

POLICY FRAMEWORK RELEVANT TO 10 YEAR STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BALLYMUN

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNCRC

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (CRC)** contains an agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations setting out the basic human rights to which children everywhere "*without discrimination*" are entitled by birth. The guiding principles of the Convention are: all children should be entitled to basic rights without discrimination; the best interests of the child should be the primary concern of decision making; children have the right to life, survival and development; the views of children must be taken into account in matters affecting them; children should have the right to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation and children should have the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

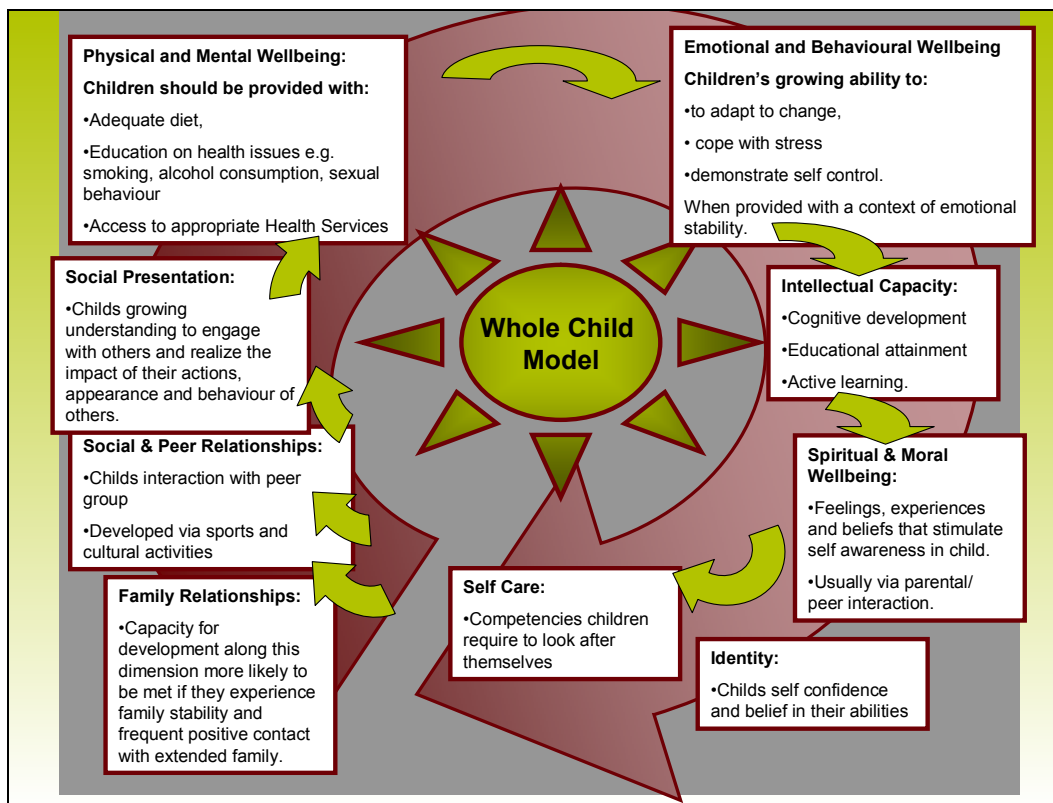
National Children's Strategy:

■ On foot of the Convention the major policy implement in this area is the **National Children's Strategy (2000) Our Children Their Lives** which sets out the following vision for young people.

"An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and their potential."

The Strategy is based on adopting a 'Whole Child' perspective which highlights key areas impacting on the development of the child. This is illustrated below.

¹ The National Children's Strategy (2000) Our Children's Lives



Source: *National Children's Strategy (2002)*

The **National Children's Strategy** sets out an ambitious series of objectives to guide children's policy until 2010. The first of these is that children will ***have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.*** Measures put forward to achieve this goal are the establishment of a National Children's Parliament and an Office of Ombudsman for Children. Additional measures under this goal will include a review of existing arrangements at local level, particularly with respect to County and City Development Boards to ensure that children's views are obtained in formulating and implementing their Economic, Social and Cultural Strategies.

The second goal is that ***children's lives will be better understood and that their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and effectiveness of services.*** Measures to be undertaken to support this goal will be the establishment of a national longitudinal study of children; a children's research programme; the establishment of a set of 'child well-being' indicators and a National Children's Research Dissemination Unit.

The third goal is that ***children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development.*** Fourteen objectives are set out associated with this national goal and will involve an extensive programme of measures at national and local level. At national level a National Children's Advisory Council, and a National Children's Office have been established to co-ordinate and implement the strategy and describe six

operational principles to guide all actions to be taken as part of the strategy as described in table 0-a.

Table A2-a: Six Operational Principles of the National Children’s Strategy

Operational Principles	Explanation
Child-Centred	The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration and children’s viewpoints should be given due regard
Family Oriented	The family generally affords the best environment for raising children and external intervention should be to support and empower families within the community
Equitable	All children should have equal opportunity in relation to access, participation in and derive benefit from the services delivered and support to achieve this.
Inclusive	The diversity of children’s experiences, cultures and lifestyles must be recognised and given expression.
Action Oriented	Service delivery needs to be focused on achieving specified results to agreed standards in a targeted and cost effective manner.
Integrated	Measures should be taken in partnerships, within and between relevant players in the state, voluntary/ community sector and families.

In addition to the National Children’s Strategy there are a number of relevant policy initiatives (and associated funding lines and new structures) that support the implementation of actions for Children and Youth. These are set out below.

National Development Plan (NDP) Social Inclusion and Childcare Priority of the Regional Operational Programmes:

One of the overall objectives of the **National Development Plan (NDP) 2000-2006** is to ensure that “the socially excluded are fully enabled to participate in, contribute to and benefit from current and future social and economic development in the Republic”. Particularly relevant in the present context are the Measures and Funding under the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, most notably Measure C, Community-Based Youth Initiatives, and many of the Social Inclusion Measures to Tackle Educational Disadvantage, many of which provide the means through which partnership approaches between formal and non-formal education providers can be resourced. An estimated €19 billion has been allocated to the 38 social inclusion measures under the Social Inclusion and Childcare Priority.

RAPID:

The **RAPID** programme (**Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development**) via the RAPID area development plans aims to deliver a range of measures to the most disadvantaged urban and rural areas in the country (including Ballymun), determined by factors such as unemployment, income levels, family and social structure, educational disadvantage and high levels of rented local authority housing.

Education Act (1998):

This Act “makes provision in the interests of the common good for the education of every person in the state, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs.” Its main objectives are; to provide for primary, post-primary, adult and continuing education and vocational education and training and ensure that the education system is accountable to students, their parents and the state for the education as a whole whilst accounting for the diversity of values and beliefs that exist in Irish society. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment was also established to make provisions for the Act.

Education Welfare Act (2000):

The Education Welfare Act, 2000 requires that schools, in preparing their attendance strategies, should provide for the development of links with bodies engaged in the provision of youth work programmes and services. The National Youth Work Advisory Committee is specified as a “relevant authority” for dealing with liaison between the National Educational Welfare Board and other bodies.

Education of Persons with Special Needs Act (2004)

The Education of Persons with Special Needs Act recognises the need for individual assessment and specific education plans for children with special needs. Section 4 of the Act makes a particular commitment that an assessment of a child should include '*an evaluation and statement of the nature and extent of the child's disability*' and should also include '*matters that affect the child overall as an individual*'. Section 3 of the Act relates to the preparation of education plans to meet the needs of children, and does so in a consultative way that includes the children's parents. The National Council for Special Education was established to perform the functions conferred on it by or under this Act.

Report of the Commission of the Family- Family Support Agency:

The Commission on the Family was established by the Minister for Social Welfare in October 1995 *"to examine the effects of legislation and policies on families and make recommendations to the Government on proposals which would strengthen the capacity of families to carry out their functions in a changing economic and social environment."*

The Commission's recommendations centred on the need for public policy to focus on *"preventive and supportive measures to strengthen families in carrying out their functions and prevent difficulty."*

■ The Family Support Agency is the statutory body providing and supporting family mediation services, putting the Family Mediation Service on a statutory basis and bringing together the different schemes and programmes designed to support families.

The National Childcare Strategy (2000):

The National Childcare Strategy sets out a list of principles to guide all childcare services. The principles themselves fall under five core headings which are; the needs and rights of children, equality of access and participation, diversity, partnership and quality. The main recommendations from the strategy were the establishment of county childcare committees to develop a childcare plan for each county and that childcare would become a legitimate business within the service sector by 2007.

Youth Work Act (2001) and the National Youth Work Development Plan (2003-2007):

The purpose of the *Youth Work Act, 2001* is to provide a legal framework for the provision of youth work programmes and services by the Minister for Education and Science and the vocational education committees (VECs). The National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007 sets out a strategy for the first five-year plan for the development of youth work in Ireland. The main provisions of the plan are to uphold the "voluntary dimension" and promote equality, openness and inclusiveness at all levels and in all areas of youth work; to recognise and uphold the right of young people to participate as full partners in the development and delivery of all aspects of youth work and promote learning via this work and acknowledge the vital role played by paid youth workers, both in their direct work with young people and their support work with volunteers and organisations.

Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999):

These guidelines aim to assist people in identifying and reporting child abuse and promote a mutual understanding among statutory and voluntary organisations about the contributions of different disciplines and professions to child protection. It emphasises that the needs of children and families must be at the centre of child care and child protection activities and that a partnership approach must inform the delivery of services. Consistency between policy and procedures concerning child welfare across health boards and other statutory and voluntary organisations is of paramount importance.

White paper on Childcare (1999)

The Department of Education and Science published the White paper on Early Childhood Education which sets out Government policy for early childhood education. The Paper sets out the importance in preparing children for the challenges of formal primary education, longer-term returns to the individual in terms of life chances and earning power, and the broader returns to society which flow from investment in the area. It also highlights the crucial importance of quality of provision.

NAPS/ NAPS incl. :

In 1997 the Government published the **National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS)**, a ten-year plan to reduce poverty with a specific commitment to child poverty. Five specific areas were identified requiring specific attention: unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, and disadvantaged rural and urban areas. During 2001, a review of the NAPS was undertaken, which led to the launch of the revised **National Action Plans on Social Inclusion (NAPs/incl)** with common objectives on combating poverty and social exclusion and a specific commitment to eradicate child poverty in Ireland by 2010.

National Drugs Strategy 2001–2008:

The National Drugs Strategy 2001–2008 recommends a number of measures to reinforce the preventative and educational work of the existing **Local Drugs Task Forces** which operate in the areas of greatest opiate use. The strategy also sets out measures to consolidate the **Young People's Facilities and Services Fund**, by providing preventative funding for young people most at risk of serious drug use in the designated Task Force and urban areas.

The report made a further set of recommendations in relation to the implementation of the **SPHE Programme (Social Personal and Health Education)** in second level schools ensuring that Substance Misuse Prevention becomes an integral part of the school curriculum for junior cycle students. In particular emphasis was placed on **“Walk Tall”** for primary schools, which is aimed at student, parents and teachers targeting schools where

there is a notable incidence of substance abuse and “**On My Own Two Feet**” aimed at second level schools providing in service training with emphasis on the students taking personal responsibility for their health and wellbeing.

National Health Promotion Strategy 2000–2005:

The Strategy for the first time identifies the ‘Youth Sector’ as a key setting for targeting young people and promoting health and well being. The aims and objectives for the youth sector acknowledge the investment in this setting to date and recommend a continuation and expansion of this into the future. Objectives include research into the role of peer education as a health education/health promotion methodology within the youth sector and supporting the ongoing development and implementation of health promotion and training organisations especially youth organisations.

Quality and Fairness- A Health System for You (2001):

Specifically relating to children and young people, an integrated national programme for child health was developed examining the expansion of initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles in children and family support services and initiatives e.g. “Positive Parenting”, The refocus of child welfare budgets and other services to support the Children Act 2001. Early intervention strategies for children with behavioural difficulties and disabilities and the youth homelessness strategy will also be prioritised.

OTHER USEFUL FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS:

Despite not being national policies the following frameworks and documentations also provide useful reference for the 10 Year Plan for Children and Young people.

On Target: An Audit of Provision of Services Targeting Disadvantage and Special Needs among Children from birth to six years in Ireland (2004):

The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) was established in 2002 and is managed jointly by St. Patrick’s College of Education and Dublin Institute of Technology. This initiative of the DES has as its brief the consideration of the development and educational needs of all children in Ireland in the age range 0-6 years, including children at risk of educational disadvantage, and those with special needs. In that context one of the first actions of the CECDE has been to engage on this project was to audit the provision of services for children in those circumstances. The main finding from the audit is that accurate information on the nature of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) services targeting disadvantage is difficult to access. The document thus recommends that the relevant Government Departments in consultation with key stakeholders, develop a national data strategy for the ECCE sector.

Towards a Framework for Early Learning (2004):

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) recently published a discussion document *Towards a Framework for Early Learning* (2004) which outlines an approach to education for children age 0-6. The NCCA has attempted to focus in a cohesive way on the care and education of children within this age range and supports a holistic approach. "Care and education are inextricably linked elements in a child's holistic development – this reality must be reflected in the ethos and programme of all services." (*Expert Working Group on Childcare*, 1999, 0.50) In their framework document (p11) the NCCA points to the importance of the early years as a basis for further learning. "the first 3 years in a child's life are crucial for laying the foundations for competence and coping skills that will affect children's overall capacity to learn and to behave and their ability to manage emotions. Such early experience of learning cannot be underestimated. 'Experience may alter the behaviour of an adult, but experience literally forms the mind of a young child.'" (Winkly, 1999). The report further highlights the first 3 years as the most sensitive age in the development of the ability to learn and the foundation years for language development. "Early learning is the foundation for all subsequent learning (the beginning of lifelong learning. Early childhood is a time of tremendous opportunity for learning." (p.11)The document takes a practical as well as a theoretical approach and identifies sub groups within early childhood as babies, toddlers and young children. Its suggested approach to early learning takes cognisance of the current primary school curriculum and of pre-school provision and advocates a number of areas of development which could span the age-groups 0-6 years. These include:.

- A sense of well-being
- Language and Communication
- Identity and Belonging
- Discovery and Exploration

A price worth paying: A Report on the sustainability of childcare services in the Canal Communities Partnership Area

R & D Consultants were commissioned by ANMAR, on behalf of the Canal Communities Partnership, to conduct a study into five childcare centres in the canal area. Three of these centres are currently in operation, two offering full day care and one offering sessional day care services. The study analysed the development and current operation of these centres, to assess how well they were achieving their objectives as set out in Government policy.

Childcare Training Needs Assessment (2004)

Ballymun Development Group for Children and Young People

The Childcare Training Needs Assessment on behalf of the Dublin City Childcare Committee determined the levels of childcare qualifications in the childcare sector in the city and inform the development of future childcare training plans for the city to the end of the Programme in 2006. The project objectives were to establish the current levels of training and qualifications in the Childcare sector in the Dublin City area and identify supports required for conducting effective training and ongoing data collection.