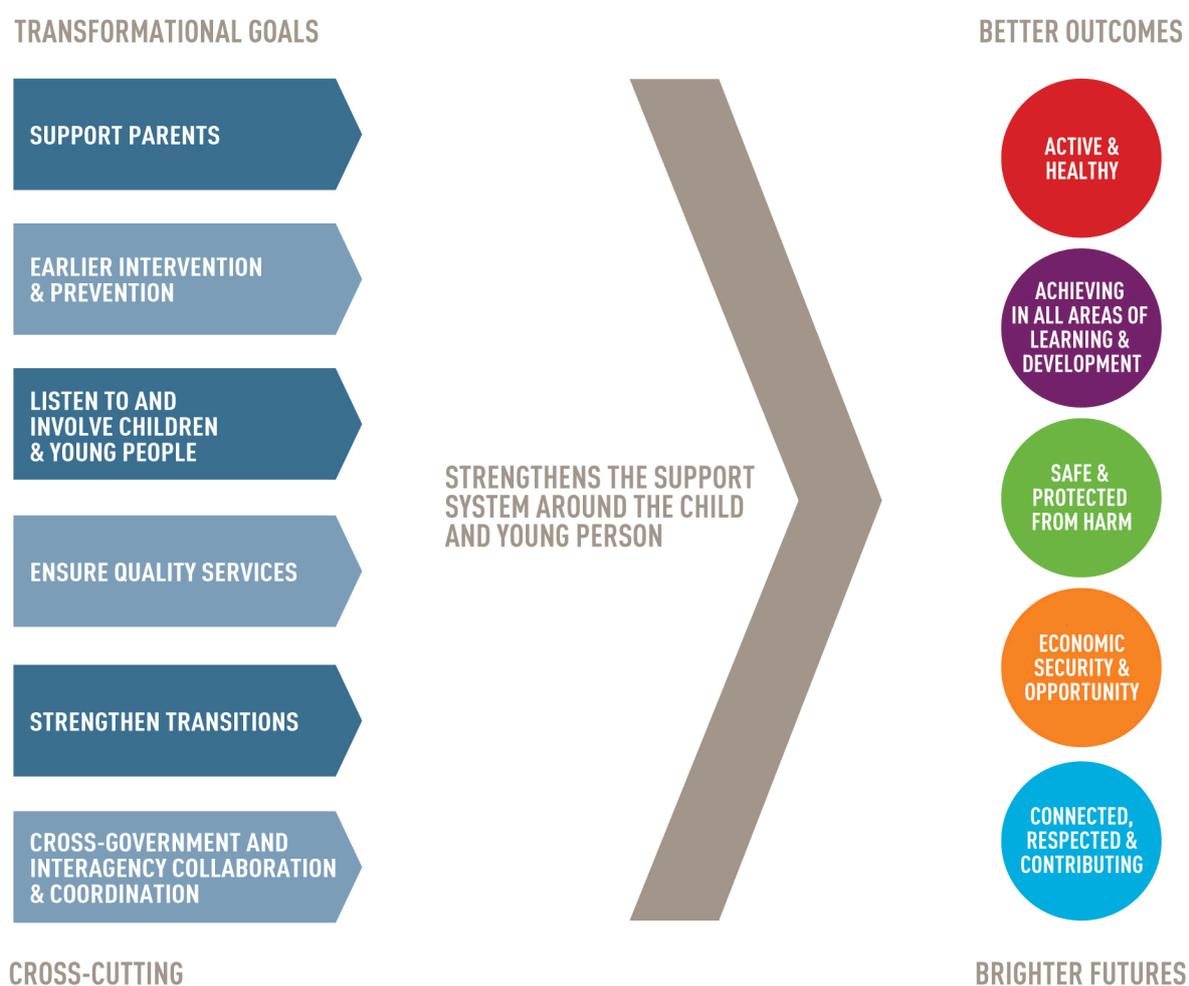
In September 2017, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government established a high level Inter-Agency Group to ensure a coordinated Government response to homelessness. The group consists of representatives of the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Health, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Department of Education and Skills, local authorities, Tusla and the HSE.

A report from the Group was submitted to the Minister of Housing, Planning and Local Government in June 2018, which includes a range of recommendations to be implemented by the Government Departments and Agencies represented on the Group. The Group is overseeing the implementation of these recommendations.

## 5.7 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 of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, 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 for children and young people.

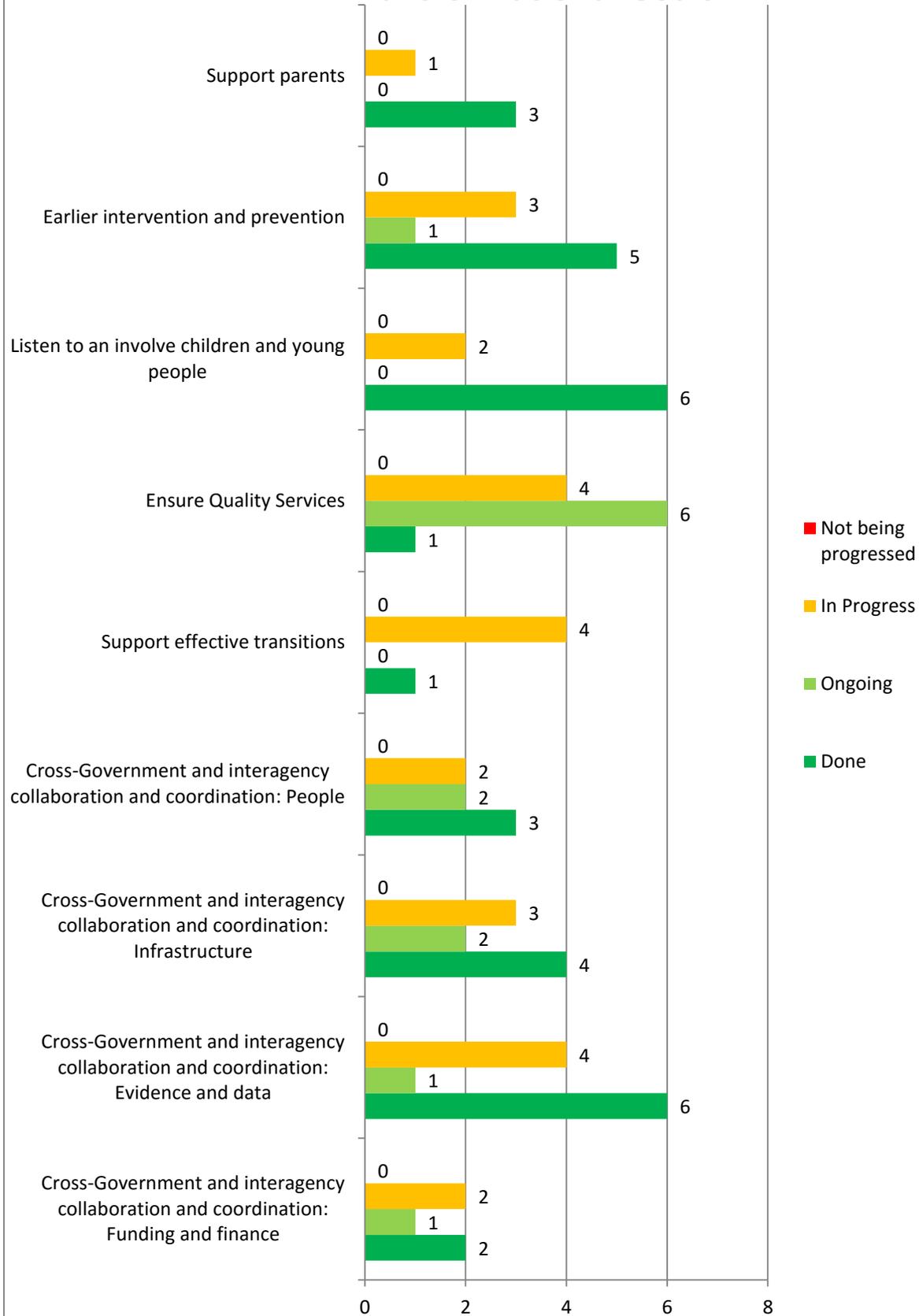
Achieving these goals will lead to improvement in the quality and timeliness of support to children and young people and to the effectiveness and responsiveness of policy and services provision. Some of these goals require cultural change, some require the rebalancing of resources, and some require better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



The individual commitments that make up the transformational goals are the responsibility of numerous different Departments and agencies. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has responsibility for the transformational goals at the Sponsors Group.

As shown in the following chart, implementation of the transformational goals is progressing well across the whole-of-Government.

## Status of commitments under each of the Transformational Goals



## Part 6: Participation structures

### 6.1 Comhairle na nÓg

Funding from the Comhairle na nÓg Development fund of €620,000, which is administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, was awarded to 31 Local Authorities in 2018 to assist in the continued support and development of Comhairle na nÓg.

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive started their two-year term on the theme of Equality in School and are working on a set of guidelines to be administered in Schools with teachers as the primary audience. The National Executive meet once a month on a Saturday in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to progress their topic.

In May 2018, an event was held for the Comhairle na nÓg co-ordinators. This event hosted 80 co-ordinators and was a successful day of networking and presentations, with a powerful presentation by Leitrim Comhairle na nÓg on their national campaign 'Use your brain, not your fists'.

The Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> November in Croke Park with 460 Comhairle members in attendance. Members from all 31 Comhairlí showcased their work from the year and presented their work on topics of importance to young people in Ireland.

A number of Comhairle na nÓg members took part in consultation over the course of 2018. This included seldom-heard young people who partook in consultations around Garda Youth Diversion Programmes and adoption.

### 6.2 EU Structured Dialogue (Young Voices)

During the timeframe of Cycle VI of EU Structured Dialogue June 2017 to December 2018 the National Working Group in Ireland chaired by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs continued to deliver the Young Voices programme, through the National Youth Council of Ireland, maintaining high standards in terms of engagement, inclusion and outputs.

Young Voices had full and comprehensive engagement in the theme 'Youth in Europe, what next?' which contributed to the development of the new EU Youth Strategy and the creation of the EU Youth Goals. Parallel to this Young Voices is continuing its work on the National Implementation Programme which represents proposals from previous cycles that require ongoing attention.

The Young Voices programme has multiple strengths including:

- The links between National Youth Council of Ireland, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the young people who are involved in Young Voices represents a very positive and significant indicator for young people in terms of their perception of influencing decision makers. This is illustrated through the delegation for the EU Youth Conferences which consists of both Young People and Departmental officials.
- Throughout Cycle VI of EU Structured Dialogue a wide variety of young people were involved, including voices of young travellers, ethnic minorities, LGBTI+, rural youth, young people with physical and intellectual disabilities, young students, young people in care,

young refugees, young asylum seekers, undocumented young people and overall a diverse and dynamic range of young people living in Ireland today, highlighting the diversity of engagement this programme can achieve.

- There is a commitment to use *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* as the lens through which the EU thematic issues are analysed and potential proposals for implementation are developed. For example the themes for Cycle VI of Structured Dialogue were mapped directly into the national outcomes of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* as a way of giving context and relevance to the Irish landscape.

Structured Dialogue theme	BOBF National Outcome
Coping with stress and times of crisis	Active & healthy, physical and mental well being
Getting the knowledge and skills we need from education	Achieving potential in all areas of learning and development
Overcoming discrimination and inequality	Safe and protected from harm
Preparing for future types of work decision making	Connected, respected and contributing to their world

Since June 2017, Young Voices engaged with over 1000 young people and organised activities the length and breadth of Ireland as well as sending delegates to EU Youth Conferences and other seminars and events across Europe including the European Youth Event in Strasbourg. Young Voices provided inputs to the National Advisory Council, the Children and Young People National Policy Consortium, the All Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit, the Sustainable Development Goals Youth Summit, the launch of the UN Youth Delegate ‘Spotlight Report’ and the National Youth Council of Ireland AGM. Young Voices also designed and produced two posters representing Mobility and Resilience as well as a dynamic animation video explaining Young Voices and all of the elements that make it effective. Please visit [www.youth.ie/youngvoices](http://www.youth.ie/youngvoices) for more in depth information about the work of Young Voices.

### 6.3 Seldom-heard children and young people

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs Participation Unit have conducted a number of consultations with seldom heard children and young people including: consulting with young people resident in Oberstown on the draft Oberstown Standards, consulting on how the Adoption Authority or Court will hear the voice of the child in adoption proceedings, getting the views of young people as part of the Garda Youth Diversion Programme (GYDP) change process and seeking the views of children and young people on creative activities they would enjoy at Cruinniu na nÓg, a creativity festival which took place in June 2018.

## Part 7: Constituent strategies

### 7.1 National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015–2020

The third annual report on the implementation of the actions in the [National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020](#) was published in January 2019. Guided and influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the strategy is primarily aimed at children and young people under the age of 18, but also embraces the voice of young people in the transition to adulthood. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that children and young people will have a voice in their individual and collective everyday lives across the five national outcome areas of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*.

The progress of commitments in the Third Annual Report shows a positive picture of how the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020 continues to be implemented. All Government Departments and Agencies are actively progressing 68 of the 73 agreed actions for 2018. This means that 93% of the agreed actions have reached completion or are in progress.

Hub na nÓg was established in June 2017 as a centre of excellence to support Government Departments, State agencies and non-government organisations to give children and young people a voice on decisions that affect their lives, with a focus on seldom-heard children and young people.

**Training:** Hub na nÓg developed and delivered training in collaboration with:

1. **Sport Ireland** for five national sporting bodies and organisations
2. The **Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)** to develop participation methods for use in the inspection process
3. **The Arts Council** for Creative Associates appointed to support the Creative Schools Initiative, which is part of the Creative Ireland Programme of the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

**Consultations:** Hub na nÓg collaborated on the development and conducting of a number of consultations with children and young people in 2018, including consultations on:

1. the Strategic Plan for the **Heritage Council**
2. the **Cruinniú na nÓg** programme
3. **Oberstown Standards**
4. the **voice of the child in Adoption proceedings**
5. a change process for the **Garda Youth Diversion Programme**.

A Mid-Term Review with an Action Plan for the last two years of the Strategy will be published in Q2 of 2019.

## 7.2 National Youth Strategy 2015–2020

Ireland's first [National Youth Strategy 2015–2020](#) takes a cross-sectoral, whole-of-society approach to supporting young people in their everyday lives. This strategy commits to leading the implementation of a number of enabling actions across the five national outcome areas for children and young people.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs funds the National Youth Council of Ireland to deliver its Child Protection Programme and co-funds it for its National Health Programme and Arts Programme. These are aimed at training of youth workers throughout all youth services in these specific areas. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs are also investing in capacity building for the sector in terms of governance requirements of Boards of Management through its implementation of the Value for Money Policy Review (VFMPR) which is another of the key enablers of the strategy.

Under the VFMPR implementation, the Area Profiling, Needs Assessment and Service Requirement tool launched in January 2019 combined with a Pobal mapping exercise undertaken in 2017, provide crucial data on the specific area-based needs of young people and the services required to meet those needs. Furthermore, it is intended that the new Targeted Youth Funding Scheme will have measurement and counting tools to help inform the outcomes for young people by providing evidence of impact of services.

Additionally, the National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work (NQSF) has been utilised as a tool to assist youth services to self-assess in terms of the quality of the services they deliver. With the implementation of the VFMPR recommendations, it has become clear that there is a need to review the Framework. The quality as it relates to youth service provision will be examined as one of the work packages set out under the VFMPR. The Quality Standards for Volunteer-led Youth Groups were, following consultation with the sector via a focus group, incorporated into the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme application form to reduce the administrative burden on this volunteer-led sector.

The VFMPR supports the ongoing significant reform of youth funding in Ireland and the VFMPR Sub-Group of the National Youth Strategy Lead Team has focused on this key enabler in delivering on the majority of the priorities and outcomes from the National Youth Strategy. The main recommendation, that the former four targeted funding schemes be collapsed into one, was realised in 2019. Implementation of the new Targeted Youth Funding Scheme began on a phased basis in 2019. Leading up to this, since 2016, there has been sampling of new and augmented youth services to help to inform the rules and processes that will be the backbone of the new scheme. The formal launch of the new scheme will be the end of 2019.

Another recommendation of the VFMPR, that all targeted provision be based on clear needs assessment, is currently underway. All targeted funding from 2020 onwards will be based only on the service requirements prepared by Education and Training Boards, on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, based on a detailed Area Profile, Needs Assessment and Service Requirement tool for their geographic areas.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs officials met with the youth constituency of the National Advisory Council in 2017 to match National Youth Strategy outcomes to the Advisory Council workplan for the year. A similar internal exercise was undertaken in the Department in 2018 to check outcomes against the Council's priorities. As the youth constituency members of the Advisory Council are also in attendance at twice-yearly meetings with the 30 National Youth Organisations funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, they participated in an exercise at the meeting in April 2019 focussed on the prioritisation for the last 18 months of the National Youth Strategy.

### 7.3 LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020

The [LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018–2020](#) was published on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2018 and is a world first. It is a key commitment for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs as part of the 2016 Programme for Partnership Government and is making a significant contribution towards the Government's broader commitment to continue to strive for the full inclusion of LGBTI+ people in Irish society. It is a 3 year strategy that is strongly action oriented with the mission to ensure all LGBTI+ young people are visible, valued and included.

Early implementation measures in 2018 included:

- Mapping of existing youth services specific to the needs of young LGBTI+ people.
- Provision of additional youth service hours for LGBTI+ young people.
- Provision of funding to 39 organisations across Ireland to undertake capacity building measures for service providers who interact with LGBTI+ young people, including youth services, family resource centres, sexual health centres, addiction services, equality organisations, traveller organisations among others.
- A competition to design a LGBTI+ Welcome Sticker which will be rolled out to a wide range of organisations and businesses as a declaration of public support for diversity, inclusion and visible representation of the LGBTI+ community.

### 7.4 First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028

[First 5: A Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families](#) was launched on 19<sup>th</sup> November by the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, Minister Zappone and other members of Government. The publication of *First 5* realises a key commitment in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and marks a major milestone in policy development for the youngest members of society.

*First 5* is a ten-year plan (2019-2028) to improve the lives of babies, young children and their families. *First 5* uses evidence to identify goals, objectives and the specific actions required from across Government to support children (and their families) in the early years of life. *First 5* commits to major initiatives on family leave, children's health services, parenting supports, child-friendly communities and Early Learning and Care services among a broad range of actions.

*First 5* articulates a vision that "All babies' and young children's early years will be valued as a critical and distinct period which should be enjoyed. Families will be assisted and enabled to nurture babies

and young children and support their development, with additional support for those who need it. Those providing services for babies, young children and their families will be equipped to contribute to their learning, development, health and wellbeing. Community contexts will help babies and young children make the most of their early years and fulfil their potential.”

A framework of four Goals, nine Objectives, five Building Blocks and 37 Strategic Actions outlines the route to make this vision a reality as well as over 150 specific Actions. The *First 5* implementation plan will be published in May 2019 for the first phase of implementation and will identify key milestones for each action across 2019, 2020 and 2021 as well as the key output for the action by 2021.

The implementation structures for *First 5* will be within *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*’ overall implementation infrastructure. An annual report on *First 5* will be published each year.

## 7.5 Irish Youth Justice Strategy (Forthcoming)

Following the expiry of the Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018 (YJAP), it is intended to develop a new National Youth Justice Strategy. The development of the new strategy incorporates a review of the Children Act 2001, which had already commenced as an action under the YJAP.

The Strategy development is being assisted by an expert Steering Group chaired by Minister of State David Stanton T.D., who has special responsibility for Youth Justice within the Department of Justice and Equality (DJE). The Steering Group includes the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Oberstown, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Skills, Tusla, An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service, as well as academic, NGO and practitioner experts. The intention is that the new strategy will come into effect in 2020, as a constituent strategy within the next iteration of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* framework.

# Appendix

## *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* Mid-Term Review 2018 Recommendations

Emerging issues/Recommendations
1. High-level structures should be maintained where senior officials from different Government Departments engage on key issues related to children.
2. Progress should be maintained on achieving commitments; however, owing to the amount, level and quality of some commitments it is critical that further strategising and prioritisation is ensured in the next phase of implementation.
3. There is a need to ensure that cross-sectoral work is child-centred within Departments and bodies working together in a holistic and strategic way. As these cross-cutting structures are nearly unique in Government it would be important that they are recognised, and where appropriate replicated.
4. Wider leadership at the Consortium should be considered.
5. Additional Government Departments should be included in the <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i> infrastructure.
6. The challenge of the growth of other initiatives that have a child/youth focus but which are not directly linked or fully utilising the <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i> infrastructure, i.e. Mental Health Taskforce, Early Years' Forum, should be addressed.
7. Greater promotion of <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i> on social media is warranted in order to increase awareness and engagement among young people.
8. While recognising the complexity of the framework, optimum messaging and communications on <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i> across Government is required.
9. Increased awareness of <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i> amongst children, young people and the general public is needed. A targeted focus in some education outputs, i.e. new Politics Curriculum and CSPE (Civil, Social and Political Education), could be considered.
10. Greater utilisation of the NGO sector to promote awareness of <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i> is needed.
11. Greater engagement with existing systems to support the communication and advancement of key strategic priorities such as child poverty and child homelessness should be progressed.
12. The access to and impact of publications such as the <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i> quarterly ezines and Annual Reports should be maximised.
13. Better engagement with Comhairle na nÓg and seldom heard children should be considered. Additionally, it was suggested that DCYA could make better use of findings from previous consultations with children and young people.
14. It is recommended that when consulting with young people it is preferable to consider carrying out such exercises in local, youth-centred settings.

15. Continuation of the good engagement evident in the development of collaborative approaches to addressing issues is needed. The roundtable on child poverty which emerged from this work brought key influencers and stakeholders together to examine the issue in more detail. This has provided a greater focus on this issue, particularly from a child's rights perspective.
16. At Consortium level, there is a need for greater accountability and engagement from some Departments, Agencies and other members in relation to their commitments under the framework.
17. There should be a greater focus on the 'Safe and protected from harm' outcome. Respondents as young as ten years and up to the age of 24 years noted the effects of crime, drugs, violence, harassment and alcohol abuse, which have left children and young people feeling unprotected and unsafe in their community.
18. A fuller appreciation of the 'Connected, respected and contributing' outcome is emphasised. Respondents recognised this as being important in the context of community development. Specifically, services and supports for children and young people with a disability and young migrants were highlighted.
19. The development of accessible and useable data and information in informing and supporting best responses for children and young people should be advanced.
20. Greater progress on the development, implementation and integration of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and its constituent strategies is needed.
21. A greater focus on aligning and advancing the transformational goals is required.
22. There is a need to build upon and transfer the learning derived from the development and implementation of this first national cross-government Policy Framework for children and young people so that other policy implementation initiatives are informed by the strengths and weaknesses of such an approach.
23. There should be a sustained focus on improving outcomes for children and young people by harmonising policy, enabling better transfer of policy into practice, and ensuring that better practice is informed by evidence.