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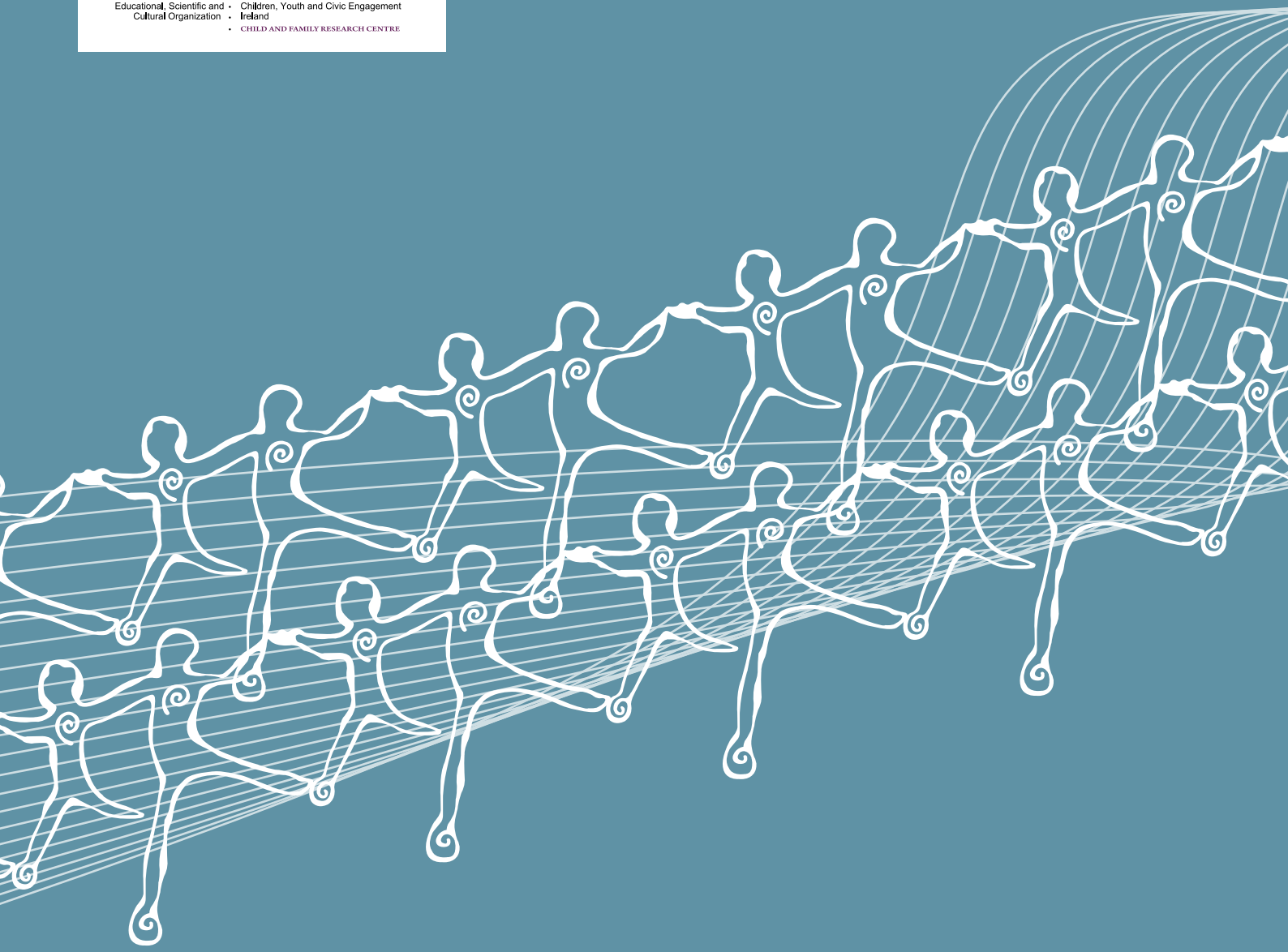

Parenting Support & Parental Participation

Parental Participation – Overall Survey Findings

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TUSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
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About the Development and Mainstreaming Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support

The research and evaluation team at the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC), NUI Galway provides research, evaluation and technical support to Tusla's Development and Mainstreaming Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS). This is a new programme of action being undertaken by Tulsa – Child and Family Agency as part of its National Service Delivery Framework. The programme seeks to transform child and family services in Ireland by embedding prevention and early intervention into the culture and operations of Tusla. The research and evaluation carried out by the UCFRC focuses on the implementation and the outcomes of the PPFS Programme and is underpinned by the overarching research question:

> *Is the organisational culture and practice at Tusla and its partners changing such that services are more integrated, preventative, evidence informed and inclusive of children and parents and if so, is this contributing to improved outcomes for children and their families? .*

The research and evaluation study adopts a Work Package approach. This has been adopted to deliver a comprehensive suite of research and evaluation activities involving sub-studies of the main areas within the Tusla's PPFS Programme. The Work Packages are: Meitheal and Child and Family Support Networks; Children's Participation; Parenting Support and Parental Participation; Public Awareness; and Commissioning.

This publication is part of the Parenting Support and Parental Participation Work Package.

About the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre

The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC) is part of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society at the National University of Ireland Galway. It was founded in 2007, through support from The Atlantic Philanthropies, Ireland and the Health Services Executive (HSE), with a base in the School of Political Science and Sociology, the mission of the Centre is to help create the conditions for excellent policies, services and practices that improve the lives of children, youth and families through research, education and service development. The UCFRC has an extensive network of relationships and research collaborations internationally and is widely recognised for its core expertise in the areas of Family Support and Youth Development.

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1

Introduction

The Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme is a comprehensive programme of early intervention and preventative work which is being undertaken by Tusla, Ireland's Child and Family Agency, with the support of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC), NUI Galway. This Programme is being implemented collaboratively by Tusla and its partner organisations by way of five main work streams (Tusla, 2017): Meitheal and Child and Family Support Networks; Parenting Support and Parental Participation; Children's Participation; Public Awareness; and Commissioning. The findings presented in this report relate to the Parenting Support and Parental Participation programme of work.

This is the second report examining the extent to which parental participation is currently embedded in Irish organisations providing parenting support. The purpose of the research is to ascertain levels of awareness about: Tusla's programme of work to support parental participation, participatory practice in organisations that support parents, challenges to participatory practice, and the skill development needs of those working with parents.

Answers provided through an online survey contribute to a follow-up study of parental participation practice within Tusla and Tusla partner organisations, informing in a formative way the development of activities in this area. The first report examining the extent to which parental participation is currently embedded in Irish organisations providing parenting support is available on the UCFRC PPFS Development and Mainstreaming Programme web page.[1]

[1] www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescochildandfamilyresearchcentre/dmpfilesmaster/Parental-Participation-Survey-Report.pdf.

2

Description of Respondents

This section describes the respondents' employment profile, geographical location, and area of work. The profile of the respondents in this follow-up survey differs from that of the baseline study. In both cases Tusla respondents were contacted via the Tusla Newscast, which contained a link to the online survey, and partner-organisation respondents were contacted via email addresses publicly available on their websites. While such an approach had the desired effect of eliciting a large sample size that is geographically wide-ranging, it also resulted in differing respondent numbers and profiles at baseline and follow-up. Consequently this report is unable to provide definitive comparisons between the two surveys conducted. However, based on the data gathered at both baseline and follow-up, section nine of this report does provide an overview of changes over time – with the caveat that this overview is for illustrative purposes only and is therefore tentative in its conclusions.

2.1 Profile of Respondents

The Parenting Participation Survey was completed by 250 respondents, including 210 Tusla employees, 21 practitioners in partner organisations, and 19 others who categorised themselves as agency, charity, or temporary workers.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Respondent Group	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents[2]
Tusla employees	210	84%
Partner organisations	21	8.4%
Other	19	7.6%
Total	**250**	**100%**

2.1.1 Respondents by Geographical Area

Tusla Employees

Tusla employees nationwide responded to the survey; no particular region was over-represented. The highest number of respondents in any region was Galway/Roscommon (28) followed by Waterford/Wexford (26) and the Mid West (24).

[2] All percentages are rounded.

Table 2: Tusla Respondents by Geographical Area

Geographical Area	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary	9	4.28%
Cavan/Monaghan	1	0.47%
Cork	9	4.28%
Donegal	10	4.76%
Dublin North	10	4.76%
Dublin North City	12	5.71%
Dublin South Central	9	4.28%
Dublin South East/Wicklow	6	2.85%
Dublin South West/Kildare/West Wicklow	9	4.28%
Galway/Roscommon	28	13.33%
Kerry	3	1.42%
Louth/Meath	12	5.71%
Mayo	8	3.8%
Midlands	13	6.2%
Mid West	24	11.4%
Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan	4	1.9%
Waterford/Wexford	26	12.38%
Other areas[3]	15	7.14%
No answer	2	0.95%
Total	**210**	**100%**

[3] Other responses pertained to having regional, national, or multiple areas of responsibility.

Partner Organisation/Other Respondents

Partner organisation/other respondents were also from several parts of the country; a slight majority (16.66%) work in Limerick.

Table 3: Partner Organisation/Other Respondents by Geographical Area

Geographical Area	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Carlow	2	4.76%
Cavan	1	2.38%
Clare	1	2.38%
Cork	1	2.38%
Donegal	3	7.14%
Dublin	3	7.14%
Galway	4	9.52%
Kerry	0	-
Kildare	2	4.76%
Kilkenny	2	4.76%
Laois	0	-
Leitrim	0	-
Limerick	7	16.66%
Longford	0	-
Louth	1	2.38%
Mayo	0	-
Meath	0	-
Monaghan	3	7.14%
Offaly	0	-
Roscommon	0	-
Sligo	2	4.76%
Tipperary	2	4.76%
Waterford	1	2.38%
Westmeath	3	7.14%
Wexford	3	7.14%
Wicklow	1	2.38%
Total	**42**[4]	**100%**

[4] It seems that this question may have been answered incorrectly on two occasions.

2.1.2 Respondents by Job Title

Tusla Employees

Many Tusla employees who completed the survey were Social Workers (25.7%) or Social Care Workers (15.23%); 19.5% of respondents classified themselves as being in the 'Other' category, the breakdown of which is outlined in Table 5 below. Three Tusla employees did not respond to this question.

Table 4: Tusla Respondents by Job Title

Job Title	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Social Worker	54	25.7%
Social Care Worker	32	15.23%
Family Support Worker	12	5.7%
Psychology/Counselling	1	0.47%
Nursing	1	0.47%
Other Health Professional	1	0.47%
Education and Welfare Officer	11	5.23%
Other Support Staff	9	4.28%
Management	31	14.76%
VIII+ Administration	14	6.66%
Other (see Table 5 below)	41	19.5%
Unknown	3	1.42%
Total responses	**210**	**100%**

Table 5: Other Tusla Respondents by Job Title

Job Title	Number of Respondents
Family Support Project Leader	1
CYPSC	2
Child and Family Support Network Coordinator	1
Administrator	6
Training & Development Officer	3
Early Years Inspectorate	2
Parenting Support	1
Area Manager	1
Home Education Assessor	1
Teacher	1
Family Welfare Conference	3
PPFS	3
Social Care Leader	4
Project Worker	1

Job Title	Number of Respondents
Trainer	1
Information Officer – Social Work Team Leader	1
Inspectorate Quality Assurance	1
Marte Meo Therapist	1
Child Protection and Welfare Social Worker	1
Research & Information Officer	1
Quality Assurance Monitor Children's Residential Care	1
Aftercare Worker	1
Workforce Learning & Development	1
Communications	1
Other	1
Total	**41**

Partner Organisation/Other Respondents

Those who categorised themselves as being connected to partner organisation or as 'others' stem from a variety of service areas, and some offer a complex combination of different types of services. The area of targeted Family Support had the most responses (22.5%).

Table 6: Partner Organisation/Other Respondents by Job Title

Service Area[5]	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Counselling/Therapy (Children/ Carers/Parents)	1	2.5%
Community-Based Family Support	8	20%
Targeted Family Support	9	22.5%
Family Resource Centre	4	10%
Adolescent/Youth (Prevention/ Intervention/Targeted/Mentoring)	4	10%
Parenting Support Service/Parenting Programme/Information/Advice	8	20%
Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence	3	7.5%
Early Years	2	5%
Addiction Services	0	-
Unknown	1	2.5%
Total responses	**40**	**100%**

[5] In the 'other' box provided for this question, five respondents entered more specific detail about their service area, such as: Coordinator, Area-Based Childhood (ABC) Programme, Community-Based Child and Family Project, Homeless Support Services, and Data Protection.

3

Tusla's Programme of Work in Parenting Support and Parental Participation

In order to ascertain levels of knowledge of Tusla's work on parenting support and parental participation, all respondents were asked about their awareness of the ongoing programme of work in this area.

Table 7: Awareness of Tusla's Programme of Work

Somewhat	Yes	No	No Answer
75	121	30	24

In addition, all respondents were asked about their awareness of the different elements of that programme of work. Of the total number of responses to each question, 66.1% are aware of the Parental Participation Toolkit, but some have no awareness of the Parental Participation Toolkit Briefings (30.8%). 60.8% of responses indicated awareness of the Parenting Support Champions Network, but not as many were aware of the Parenting Support Champions Practitioner's Handbook (36.6%). Just over half (51.06%) indicated that they are aware of the Parental Participation Seed Fund.

Table 8: Awareness of Elements of Tusla's Programme of Work in Parenting Support and Parental Participation

Programme of Work	Yes	%	No	%	Unsure	%	No Answer
Parental Participation Toolkit	131	66.1	35	17.6	32	16.16	52
Parental Participation Toolkit Briefings	90	48.6	57	30.8	38	20.54	65
Parental Participation Seed Fund	96	51.06	63	33.5	29	15.4	62
Parenting Support Champions Network	121	60.8	51	25.6	27	13.5	51
Parenting Support Champions Practitioner's Handbook	86	45.0	73	36.6	32	16.08	59

Respondents' comments on this question were mixed, but generally pertained to having no awareness or limited knowledge of the programme of work. Respondents in some cases pointed to having better awareness of child and youth participation than parenting, as is evident in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Comments on Tusla's Programme of Work around Parental Support and Parental Participation

Comments	Number of Responses	% of Responses
More dissemination needed	1	6.25
Knowledge is limited	4	25
Capacity to assimilate all PPFS limited (workload)	2	12.5
Awareness of child and youth participation but not of parenting programme of work	3	18.75
Full awareness	2	12.5
No awareness	3	18.75
Surprised by information in the survey	1	6.25
Total responses	**16**	**100**

4

Practitioners Working Directly with Parents

4.1 All Respondents

In the course of their work, the majority of respondents (77.3%) are in direct contact with parents and work with them on an individual level providing different supports.

Table 10: Direct Work with Parents

Yes	No	No Answer
174	51	25

At a practice level, many utilise participatory practices as part of their approach to working with parents. Providing parents with the appropriate information they need to be involved was the most commonly identified participatory approach to working with parents, with 72.3% of responses indicating this was definitely true and 25.8% indicating it was mostly true.

Table 11: Participatory Approaches to Working with Parents

In my role I...	Definitely true (%)		Mostly true (%)		Unsure (%)		Mostly not true (%)		Definitely not true (%)		No Answer (%)
Provide parents with the appropriate information they need to be involved	123	72.3	44	25.8	2	1.17	-	-	1	0.58	80
Actively seek the views of parents	134	79.2	30	17.7	-	-	3	1.7	2	1.18	81
Support parents to express their views	135	79.4	31	18.2	3	1.76	1	0.58	-	-	80
Ensure parents' views are listened to	133	79.1	31	18.4	2	1.19	2	1.19	-	-	82
Work in partnership with parents to reach decisions	109	65.2	49	29.3	4	2.39	4	2.39	1	0.59	83
Provide parents with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken	120	71	40	23.6	3	1.77	4	2.36	2	1.18	81

5

Challenges to Working in Participatory Ways with Parents

While it is evident from Table 11 above that a participatory approach to working with parents is an element of practice in many cases, a number of respondents indicated that there are challenges to this approach (64.1%).

Table 12: Challenges to Working in Participatory Ways with Parents

Yes	No	Unsure	No Answer
109	47	14	80

Respondents provided several examples of the challenges they experience. Some of the most common were: misconceptions of Tusla and services, resulting in distrust (12.3%); parental resistance towards Tusla, social work, and child protection (18.18%); and parents having a range of issues requiring attention, including addiction, mental health issues, problems with housing and homelessness, and low levels of education and aggression (20.66%).

Table 13: Challenges to Participatory Practice with Parents

Challenges Encountered	Number of Responses	% of Responses
Unwillingness/inability/difficult to engage	11	9.09
Difficulties in collaborative working	12	9.91
Misconceptions/distrust	15	12.3
Parental resistance towards or disagreement with Tusla/social work/child protection	22	18.18
Professional resistance towards participation	5	4.13
Parental issues (aggression/addiction/mental health/housing/education)	25	20.66
Service limitations	10	8.2
Ineffective policies	6	4.9
Participation consumes time and resources	15	12.3
Total responses	**121**	**100%**

6

Organisations Working in Participatory Ways with Parents

Respondents were asked to rate current opportunities for parental participation at an overall organisational level. A number of respondents indicated that their organisations utilise participatory practices as part of their overall approach to working with parents. Supporting parents to express their views was the most commonly identified participatory approach to working with parents, with 41.1% of responses indicating this was definitely true and 37.6% indicating it was mostly true.

Table 14: Opportunities for Parental Participation in Organisations

My Organisation presently:	Definitely true (%)		Mostly true (%)		Unsure (%)		Mostly not true (%)		Definitely not true (%)		No Answer (%)
Provides parents with the appropriate information they need to be involved	66	38.6	71	41.5	25	14.6	7	4.09	2	1.16	79
Actively seeks the views of parents	64	37.4	69	40.3	22	12.8	14	8.18	2	1.16	79
Supports parents to express their views	70	41.1	64	37.6	35	20.6	1	0.58	1	0.58	80
Ensures parents' views are listened to	48	28.2	59	34.7	45	26.4	15	8.8	3	1.7	80
Works in partnership with parents to reach decisions	51	30	76	44.7	29	17.05	11	6.47	3	1.7	80
Provides parents with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken	54	32.3	69	41.3	31	18.5	11	6.5	2	1.19	83

Respondents provided examples of how their organisation works in participatory ways in a number of areas, such as service planning, reaching decisions, and review and evaluation of services.

6.1 Parental Participation in Service Planning

The most common example of participatory practice in the planning of services was identified as the inclusion of parents' views in the planning of services. 54.9% of responses indicated various ways that parents' views were accessed. However, 9.9% of responses indicated that parents had no involvement in the planning of services in their organisations.

Table 15: Parental Participation in Service Planning

Approaches to PP in Service Planning	Frequency of Response	% of Responses
Identify needs/assessment	8	7.2
Through CYPSC/FRC	3	2.7
FWC/SOS/CPC	4	3.6
Parents not involved	11	9.9
Through Seed Funds	4	3.6
Meitheal	8	7.2
Parental views/advisory committees[6]	61	54.9
Design plans/interventions	5	4.5
PSC Project	1	0.9
Provide information/parenting programmes	5	4.5
N/A	1	0.9
Total responses	**111**	**100**

6.2 Parental Participation in Reaching Decisions

The most common example of working in partnership with parents to reach decisions was identified as being facilitated through meetings and consultations (40%), with 4% of responses indicating that such practices were rarely used or not in place in their organisation.

Table 16: Parental Participation in Reaching Decisions

Methods of Participatory Practice in Reaching Decisions	Frequency of Response	% of Responses
FWC/SOS/CPC/EWC/CCIR	33	26.4
Meetings/consultations	50	40
Meitheal	27	21.6
In collaboration with other agencies	1	0.8
Lundy model	1	0.8
Part of Family Support Services	5	4
Not in place	3	2.4
N/A	2	1.6
Not sure	1	0.8
Rarely	2	1.6
Total responses	**125**	**100**

[6] Garnering parents' views through: individual/group meetings, focus groups, surveys, questionnaires, and feedback forms. In addition, advisory committees are set up in some organisations.

6.3 Parental Participation in the Review and Evaluation of Services

A number of respondents provided examples of how their organisations work in participatory ways with parents in the review and evaluation of services. Seeking parental feedback (24.7%) was highlighted as the most common form of participatory practice in this area. However, 9.1% of responses indicated that no such practice occurred.

Table 17: Parental Participation in the Review and Evaluation of Services

Participatory Practice in the Review and Evaluation of Services	Frequency of Response	% of Responses
Care plans/welfare conferences/ CPC/CCIR	8	7.3
Parents asked for views on service	19	17.4
N/A	5	4.5
Parents not included in evaluation	10	9.1
Parental feedback	27	24.7
Meitheal	6	5.5
Measures taken	19	17.4
NUIG evaluation	1	0.9
Planning and review meeting	3	2.7
Parental participation group	1	0.9
Response to complaints	2	1.8
Unsure	6	5.5
Day for service users	1	0.9
CYPSC	1	0.9
Total responses	**109**	**100**

7

Tangible Change as a Result of Participatory Practice with Parents

Comments are mixed on how participatory practice resulted in tangible change in the areas of service planning, reaching decisions, and review and evaluations in the different organisations.

7.1 Change in Service Planning

Regarding service planning, 28.8% of responses maintained that services were now tailored to the needs identified by parents, and 12.2% of responses indicated that dialogue with parents had modified their practice towards parental inclusion in service planning, with 11.11% of responses indicating increased efforts to include parents in planning. 17.7% of responses revealed that no change in practice had occurred in this area.

Table 18: Tangible Change in Service Planning as a Result of Parental Participation

Changes in Service Planning	Frequency of Response	% of Responses
Services tailored to needs identified[7]	26	28.8
No change	16	17.7
Modified practices[8]	11	12.2
Meitheal	6	6.6
CPC/SOS	3	3.3
CYPSC	1	1.1
Collaboration with other services	1	1.1
Increased efforts to include parents in planning[9]	10	11.11
Parents now actively involved in planning	14	15.5
Unsure	2	2.2
Total responses	**90**	**100**

[7] Based on parents' needs, changes have been made; for example: running programmes at times that suit parents, providing more one-to-one support, and adjusting programme content.

[8] Practices have changed in the way parents are treated by the service, and the way that services or consultations are operationalised.

[9] Parents invited to be involved in forums and boards, as well as setting targets, etc.

7.2 Change in Practices around Reaching Decisions

Responses to this question indicated that the practice of working with parents to reach decisions had improved as a result of dialogue and information-sharing with parents (14.2%). An equal number of responses maintained that such improvements were as a result of the Meitheal process (14.2%). Improvements in decision-making practices have had a number of positive effects, as outlined in Table 19 below. 5.3% of responses stated that no change in decision-making practices had occurred in their organisation.

Table 19: Tangible Change in Decision-Making Practice as a Result of Parental Participation

Changes in Decision-Making	Frequency of Response	% of Response Rate
Improved parenting	12	10.7
Better care arrangements for children	2	1.7
Better outcomes for children	7	6.2
Better listening	16	14.2
FS/FWC/CICR/EWC/CP	12	10.7
Improved practice (through dialogue/information)	16	14.2
Improved help-seeking behaviour	1	0.9
Meitheal	16	14.2
Improved parental confidence	4	3.5
Improved relationships (staff and parents)	3	2.6
Moved away from formal support	1	0.9
Workers' capacity to facilitate improved	1	0.9
Voluntary admission to care	1	0.9
Reunification	3	2.6
Parent representatives at organisational level	1	0.9
Change in public awareness campaign	1	0.9
No change	6	5.3
Answers not applicable	9	8
Total responses	**112**	**100**

7.3 Change in the Review and Evaluation of Services

The most prominent example of tangible change in review and evaluation services as a result of dialogue with parents is cited as post-intervention surveys, reviews, and evaluations (20%). Seeking and acting on feedback from parents, and having parents involved in this process in some capacity, were also identified as tangible changes (18.6%). 12% of responses indicated that there has been no change in this area.

Table 20: Tangible Change in Review and Evaluation Practices as a Result of Parental Participation

Changes in Reviews & Evaluations	Frequency of Response	% of Responses
N/A	9	12
Seeking/acting on feedback from parents	14	18.6
Meitheal	2	2.6
Parents are involved	14	18.6
Research on parental participation	2	2.6
Pre/post meetings	2	2.6
CPC	1	1.3
CYPSC	1	1.3
Survey/review/evaluation post-intervention	15	20
Unsure	4	5.3
Needs improvement	1	1.3
No change	9	12
Limited resources	1	1.3
Total responses	**75**	**100**

8

Supporting Parental Participation in Organisations

Respondents provided several suggestions on how to support the implementation of parental participation in their organisations. Many (12.2%) suggested that support for professionals was needed in this area. Some responses indicated that resources were needed to implement parental participation effectively (10%) and that direction and support were needed at organisational level in order for it to become embedded (6.4%).

Table 21: Suggested Changes to Support Parental Participation

Suggested Changes	Frequency of Response	% of Responses
Implement participation fully as mandatory in Tusla and partner organisations	8	5.6
Organisational management needs to improve: direction and follow-through	9	6.4
Train parents for PP	1	0.7
Facilities to support parental participation[10]	9	6.4
N/A	9	6.4
Need to encourage informative feedback	10	7.1
Need to increase involvement of other agencies in Meitheal	1	0.7
More appropriate involvement of parents	6	4.3
More understanding of the challenges of parental participation (practitioners & parents)	6	4.3
Parental advisory groups/forums/advocates	11	7.9
Promote the Parental Participation Toolkit	2	
Increase PSC access to practitioners	1	0.7
Increase awareness (practitioner/public)	9	6.4
Reduce caseloads or add to caseload management tool/ time/more staff	11	7.9
Resources to implement parental participation	14	10
Support for professionals needed[11]	17	12.2
User-friendly documents and information needed	4	2.8
Not sure	11	7.9
Total responses	**139**	**100**

[10] Buildings, meeting rooms, childcare, and transport, for example.

[11] Recognise the value of parental participation work, facilitate time for true rather than tokenistic inclusion and consultation, training needed same as child and youth participation, information and discussion needed for staff.

8.1 Skills and Training that Would Support the Development of Participatory Practice with Parents

Respondents identified several skills and gave suggestions for training that could improve the way their organisation approaches participatory practice with parents. Specific suggestions for updating skills, training, and development are outlined in Table 22 below.

Table 22: Skills/Training Suggestions to Improve Participatory Practice

Suggestions for Skills/Training	Suggestions for Skills/Training	Suggestions for Skills/Training
Academic qualification	Evaluation/research techniques	Power
Active listening	Use of the Family Star	Include PP in monthly supervision
Dealing with additional challenges	How to get messages out there	Parental participation training
Attachment	Group facilitation	Reflective functioning
Community development	Integrate managers in PP	Relationship resolution
Coaching skills	Learning from other areas	Replicate child and youth participation training
Communication	Training in the Lundy model	Research on impact of PP
Conflict management	Access to manuals	Seeking views and giving feedback
Counselling skills	Marte Meo	Service user training
Courtroom management	More information on PP	Signs of Safety
CS training	Multi-skilled workers	Stress management training
Daily life event training	New communities	Team training
Domestic violence	Parents Plus	Trauma
Effective consultation	Parents' rights training	PSCs as a means of information
Engaging hard-to-reach populations	Training on PP Policy and Procedure	

9

Key Findings

This section of the report provides an overview of changes that occurred between the baseline survey and the follow-up survey, with the caveat that this overview is for illustrative purposes only and is therefore tentative in its conclusions.

9.1 Awareness of Elements of Tusla's Programme of Work in Parenting Support and Parental Participation

Exploration of levels of awareness of the different elements of Tusla's programme of work in parenting support and parental participation at baseline (depicted as time one, TI, in tables 23, 24 and 25 below) and follow-up (depicted as time two, T2, in tables 23, 24 and 25 below) and follow-up suggests that awareness has increased across all elements, and consequently the number of respondents unaware of the different elements of the programme of work in this area has decreased. However, the numbers who categorised themselves as being unsure have increased.

Table 23: Awareness at Baseline (T1) and Follow up (T2)

Programme of Work	Yes –T1	Yes – T2	No – T1	No – T2	Unsure –T1	Unsure – T2
Parental Participation Toolkit	47.5	66.1 +	33.5	17.6 _	9.6	16.16 +
Parental Participation Toolkit Briefings	30.5	48.6 +	49	30.8 _	8.5	20.54 +
Parental Participation Seed Fund	29.5	51.06 +	51.5	33.5 _	8	15.4 +
Parenting Support Champions Network	32.5	60.8 +	48	25.6 _	8	13.5 +
Parenting Support Champions Practitioner's Handbook	20.5	45.0 +	56.5	36.6 _	11	16.08 +

Respondents' comments on this question were generally mixed at both baseline and follow-up. However, consistent comments at both times suggest that levels of awareness about Tusla's programme of work in this area are not universal, with comments suggesting that respondents have full awareness, have awareness of some elements but not all, or have limited knowledge. In addition, the need for more dissemination was identified at both baseline and follow-up.

9.2 Working Directly with Parents

9.2.1 Practitioners Working in Participatory Ways with Parents

The majority of respondents surveyed work directly with parents as part of their role, and many utilise participatory practices as part of their approach to working with parents. Questions exploring participatory practice as an approach to working with parents at baseline and follow-up suggest that in the specific areas explored, respondents are utilising such practices, evident in the increase in 'true' responses and the decline in the 'not sure' responses. However, in the case of the 'mostly not true' category, two areas – 'actively seeking the views of parents' and 'ensuring parents' views are listened to' – saw a slight increase.

Table 24: Participatory Approaches to Working with Parents in Practice at Baseline (T1) and Follow-up (T2)

In my role I...	Definitely true (%)		Mostly true (%)		Unsure (%)		Mostly not true (%)		Definitely not true (%)	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
Provide parents with the appropriate information they need to be involved	47.5	72.3 +	22	25.8 +	2	1.17 _	0.5	-	1.0	0.58 _
Actively seek the views of parents	53	79.2 +	16	17.7 +	1	-	0.5	1.7 +	2.5	1.18 _
Support parents to express their views	53.5	79.4 +	15	18.2 +	2	1.76 _	0.5	0.58 -	1.5	-
Ensure parents' views are listened to	51	79.1 +	15	18.4 +	3.5	1.19	0.5 _	1.19 +	1.5	-
Work in partnership with parents to reach decisions	38.5	65.2 +	24	29.3 +	5	2.39 _	2.5	2.39 _	2.5	0.59 _
Provide parents with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken	50	71 +	17.5	23.6 +	2.5	1.77 _	-	2.36 _	2.0	1.18 _

9.2.2 Organisations Working in Participatory Ways with Parents

Respondents were asked to rate current opportunities for parental participation at an overall organisational level at both baseline and follow-up. A number of respondents indicated that their organisations utilise participatory practices as part of their overall approach to working with parents, evident in increases in the 'true' categories. However, with increases in the 'unsure' and the 'mostly not true' categories and increases and decreases in the 'definitely not true' category, indications are that opportunities for parental participation are mixed and organisation-dependent.

Table 25: Opportunities for Parental Participation in Organisations at Baseline (T1) and Follow-up (T2)

My Organisation presently:	Definitely true (%)		Mostly true (%)		Unsure (%)		Mostly not true (%)		Definitely not true (%)	
Time one/Time two	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
Provides parents with the appropriate information they need to be involved	26.5	38.6 +	35.5	41.5 +	8.8	14.6 +	4	4.09 +	-	1.16
Actively seeks the views of parents	30	37.4 +	25.5	40.3 +	9.5	12.8 +	6	8.18 +	-	1.16
Supports parents to express their views	31	41.1 +	27.5	37.6 +	10	20.6 +	4.5	0.58 _	1.0	0.58 _
Ensures parents' views are listened to	22.5	28.2 +	24.5	34.7 +	18.5	26.4 +	7.5	8.8 +	1.0	1.7 +
Works in partnership with parents to reach decisions	26	30 +	29.5	44.7 +	11.5	17.05 +	5.0	6.47 +	2.0	1.7 _
Provides parents with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken	30	32.3 +	29.5	41.3 +	8.0	18.5 +	4.0	6.5 +	2.0	1.19 _

9.2.3 Examples of Participatory Working with Parents

Respondents provided examples of how their organisation works in participatory ways in a number of areas, such as service planning, reaching decisions, and review and evaluation of services.

9.2.3.1 Parental Participation in Service Planning

Both the baseline and follow-up surveys identified similar ways in which parents were involved in service planning. The inclusion of parental views (through committees) in the planning of services was identified most often as a mechanism through which practice is performed in this area. Notably, however, both the Parental Participation Seed-Funded Projects and the Parenting Support Champions Project were identified in the follow-up survey as mechanisms through which parents are involved in service planning, which had not been identified previously.

9.2.3.2 Parental Participation in Reaching Decisions

Responses to the question of methods of participation in reaching decisions were similar at baseline and follow-up, with no significant differences between the two times. Meetings and consultations, Family Welfare Conferences, Signs of Safety, Child Protection Case Conferences, Child Care in Review, and Meitheal were identified most often as the method through which such practice was accomplished.

9.2.3.3 Parental Participation in the Review and Evaluation of Services

While types of participatory practice in relation to parents' involvement in the review and evaluation of services are similar in the baseline and follow-up surveys, findings show that there seems to be increased focus on involving parents in review and evaluation. The use of evaluative measures, meetings for planning and review, and procedures for responding to complaints were all identified in the follow-up survey in addition to methods highlighted in the baseline survey.

9.2.4 Tangible Change as a Result of Participatory Practice with Parents

Comments on how participatory practice has resulted in tangible change in the areas of service planning, reaching decisions, and review and evaluations in the different organisations are broadly similar at both baseline and follow-up. However, the follow-up survey highlights some additional changes not highlighted in the baseline survey, suggesting a possible increase in effect over time.

9.2.4.1 Tangible Change in Service Planning as a Result of Parental Participation

Findings on examples of how participatory practice resulted in tangible change in the area of service planning show that such practice resulted in services tailored to the identified needs of service users. This was the most cited tangible change at both baseline and follow-up. Increased efforts to include parents in planning and the active involvement of parents in planning were identified in the follow-up survey. However, a similar number of respondents maintained that there was no tangible change in this area at both baseline and follow-up.

9.2.4.2 Tangible Change in Decision-Making Practices as a Result of Parental Participation

In terms of tangible change in decision-making practices as a result of parental participation, improved practice and improved parenting were cited in both surveys as examples of tangible change in this area. A number of additional changes in decision-making practices were cited in the follow-up survey which had not been previously indicated, such as better listening and improved parental confidence.

9.2.4.3 Tangible Change in the Review and Evaluation Practices as a Result of Parental Participation

In relation to tangible change in the review and evaluation practices as a result of parental participation, review and evaluation post-intervention was cited most as a tangible change at both baseline and follow-up. The need for improvement and limited resources to accomplish such changes was also identified at both times.

9.3 Challenges to Working in Participatory Ways with Parents

While it is evident that a participatory approach to working with parents is an element of practice in many cases, a number of respondents indicated at both baseline and follow-up that there are challenges to this approach. Challenges to working in participatory ways with parents are similar at both times. Particular challenges identified at baseline and follow-up include: parental unwillingness or inability to engage, parental resistance towards Tusla/social work/child protection, parental issues,[12] service limitations, ineffective policies, and the time and resources required to fulfil such practices effectively. It is worth noting that there were some differences across the two surveys; difficulties in collaborative working were identified in the follow-up survey with 9.9% of responses indicating this.

9.4 Supporting Parental Participation in Organisations

Respondents at both baseline and follow-up provided several suggestions on how to support the implementation of parental participation in their organisations. Suggested changes to support parental participation encompassed a number of areas; common suggestions in the baseline and follow-up included the need for the mandatory roll-out of parental participation practice in Tusla and across its partner organisations, and the need for resources to effectively implement parental participation practice. It is worth noting that there was an increase in suggestions in the follow-up study pertaining to national operations as well as local practice, which are outlined in Table 21 above.

[12] Such as: addiction problems, mental health issues, housing difficulties, and low levels of education.

9.5 Skills and Training that Would Support the Development of Participatory Practice with Parents

Respondents at both baseline and follow-up identified several skills and gave suggestions for training that could improve the way their organisation approaches participatory practice with parents. Common suggestions for updating skills, training, and development at both baseline and follow-up included active listening, community development training, coaching skills, communication, conflict management, counselling skills, and group facilitation training. Additional suggestions for training and skill development were given in the follow-up survey. A prominent suggestion was that training was required in the area of parental participation and that such training should replicate the child and youth participation training already rolled out. In addition, there was the view that parental participation practice should form part of monthly supervision.

10

Conclusion

This is the second report examining the extent to which parental participation is currently embedded in Irish organisations providing parenting support. The aims of the parental participation study, which consisted of two online surveys aimed at practitioners in organisations providing parenting support services, were to ascertain levels of awareness about: Tusla's programme of work to support parental participation, participatory practice in organisations that support parents, challenges to participatory practice, and the skill development needs of those working with parents.

Tentative comparisons between the baseline data obtained in December 2016 and the follow-up data obtained in March 2018 suggest that levels of awareness about Tusla's programme of work in the area of parenting support and parental participation have increased. Moreover, participatory practice in organisations providing parenting support seems to be expanding, evident in additional examples given in the follow-up survey. Such expansion in participatory practice seems to have resulted in tangible change in a number of areas, evidenced in the examples provided in sections seven and nine of this report. Challenges to participatory practice remained for the most part unchanged between baseline and follow-up, with similar challenges identified in both surveys. Similarly, training and skill development needs were similar in both surveys, although additional needs were identified by respondents in the follow-up survey.

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