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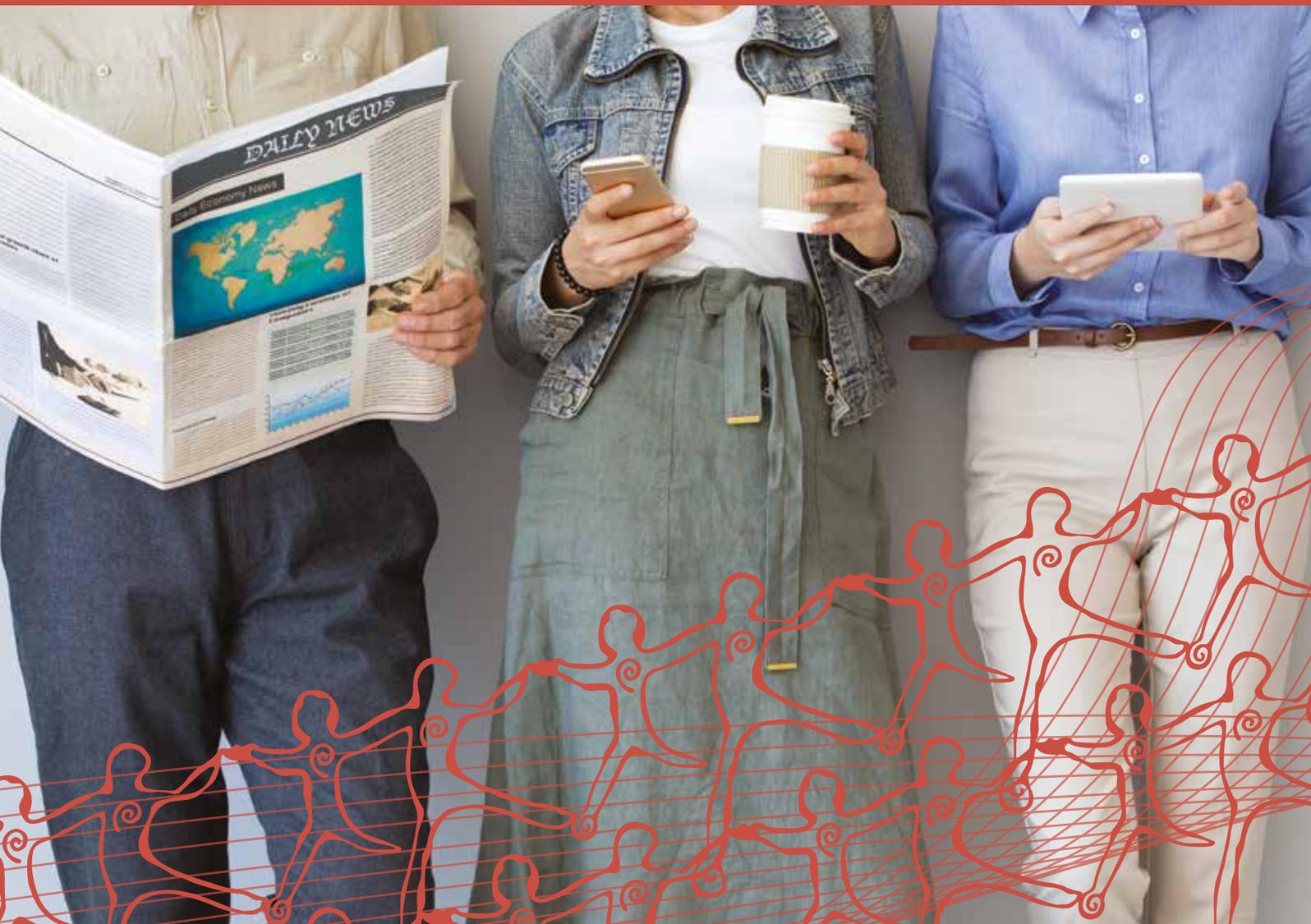
Institute for
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Public Awareness Work Package Final Report

Key Findings

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Development and Mainstreaming Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS)

This is a programme of action being undertaken by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, as part of its National Service Delivery Framework. The programme seeks to embed prevention and early intervention into the culture and operation of Tusla. The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway has undertaken an evaluation study focusing on the implementation of and the outcomes from the PPFS Programme. The study's overall research question is:

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

We have adopted a Work Package approach reflecting the key components of the PPFS Programme. The five work packages are: Meitheal and Child and Family Support Networks, Children's Participation, Parenting Support and Parental Participation, Public Awareness and Commissioning. While stand-alone studies in their own right, each Work Package contributes to the overall assessment of the programme.

What is the Public Awareness Work Package?

The Public Awareness Package is one of five core packages for the Tusla PPFS Programme. Public awareness of services that are available and how to access them is the focus of this work. The expected outcome of the Public Awareness work of Tusla is that children and families are increasingly aware of available supports and are therefore less likely to fall through gaps, as all relevant services are working together in Tusla's prevention and early intervention system. This research has enabled us to learn a lot about how the public understand PPFS and Tusla and how the public can best be informed about services and how to access them. We have also developed a focus on media reporting of PPFS and Tusla. We have used these findings to inform how Tusla can best inform the public of services into the future.

What is the focus of this report?

The agreed questions for the research evaluation of the public awareness project were as follows:

- Do the public understand Tusla's role, purpose, and processes (of how to access services, for example)?
- How can the public be made more aware of Tusla, with a view to ensuring the service is maximised as a means of enhancing child and family well-being?
- What mechanisms work best for informing the public (e.g., website, community events, leaflets, advertisement)?
- How has the public's level of awareness changed at end of 2017?
- How best can Tusla develop its public awareness activities into the future?

How was the research conducted?

The methods used to conduct the research were:

1. **Surveys** – 1,000 adults were interviewed face-to-face in 2015 and another 1,000 adults were interviewed again in 2018. Both surveys asked identical questions about knowledge and awareness of Tusla with an extra question in 2018 on how to inform the public.
2. **Print Media** - A total of 1,497 news items from a wide sample of regional and national Irish newspapers were analysed between 2014 and 2017.
3. The **literature** reviewed includes national and international studies and reports carried out to provide evidence of how public awareness campaigns have been achieved by other organisations.
4. **Semi-structured interviews** were carried out in 2017 with 100 stakeholders involved in children and family services in Ireland.
5. Twelve **HIQA reports** carried out on child protection and welfare services between 2014 and 2017 were analysed.

WHAT ARE THE KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS?

Population Surveys:

The main findings from the surveys are as follows:

- The public are a lot more aware of Tusla in 2018 than in 2015: knowledge increased from 25% in 2015 to 56.4% in 2018.
- More people also know about PPFS (up from 15.3% to 28.6%) and about Meitheal (up from 5.9% to 10.5%).
- Most people get their family support from within their own families and this increased from 60.9% to 73.9%.
- When families look for help outside of the family, they are most likely to go to the local GP or social service in their community.
- The most frequently mentioned service for improvement was mental health in 2015 (52.1%) and 2018 (53.5%).
- Even though more people know about PPFS, the findings clearly indicate the need for greater clarification of the relationship between child protection and family support that can be communicated to the public in general as well as to the media and other target groups such as politicians, educators, policy makers.
- Family support is understood differently by the public than by professionals which shows the importance of continued work to help inform the public about the nature and availability of Tusla services.

Key Stakeholder Interviews:

Key finding from the interviews are that:

- Most public awareness work by stakeholders occurs at the local/area level. Mechanisms to inform the public to raise awareness included interagency networks which were the most common approach cited. Other responses included local hubs, local fora, schools, Parenting Support Champions, word of mouth, parenting programmes and sponsorship.
- Public awareness at national level is focused mostly on the website, social media and Tusla Communications Strategy.
- Stakeholders show there is a wide range of awareness raising activities being used in local areas.
- Target strategies are essential. Over half of all respondents indicated that target strategies in their local areas were specifically aimed at particular groups such as the youth or traveller population with most being other ethnic minority parents.
- While some stakeholders said it is important to target certain groups, others stated the focus should be universal to avoid separation of groups.
- Any public awareness messages need to communicate how PPFS integrates and links with the wider workings of Tusla.
- Stakeholders state Tusla Communications Strategy going forward should take the workings of the organisation as a whole into account with PPFS being a part of that work, not focussing specifically on PPFS.
- The public needs to be aware of Tusla's work about supporting families, offering services and PPFS is an approach to that.

Print Media Analysis:

The main findings from the print media analysis were as follows:

- Media coverage shows there is more than one narrative about PPFS and Tusla and that both positive and negative reports are available.
- There is a tendency of the media to view family support work more in terms of child protection and children in care than family support work approaches.
- News items about Tusla and PPFS increased progressively across 2014 (169) and 2017 (573). More articles were negative with some positive or mixed.
- The number of news items regarding Child Protection increased steadily from 2014 to 2017.
- Children and young people in care news items increased from 2014 to 2016 but coverage almost halved from 2016 (n=97) to 2017 (n=51).
- Very little news coverage was given to young people's mental health (0.5%).
- News items regarding Support Services were more positive than negative in 2014 (65%) whereas Child Protection and Children in Care were more negative than positive in that year at 62% and 85%.



HIQA Analysis (2014-16):

A detailed content summary of all HIQA Child Protection and Welfare reports completed between 2014 and 2016 was carried out. No specific measure for public awareness currently exists. From the research, five themes pertaining to public awareness were identified from the analysis:

- Awareness strategy is in place for the public
- Awareness strategy is in place for external agencies
- Information is available to the general public
- Measures are in place around language barriers
- Measures are in place around communication difficulties.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- A variety of different ways to inform the public about Tusla should be used. In this work, it is important to take account of differences based on rural-urban context, age and levels of likely need for services.
- The role of schools in creating and maintaining greater awareness among young people should be considered in partnership with teachers and the Department of Education.
- The finding that emphasises that families rely mostly on their own networks should be used to advocate strongly for partnership working and improved general support services to families from other Government departments responsible for family and community support.
- The media and the public need more information about what family support involves. It is important to make clear in communications that while Meitheal and Signs of Safety are two distinct models of practice aimed at preventative and protective work respectively, they are complementary approaches.
- Greater partnership working with the media through local and national events be established as part of the ongoing public awareness work.
- The Child Protection and Welfare Standards from the Health and Information Quality Authority should include a measurement of public awareness actions relating to family support practice.

Summary of findings

Overall, the increase in knowledge and understanding of family support has been demonstrated and greater public awareness about what prevention partnership and family support services are has been established. The findings show the extent to which families rely on their own networks for help and also demonstrate the way in which the public understand the role and purpose of family support services delivered from universal and specialist services.

The following are some of the key messages that have emerged from the findings.

Regarding awareness and knowledge of Tusla, our key messages are:

- The public understanding of PPFS differs somewhat from professional constructions.
- The relationship between child protection and family support needs to be clearer.
- The relationship between Family Support and Generic Universal Services needs to be considered.
- Most family support in Ireland is delivered through family and informal support networks.
- Particular attention should be paid to media reporting of PPFS at national and local level.
- Given that people often go to universal rather than specific family support services, the findings show the importance of ensuring high levels of knowledge and awareness of PPFS services among GPs and PHNs for example for adults, and among schools and teachers for young people.

In relation to how best to inform the public about TUSLA PPFS, our key messages are:

- A variety of mechanisms and strategies should be used to inform the public.
- Clarity of purpose and rationale is important in a communication strategy.
- Specific strategies are needed for creating awareness among young people.
- Campaigns and awareness activities need to include a focus on targeted populations.
- Public awareness activities and campaigns should have an evaluation plan.
- Public awareness work needs to capture the values and identity of Tusla in public awareness work.

In relation to how the findings can inform the public awareness work of Tusla into the future, a number of recommendations were made and are summarised below.

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 Service Executive, 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.



List of Publications for the Public Awareness Work Package:

McGregor, C. and Nic Gabhainn, S. (2016) *Public Awareness of Parenting, Prevention and Family Support Services: Population Survey Baseline Report 2016*. Galway: The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway.

McGregor, C. and Nic Gabhainn, S. (2018) *Public Awareness of Parenting, Prevention and Family Support Services: Population Follow Up Survey Report 2018*. Galway: The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway.

McGregor, C., Canavan J. and O'Connor, P. (2018) *Public Awareness Work Package Final Report: Tusla's Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support*. Galway: UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland Galway.

O'Connor, P., McGregor, C., and Devaney, C. (2018) *Newspaper Content Analysis: Print Media Coverage of Ireland's Child & Family Agency (Tusla) 2014-2017*. Galway: The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway.



Further Information

If you would like to read the Public Awareness Work Package Final Report, or any of the publications listed above please visit our website www.nuigalway.ie/childandfamilyresearch

If you have any questions on our research, please email cfrc@nuigalway.ie

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