



CAAB NEWS

Message from the Chairperson



Jacinta Stewart, Chairperson

It has been an honour and privilege to work with the board of the Children Acts Advisory Board (CAAB) as

chairperson. As a board we were 12 in number and represented four sectors - three from health, three from education, three from justice and three child care experts. Our mandate was to bring our expertise to bear to ensure coherent, consistent and effective responses for children who are central to the Children's Act. It has been a pleasure to serve with this highly skilled, enthusiastic and committed group of people.

We greeted with regret the decision to subsume the CAAB functions into the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). We have, however, laid a good foundation of work that will make it easier for the OMCYA to move forward and we

must acknowledge that the work of the OMCYA to date has been hugely beneficial.

I am delighted that the future continuation of the National Awards for Services to Children and Young People has been confirmed and will be held in Dublin Castle on the 9th of March 2010. It is important to continue to recognise, highlight and celebrate exemplary practice in the community, in education, in inter-agency working, in juvenile justice and in residential care and this is an excellent and memorable way of doing so.

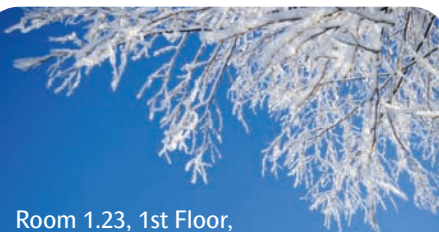
I want to congratulate Aidan Browne and his staff at CAAB for this and all their significant achievements. Much has been done to provide quality advice and guidance to the Ministers and to the child care sector. Important audit, analysis and research work has been undertaken, published and disseminated. Conference, seminars and events have been very well run and attended and the knowledge base of the child care sector has been significantly extended and strengthened.

I have confidence that the CAAB contribution to the office of OMCYA will be as vital as it is valuable and want to wish you every success in continuing this very important work.

Retirement of Director, OMCYA

Sylva Langford, Director General of the OMCYA has retired from her position with effect from the 15th of January 2010. As the first DG of the OMCYA, Sylva contributed significantly to the development of the office and its influence within and way beyond the sector. Sylva's capacity to mobilise goodwill across agencies is legend. Whenever her name appeared things happened. She will be greatly missed.

The good news is that despite the embargo on public jobs it has been decided to replace Sylva through a public recruitment drive. In the interim Jim Breslin, Assistant Secretary Department of Health and Children will fulfil the duties of the office of Director General.



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This is the final edition of CAAB News. As well as providing updates on the most recent developments this issue also provides a look back over the work and outputs of the SRSB and CAAB. Further to the Government decision to subsume the CAAB into the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, pending the passage of the necessary legislation we have moved office with effect from Monday 15th February 2010 and are now located at the offices of the Department of Health and Children, in Room 1.23, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2. If you wish to follow up any of the issues dealt with by the CAAB please contact the Office of the Minister for Children & Youth Affairs at www.omcya.ie.

Recent Publication Launches

The CAAB offices were exceptionally busy over the last three months as we put the final touches to a range of publications launched over the months of November and December.

Putting Research Evidence to Work: Key Issues for Research Utilisation in Irish Children's Services

A large audience attended a launch and web-cast in the Gresham Hotel on the 13th of November to mark the publication of very important research work relating to putting research evidence to work.

Commissioned by CAAB and carried out by the School for Social Work and Social Policy and the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, as a key element of the CAAB Research Strategy, the research project had the intention of informing the children's sector about initiatives that can be taken to help put research evidence to work and of providing a basis for other organisations and individuals to take positive action in this area.

The format of the launch was a presentation of the research findings from Dr Helen Buckley followed by responses from

Sylda Langford, Director General, OMCYA who responded from a policy perspective; Nuala Doherty, Director, National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), who responded from a management perspective; Pádraig McCullough, Social Care Leader, Don Bosco, who responded from a practitioner perspective; and Dr John Canavan, Associate Director, Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland Galway, who responded from the perspective of the research community. The responses were very interesting and informative and in many cases quite challenging. The full video of the web-cast along with copies of the report are available to view and download on the CAAB website at www.caab.ie.



Inter-agency Working in Children's Services



A launch and web-cast was held in the Gresham Hotel on the 4th of December to present the findings of a comprehensive process of research on the topic of inter-agency working in children's services.

This event was the culmination of 18 months work which included a number of linked components, which, as well as providing the most comprehensive view of inter-agency working in children's service available to date, culminated in the production of a guidance document to support the development of effective inter-agency working.

On the day there were four elements to the launch. Finbar McDonnell of Hibernian Consulting reported on the views of some stakeholders from a study carried out in mid 2008. Robert Murphy presented (on behalf of WRC Social and Economic Consultants Limited) an overview of a literature review of inter-agency work with a particular focus on children's services. Anne Colgan of Colgan Associates presented an outline of the detailed study undertaken by herself and Organisational Development Consultant Mary Rafferty on organisational case studies of inter-agency co-operation in the delivery of children's services.

And finally, Robert Murphy, Head of Research and Information with the CAAB provided an overview of the guidance document developed by CAAB and informed by the work of the previous studies.

The video of the web-cast and all supporting documentation is available to view and download on the CAAB website at www.caab.ie.

Therapeutic Intervention

The CAAB recently published a set of best practice guidelines for the use and implementation of therapeutic interventions for children and young people in out of home care.

The guidelines were launched by the Director General, OMCYA, Sylda Langford, on the 18th December 2009, with an introduction by the CAAB's Finbarr O'Leary and an overview of

the process by CAAB Advisory Officer Gráinne McGill. In attendance were a number of key stakeholders, members of the steering committee and other interested parties.

Over 700 copies of the guidelines have been circulated to key stakeholders including residential units, children detention schools, universities and colleges.

The full report can be found on the CAAB website www.caab.ie.

Social Care Guidelines

In association with Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and the Social Service Inspectorate (SSI) the CAAB has published two guidance documents to support workers in the care of children in residential settings.

The first publication is Guidelines on the Role of Social Workers for Children Placed in Children's Residential Centres. These guidelines have been issued to assist social workers, residential care staff and other relevant parties in clarifying the role of social workers. Most importantly the guidance is designed to assist social workers in their work with children in care.

The second publication is titled Guidelines on Recording in Children's Residential Care. The main focus of these guidelines is to promote positive child care practice that will assist residential staff in both collating and recording relevant and timely information on children and young people placed in the care of the Health Service Executive (HSE).

It is envisaged that HIQA/SSI would make reference to these guidelines in their inspection of residential settings. Copies of the guidelines are being distributed widely and are available for download from the CAAB website www.caab.ie.

Inter-agency Booklet Launch

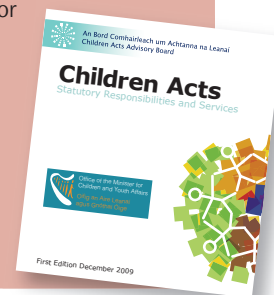
The concept of producing a booklet on the State agencies delivering services under the Children Acts came from feedback from both practitioners and agencies themselves. There was a perceived void in information on the roles, responsibilities and key contact points across agencies. The delivery of the Children Acts requires a number of agencies with various backgrounds to deliver services to children and young people under the Acts (e.g. Child Care Act, 1991, Children Act, 2001, both as amended).

A CAAB working group set out a plan to engage with the

relevant agencies and to prepare a booklet that had a balance of necessary information (legal and otherwise) while being both accessible and readable. The booklet allows for inserting any future amendments or changes.

The booklet was launched by Sylva Langford, Director of the OMCYA on the 18th of December and has been distributed in hard copy to the key agencies and NGOs.

The booklet is available to download on the CAAB and OMCYA websites.



Study Visit to a Restorative City: Hull City, England

The CAAB sponsored a two-day visit to Hull in England. The Hull Centre for Restorative Practices aims to develop Hull as 'restorative city'.

The group consisted of:

Andrew Tuite, Juvenile Liaison Officer Sergeant, An Garda Síochána; William Geraghty, Guidance Councillor, Benevin College, Finglas, Co. Dublin; Michael Nagle, Community Sergeant, An Garda Síochána, Kevin Street, Co. Dublin; William O'Brien, School Principal, Basin Street, Co. Dublin; Thomas Blanche, School Principal, Newbridge, Co. Kildare; Marion Martin, Advisory Officer, CAAB; Aidan Browne, Chief Executive, CAAB.

The purpose of this visit was to meet with other professionals who have implemented restorative practices (RP) within their own agency and on an inter-agency level and to experience the RP model in practice. The group also had an opportunity to meet with students and receive feedback on what they think of the RP model and if it presents benefits for them.

Day one:

The group met with Mark Finnis, Project Consultant and Lead Trainer for the **Hull Centre for Restorative Practices**. Mark gave an overview of Hull City, the work of the Hull Centre for Restorative Practices and the future plans for RP in Hull. Mark discussed in detail how the project to develop Hull as a 'restorative city' came about and how it has been developed in the city at an inter-agency level.

This meeting was followed by a visit to **Endeavour High School** to meet with the school principal Chris Straker, two teachers and six students. The group was shown a DVD entitled **An Introduction to Restorative Practices at Endeavour High School** and spent time discussing the changes and the benefits restorative practices have had on the school from both the teachers and students perspectives.

The first days visit concluded with a meeting with Yvonne Bailey, Manager of **Looked After Services (residential and fostering)**, and one of her staff members, to discuss their

experiences of implementing RP in a residential care setting and also working with foster parents who have been trained in RP.

Day two:

An early morning start brought the group to **Collingwood Primary School** where they split up and joined various classes for the morning 'circle time' followed by a discussion with the principal Estelle Macdonald and the school's students council. The group felt that the experience of and watching the children's participation during 'circle time' was very beneficial and presented the real positive impact of RP. It was a very strange experience to see a garda sergeant, a school principal, a chief executive and six 'other' four year-olds sitting cross legged on the floor discussing their feelings!

There followed a meeting with Inspector Iain Dixon of **Humberside Police** and his colleague community police officers who gave an overview of the work they do through restorative practices and how they have benefited from the training. They cited fewer call outs to neighbourhood disputes as one of the most successful results of RP. The community police officers also have good inter-agency relationships with the local schools and the benefits of all being trained in RP was noted.

The tour ended with a visit to an **'alternative school'** providing education facilities as an alternative to detention to young people in trouble with the law. The group met with the Manager, Roy Walker. This is a new project supported by Ted Wachtel, President of the International Institute for Restorative Practices, USA and aims to replicate similar alternative schools run by the Buxmont Academy in Pennsylvania, USA.

The overwhelming feeling of the group after the visit was of the huge value of the work being undertaken in Hull both for the immediate day-to-day lives of the participants and the service providers but also the real potential to build social capital for the benefit of the whole community for the longer term.

For further information contact the Hull Centre for Restorative Practices at The Goodwin Centre, Hull, HU32HQ, or email: hcrpadmin@goodwin-centre.org

The Establishment of a Childlink Child Protection Hub

The CAAB has co-financed the establishment of a Childlink Child Protection Hub that will provide daily updated child protection information on policy, research and practice issues in the south and north of Ireland.

The Hub is being co-financed with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Northern Ireland, and in partnership with the Irish Department of Health and Children.

This opportunity has emerged as part of the CAAB's participation on the North-South Ministerial Council Child Protection Sub Group on Research and Knowledge Transfer. The development helps to deliver on the CAAB's mission and third strategic objective.

The Childlink Child Protection Hub is in the process of being developed and will be launched later in 2010.

Benchmarking Progress

During 2008 and 2009 the CAAB undertook an exercise to benchmark progress against the objectives of the Children Acts (the Child Care Act, 1991 and the Children's Act, 2001).

The Child Care Act, 1991 was concerned primarily with the welfare and protection of children, while the principal focus of the Children Act, 2001 was the use of detention as a matter of last resort. In examining progress against the objectives of these pieces of legislation it was also appropriate to consider what progress has been achieved since the publication of *The National Children's Strategy* in 2000.

Each department and agency currently produces an annual report but there exists no overview of activity, output or outcome across all agencies dealing with children and youth. While the national children report last published in 2005 produces very useful data it is largely static and does not produce comparative data. The absence of such a measurement makes it very difficult to decide if real progress is being made across the whole of the children's sector.

The methodology used in this study included the gathering of data from **published** material from the relevant education, justice and health and welfare departments and agencies. A number of questionnaires were also distributed to these agencies to obtain information and opinion on issues not specifically covered in the documentation.

What Did Government Say Would be Done?

The National Children's Strategy published in 2000 set out a very

ambitious and wide ranging set of objectives to be achieved over the lifetime of the strategy. Interestingly the last progress report published on the implementation of the strategy was in 2004!

In launching the strategy the Taoiseach recognised the need for ongoing commitment and clarity of purpose and for all Government bodies and NGOs to work together to help us become a society which fully values and respects its children. The State's ambition as declared by the Minister for Health and Children was to recognise and support the role of parents, the family and the local community. The Junior Minister with special responsibility for Children made specific reference to the need to hear the voice of children in developing our strategies and service responses.

The principles on which the strategy was founded were that all our actions should be:

- child centred;
- family orientated;
- equitable;
- inclusive;
- action orientated;
- integrated.

Timeline

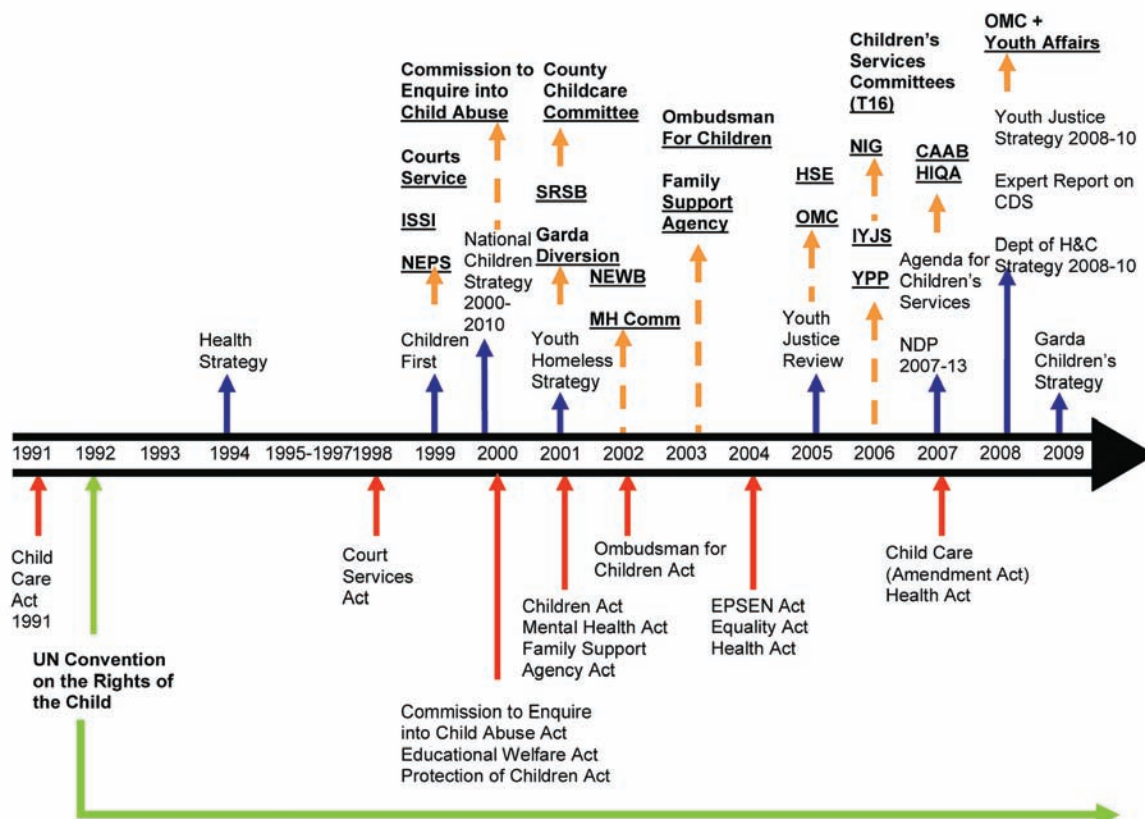


Figure 1: Timeline of Strategic, Policy and Legislative Developments in the Children's Sector

Three key goals declared were that children will:

- have a voice...;
- be better understood...lives will benefit from evaluation, research, information...;
- receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development.

In attempting to deliver on these objectives it was recognised that change would be required at a number of levels:

- national policy in terms of prioritising prevention;
- agency level in terms of mandating and prioritising prevention work;
- the provision of adequate support to staff such as supervision and training.

It was recognised that some children have additional needs and would require:

- financial supports to eliminate poverty;
- accommodation appropriate to their needs;
- to be maintained in the least restrictive environments (in the case of troubled children);
- services to meet disability needs;
- to be educated to value social and cultural diversity.

The strategy set out (43) specific objectives, which could be divided into:

- strategic, policy and legislative;
- organisational change;
- programmatic/service developments.

Legislative and Policy Environment

The period from 1991 when the Child Care Act was enacted to 1999 was relatively quiet with regard to legislative and policy initiatives. However since 1999 when the Children First guidance was produced by the Department of Health and Children the entire children's sector has been impacted very significantly by a raft of legislation, strategy and policy initiatives as outlined in the timeline in Figure 1.

As we can see from the timeline there are many agencies involved with children and families and there is little doubt that the activities of all of these agencies influence one another for better or worse. This article is primarily focused on the work of those agencies that are covered by the Children's Acts.

Trends across Children's Services

While the quality of data collection has been poor and is very open to challenge a number of trends are notable across the range of services delivered to children. The kind observer might note that these changes are as a direct result of the strategy and policy developed by Government and implemented fully by the agencies involved. However, when discussed with senior officials and practitioners across departments and agencies people struggle to identify what are the factors that have led to the changes that are evident over the period of the last five to 10 years. This is an area worthy of much more debate. So let us look at some of the evidence.

Quality of Statistics

As the CAAB's remit only extended to commenting on 'published statistics' this has presented a significant challenge. The quality of

published statistical data is, to put it kindly, very mixed. We have noted that it is very difficult to compare statistics year on year as a different data set is often used. For example, the HSE data is very challenging when attempting to make comparison. It is notable that often published data is incomplete even though it isn't published for between nine and 18 months after the fact! We have also noted that historical data consistently changes as each new report is published!

None of this is helpful to the interested observer who wants to know what progress is being made in individual services. Neither is it helpful to anyone (which should be everyone) who is interested in drawing conclusions on how the whole of government services to children and young people is developing.

Juvenile Justice

Detention Schools

When we consider average occupancy (the number of children in detention on any day) the number of children in detention has fallen significantly from 90 in 2000 to 42 in 2009, according to the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS). Figure 2 shows the changes across the four detention centres over the period.

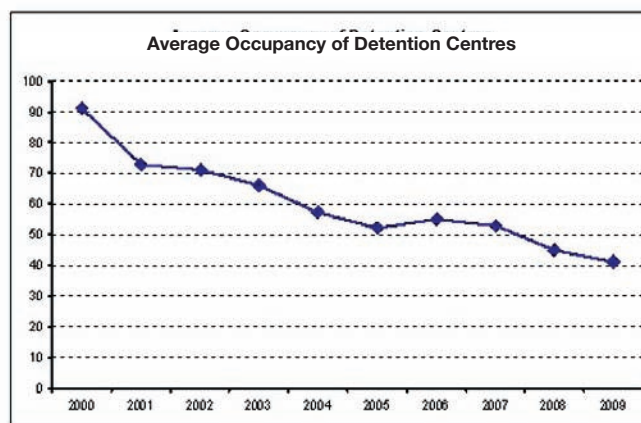


Figure 2

The actual number of children detained annually in detention centres has fallen from 170 in 2004 to 123 in 2008, the last full period of recording, (Figure 3) with a slight increase in girls from 24 to 29 and a dramatic decrease in boys from 146 to 94.

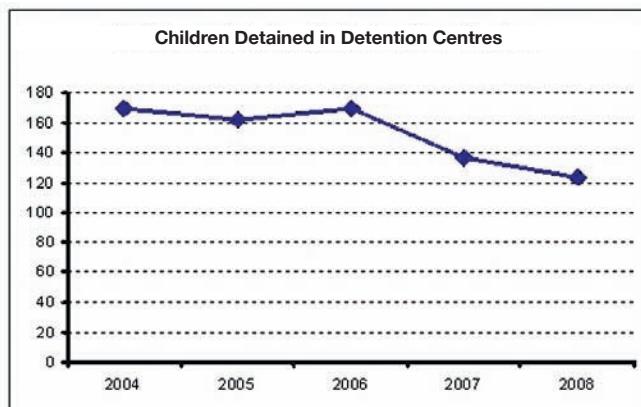


Figure 3

The current average age of committals is 15.4 years for boys and 17 years for girls.

Prison Service

Of course this is not the complete picture, as a large portion of youth in detention are still located within the prison system (50% in 2009). The IYJS is actively working to address this situation with the proposed development of appropriate facilities on the Lusk campus. The available prison statistics (Table 1) appear to show a relative steady state in the total numbers of children (16 and 17 year-olds) detained in St. Patrick's Institution. Using the 'snapshot' data (the 7th of December each year) it appears that the downward trend evident from 2005 to 2008 has reversed significantly in 2009.

St. Patrick's	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Committed		165	123	161	
Dec 7th	45	46	31	38	54

Table 1: Children Detained in Prison

It is notable that of the 54 children currently detained in prison 50% (27) have received a previous sentence and 14% (8) have been on remand. Of the current prison population 16 are from Dublin, 11 are from Limerick, seven are from Cork, four are from Louth, three each are from Kildare and Galway and one each from Clare, Kerry, Laois, Mayo, Offaly, Roscommon, Waterford, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow.

Garda Youth Diversion Programme

Following the introduction of Part 4 of the Children Act, 2001 the Juvenile Liaison Officer Scheme came to an end and was replaced by the Diversion Programme, which could be described as a package of measures for dealing with children under the age of 18 who commit an offence or offences. The programme is managed by a garda superintendent appointed by the Commissioner and known as the 'director of the programme'. The director must consider all cases and decide on the suitability or otherwise of the child for inclusion in the programme.

In order to be admitted to the programme a child must:

- be over the age of criminal responsibility and under 18 years of age;
- accept responsibility for the offence(s) committed;
- consent to being cautioned and supervised.

If the child is deemed suitable for admission to the programme then they are given either a formal or an informal caution. In certain

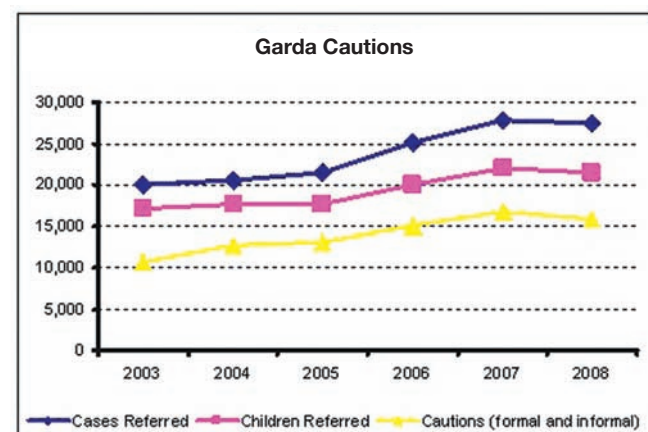


Figure 4

circumstances the victim of the offence may be invited to attend the caution or the juvenile liaison officer (JLO) may recommend that a family conference be held in relation to the child.

A child given a formal caution is placed under garda supervision for a period of usually 12 months. An informal caution is administered by a JLO and the child is not normally placed under supervision. In practice, both cautions are formal processes, one accompanied by a period of supervision and the other without supervision.

Since the introduction of Part 4 of the Children's Act in mid 2002 the number of cautions has increased by 100% (Figure 4). The number of juveniles unsuitable for caution has remained consistent at around 15%. Increasingly the Garda Juvenile Liaison Service is utilising the restorative events option introduced in the Children Act, 2001 as a mechanism to hold children to account for their actions (Table 2). An extensive training programme has been introduced to ensure gardai can effectively use this approach where it is deemed appropriate and the number of JLOs has been increased to take account of the expanding role.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Restorative Events	118	177	262	307	378	422
JLO Officers	93	96	97	97	102	109

Table 2: Restorative Events

JLOs are the primary source of referrals for the garda projects and in many cases work closely with the co-ordinators to develop appropriate interventions and crime reduction programmes. The number of children participating in garda youth diversion projects has risen from 2,425 on commencement in 2006 (Figure 5) to 8,266 for the full year of 2008. Trends for the current year are upwards, with over 5,000 estimated for the first six months of 2009. The male/female breakdown of participation on the projects is roughly 70/30.

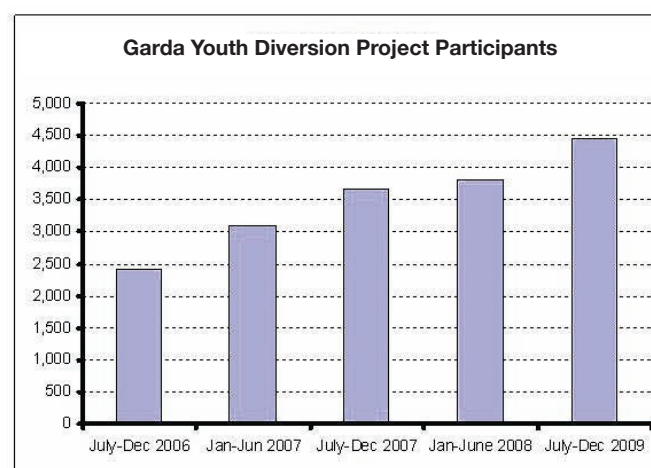


Figure 5

The legislation in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders commenced in March 2007. From commencement to the end of July 2009 the gardai have issued 615 behaviour warnings to juveniles (2007 – 132; 2008 – 219 to May; 2009 – 264 to end July). It has not been considered necessary to issue any behaviour orders.

The Probation Service

Since its establishment in 2005 the Young Person's Probation (YPP) has been resourced to deal solely with youth offending, and significantly increased resources have been allocated to the service (from 30 probation officers in 2005 to 65 in 2008). YPP currently has 13 community based organisations delivering services on its behalf.

YPP aims to promote the use of community based sanctions and restorative justice in order to reduce re-offending and deals with approximately 600 young offenders nationwide. The work of the YPP involves:

- preparing pre-sanction assessments for the courts;
- supervising offenders in the community who are referred by the court;
- supervising offenders released conditionally from custody;
- providing a counselling service to offenders and their families.

YPP is a multi-agency approach to addressing young offenders. FAS and local vocational educational committees work in conjunction with some of the YPP projects to offer training and education. Counselling and other support services are also offered. Residential projects are now being phased out and it is intended to engage external service providers, through a tender process, to offer this service in a new format.

The Children Act introduced the option of a probation family conference, which was implemented by the YPP since 2005. YPP is undertaking on average 35 conferences annually with a successful disposal rate of approximately 40% (Figure 6).

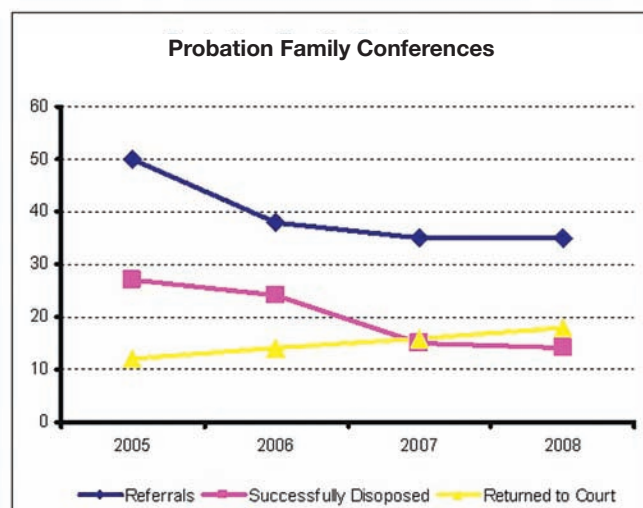


Figure 6

Health, Welfare and Protection

The Child Care Act, 1991 charges the HSE with responsibility for the protection and welfare of vulnerable children, while the Children Act, which is primarily concerned with detention as a last resort, provides for circumstances under which the HSE can apply for a child to be detained in special care. The use of this form of detention has been the subject of much High Court activity over several years and has presented the HSE with a significant challenge to provide an appropriate organisational structure and a range of appropriate services to deal with this cohort of children.

The total number of children in the care of the State has remained relatively constant over recent years with a slight increase year on year (Table 3). The significant trend in the care and welfare statistics is the shift away from residential care to a reliance on foster care.

Special Care

As with the statistics earlier presented for detention schools there has been a significant fall off in the number of young boys detained in special care. The fall in girls detained, while not as steep is still significant. Overall there has been a fall of 100% in the last five year period (Figure 7).

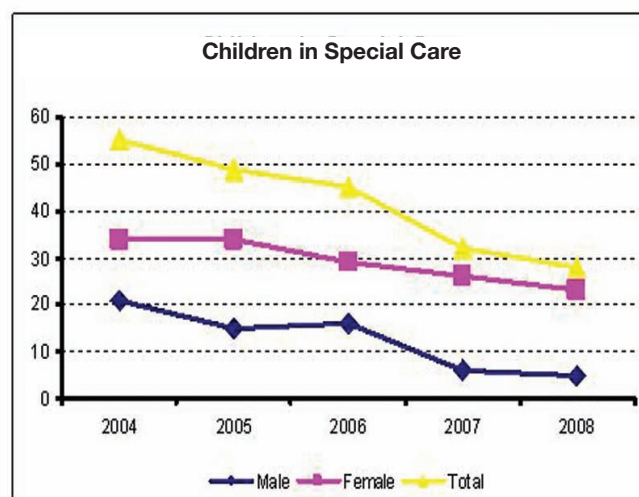


Figure 7

A cautionary note however is the number of children who have been sent out of State for special care. Destinations include Sweden and Nebraska. This number had risen from 17 in 2003 to 25 in 2007.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Residential Care	569	560	527	442	395	408	370	381
Foster Care	3691	3888	4016	4281	4455	4631	4724	4766
Other	1257	473	441	337	177	210	195	210
Total	5517	4921	4984	5060	5027	5247	5309	5347

Table 3: Children in Care

Total Children Detained

As stated earlier, the key objective of the Children Act, 2001 was that detention would be used as a matter of last resort. From the figures available it appears that this objective has been met, with a total reduction of 40% between 2004 and 2008 (last available complete data) (Figure 8). A significant figure in the midst of all the statistics is that the total number of boys in detention has dropped from 328 in 2004 to 260 in 2008. The number of girls has remained relatively constant.

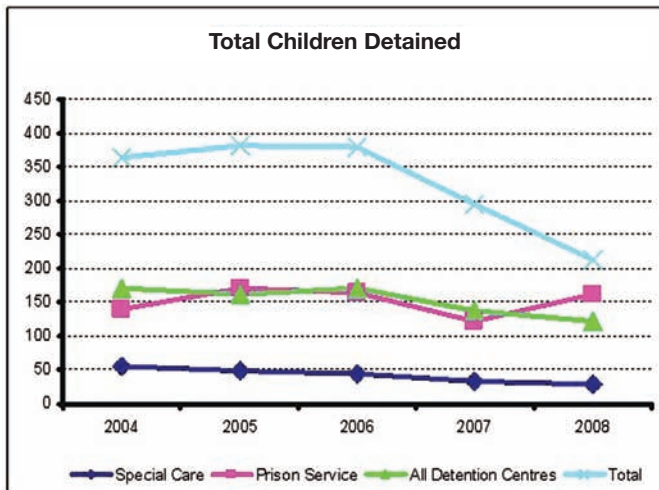


Figure 8

Statistics Overview

It is clear from the statistics that there is a downward movement in all residential services across the justice and health domains, with an increasing reliance on addressing difficulties within families and communities. As alluded to earlier, the reasons for this are not wholly clear. Within the justice family it is arguable that the marked increase in the use of community sanctions has ensured that fewer children are going through the courts. Once within the court system the use of family conferencing has presented alternatives to custody. Within the health and welfare system there would appear to be different forces at play. Many practitioners would argue that it is very difficult to have an application for special care approved by senior management in HSE, that the bar has been raised too high. From a management perspective the intention has been to raise the bar high and to insist on local services utilising all services at their disposal to avoid the use of detention. Looking at this process purely under the heading of 'detention as a matter of last resort' this approach is perfectly rational and appropriate. However, with the lack of availability of outcomes data on the use of special care it is not yet possible to say what is the correct level of use of this intervention or if alternative interventions achieve the same level of success.

Response to Questionnaire from Key Departments and Agencies

The questionnaire circulated to the agencies was concerned with eliciting responses to establish the current status of a number of the high level objectives of the Children's Strategy. Evidence was sought

from each sector where they indicated that progress had been made. The agencies approached included the following.

- Irish Youth Justice Service
- Probation Service
- Department of Education
- School Completion
- Youthreach
- NEWB
- Garda Síochána
- Health Service Executive
- Family Support Agency
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The Voice of the Child

There was evidence across all sectors that the voice of the child is considered in the design and evaluation of services. While some agencies engage directly with children and youth themselves in this process it is necessary in the interest of child protection for others to use the resources of those most skilled in this process. To this end the OMCYA and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children have developed particular expertise and channels of communication with younger people. Non-governmental agencies such as the Irish Association of Young People in Care have also supported policy and service managers in providing the views of the client group.

In this context also some good work has been done to raise awareness of the needs and the rights of children. An example is the work being undertaken by the Garda Síochána both in basic training programmes and in-service development.

Inter-agency Protocols

All agencies acknowledged the importance of inter-agency working. This is evident in the strategy and policy documents of the agencies. However, not all agencies have formalised written protocols addressing this issue. Those protocols that do exist tend to be focused on very specific parts of their work rather than at organisation level.

Examples of those agencies that do have such protocols include:

- Garda Síochána and the HSE for the interviewing of child victims and for children missing from care homes;
- the NEWB and NEPS;
- Probation and Young People at Risk.

Formal training in inter-agency working has become a feature of some organisations but could not be said to be systematised.

Evaluation and Research

While there is increasing evidence of evaluation processes being used by departments and agencies, the evidence is that in the main they are focused on activities carried out by others on their behalf with little evidence of evaluation of statutory run services. This does not prevent agencies from making changes to models of service delivery or practice but not always with reference to verifiable data.

Most agencies now have employed researchers or have directly commissioned research.

There is strong evidence that agencies have formed relationships with one or more academic institutions both in terms of research and evaluation work, strategy development and training and development of staff.

Since its establishment the CAAB is the first agency in the sector that has attempted to co-ordinate the research interests of the various stakeholders under an umbrella research committee. With the abolition of the CAAB this work should rightly fall under the remit of the OMCYA.

Improvements Observed by Agencies

The key improvements over the recent past observed by those agencies questioned included:

- the development of the children's services committees;
- the leadership role provided by the OMCYA;
- the development of the Youth Justice Strategy;
- the effective co-ordinating role of the IYJS;
- the development of a better understanding of the role and contribution of youth work;
- an increase in the awareness of the need to collaborate;
- the development of good informal relationship.

Issues Identified by Agencies

Key issues identified included:

- the significant changes resulting in patchy collaboration;
- lack of access to social workers and counselling;
- paucity of mental health, drug and alcohol services for children;
- children coming before the courts because of a lack of timely provision of services of a welfare nature;
- new services still being developed without rigorous cross departmental evaluation;
- absence of formal protocols between agencies;
- challenge of engaging with schools;
- trust between service providers not always as it should be.

Summary

In summary it is possible to say that a lot of progress has been made

over the past 10 years and in particular in the last three years and that the objectives of Government are being met to a good degree. It is however fair to question if this progress is sufficient for the level of resource committed and whether more could be achieved by better joined-up working. There is some evidence that while some of the required outputs are being achieved we cannot be confident that these are the best outputs or that better might have been achieved by using the resource in a different way. One of the consistent findings of the CAAB was the limited understanding of agencies about the nature and range of activity of other agencies working alongside them.

As we have now reached the end of the current children's strategy it is timely to develop a new strategy that is more focused on using the total resource available for the benefit of all children and families and breaking down barriers to achieving this. The current embryonic work of the children's services committees at county level would appear to be the best chance of achieving this outcome, but this work needs to be accelerated to provide consistency across the whole country. A statutory framework may be required.

In any new strategy more attention needs to be paid to the following three areas.

- Monitoring, Review and Evaluation
 - There is a need to develop robust outcome targets for the whole child care system as well as for each integral part, with ongoing monitoring, review and evaluation and a willingness to respond to emerging evidence.
 - A transparent timely reporting process is required to allow real time evaluation of progress.
 - There needs to be an overall programmatic approach to children's services.
- Data and Indicators
 - Basic service level data needs to be made available in a timely manner and to be totally transparent.
- Understanding of Trends and Drivers
 - Greater analysis of trends and the drivers of these trends, benefits and implications needs to become central to children's services management.

The Work and Achievements of the SRSB

The Special Residential Services Board (SRSB) was placed on a statutory basis on the 7th of November 2003, having operated in an interim capacity with the assistance of the ministerial appointees to the Board, and a small core staff.

Roger Killeen a former inspector in the Department of Education and Science was formally appointed as Chief Executive. The formal recruitment of staff to the SRSB commenced in December 2003, with approval for ten staff. The staff assigned came from various backgrounds, for example, An Garda Síochána, Youth Offending Team (UK), a teacher and a psychology graduate.

The first two years was focused on setting out the working agenda, the role and operating function of the Board with all the key stakeholders in delivering on the Children Act, 2001. This proved both challenging and exciting. The legal functions of the Board were set out in section 227 Children Act, 2001 and dealt with a number of key areas that were subsequently incorporated into the functions of the CAAB. A key operational and administrative function from 2003 onward was to 'in particular, assist the courts, on request, in identifying suitable places in children detention schools for children charged with offences and for that purpose liaise with the directors of the schools'. The legislation was focused on assisting the courts, ensuring the appropriate and efficient utilisation of schools and units and that detention was seen as a measure of last resort.

A 24/7 on-call system was established to deal with requests from the Courts Service and other agencies. Between 2004 and 2006 the Board was involved in the placement of children and young people (aged 16 years) in the five children detention schools as a result of court orders. The average number in detention during the period 2004–2006 was 70, where today the average in the four detention schools is 30 – a dramatic change borne out by the commencement of the Children Act, 2001 (as amended) and the benefits from an inter-agency approach. The SRSB officers engaged with the courts and considered options that involved an inter-agency approach. The SRSB brought a structure to the agency requests for placements in the detention schools, while looking ahead to the aftercare of children and young people released from detention.

The SRSB sponsored a number of key conferences and seminars throughout the country during this period, for example, 'Education in Care' (Athlone) and 'Stepping Out: Young People Leaving Care or Custody' (Galway). There were missions to Sweden and Girls and Boystown, Omaha, to view operations, to learn and to indirectly benchmark Ireland against other jurisdictional practices.

The first report of the SRSB (2004) was launched by Minister Brian Lenihan, T.D., the then Minister for Children, at the Merion Hotel, Dublin. There was a large media gathering with radio/television coverage on the day. A key objective of the Board was supporting alternative services to detention for children and young people. The 2004 Annual Report commented on a small number of children with a welfare background being placed in children detention schools. During this time the capacity in special care units had reduced due to a number of issues, primarily staffing resources. The Board also raised concerns about the lack of an appointment of an independent inspectorate to the detention schools as envisaged in the 2001 Act. The CAAB is glad to report that the issues pertaining at the time have since been resolved with policy and the emergence of new structures, for example, the HSE, the IYJS and a new role for the SSI in the detention schools.



Roger Killeen, first Chief Executive of the SRSB

During 2005, the Board was preparing for the implementation of part of the 2001 Act dealing with a special care statutory scheme. The Board had a 'gatekeeping' role in reviewing special care applications. The foreword by the then chairperson, Maureen Lynott in 2006 stated that the 'the principles of the Children Act, 2001 and the best interests of the child have constantly guided the work of the SRSB'. During the period 2003 to 2006 the Board produced some key research material on special care, the recommendations of which focused on policy and practice in this new area of service delivery.

In September 2005, the Board launched a 'Review of Admission Criteria and Processes for Special Care'. This baseline research was into the use of the criteria and whether it was effective in identifying children who were in need of special care or for whom a special care placement would be appropriate. The Board had agreed admission criteria with the HSE for children and young people placed in special care units. The Board had been planning for the commencement of the special care statutory scheme where the Board had a key 'gatekeeping' role in presenting its 'views' on HSE (former health boards) applications made to the court. While there have been service developments and greater co-ordination nationally, the proposed scheme was never fully implemented and is now to be replaced by a scheme detailed in the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2009 – currently before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

In the 2006 Annual Report, the Board was concerned about the number of children in the care of the HSE placed by the High Court in children detention schools. The Board's stated view was that these placements are in principle not appropriate for a number of reasons, in particular, vulnerable children in need of special care or protection were being placed alongside children in the criminal justice system. With subsequent changes to policy and structures since 2006 onwards, the numbers deemed to be inappropriately placed, for the stated reasons, is now negligible. The subsequent annual reports were more low key, and, while placed in the Dáil library as statutorily required, did not draw the same level of public interest. The new Chairperson, Jacinta Stewart, stated that the coming years promised further changes and improvements in how services were organised and delivered.

In 2005/6, the SRSB co-sponsored, with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, a national research study which was undertaken by the Association for Criminal Justice, Research and Development (former IASD) on cases of children and young people before the Children Courts. This provided a key insight into the practical application of the Children Act, 2001 and provided evidence for both policy makers and service providers in the future implementation. In 2006, the SRSB produced Best Practice Guidelines in the Use of Physical Restraint (Child Care: Residential Units) in association with other key agencies. These guidelines were launched by Minister Lenihan at the National Concert Hall, Dublin before an invited audience.

The SRSB transitioned into the CAAB on the 23rd of July 2007.

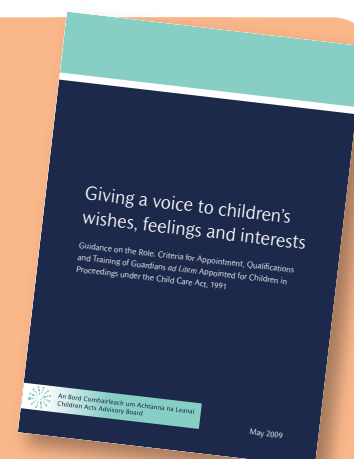
Guidance

Giving a Voice to Children's Wishes, Feelings and Interests

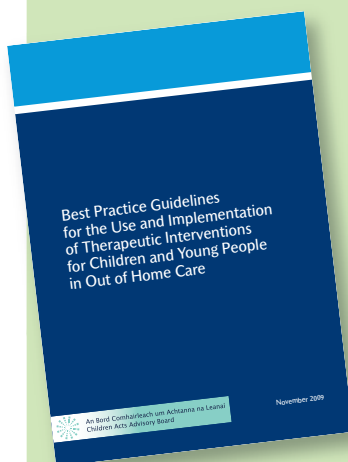
The CAAB formally launched the above guidance on the role, criteria for appointment, training and qualifications of guardians *ad litem* appointed in proceedings under the Child Care Act, 1991, on Tuesday the 19th of May 2009. The publication of this guidance is an **initial step** that will ultimately ensure that the voice of the child can always be appropriately heard in child care proceedings.

The preparation of the guidance involved a consultative group comprising all the key stakeholders under the direction of the CAAB. There was also a public advertisement inviting submissions to ensure the widest possible consultation and engagement. An agreed definition of the role of a guardian *ad litem* is to 'independently establish the wishes, feelings and interests of the child and present them to the court with recommendations'. There is a general consensus that the Child Care Act, 1991 lacked any specific detail regarding the functions and duties of the guardian *ad litem*.

In devising this guidance, a common sense approach was taken, based on practical experience and input from key practitioners and children and young people. The guidance seeks to help to standardise the provision of guardian *ad litem* services nationally as well as assisting the courts in determining the need for and appointment of guardians *ad litem* in specific cases. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Barry Andrews T.D. formally launched the guidance report at Buswells Hotel, Dublin.



Best Practice for the Use and Implementation of Therapeutic Interventions for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care



This report was formally launched on the 18th of December 2009 and proposes a set of best practice guidelines for the use and implementation of therapeutic interventions for children and young people in out of home care.

The need for this guidance arose from the experience of the SSI following its inspection of residential units. The OMCYA requested the CAAB to prepare guidelines for the use and

implementation of therapeutic interventions for children in residential care. The CAAB invited a number of key agencies and professionals including the HSE (policy, inspectorate and residential managers), the IYJS, the HIQA and SSI, and a number of senior clinicians and academics to assist in their development.

A literature review was completed to provide a knowledge base upon which best practice guidelines could be supported. What became apparent from the knowledge base of professionals and from the literature review was that there was no clear definition of what constituted a therapeutic intervention. Therefore, the starting point was to establish a definition working group to come up with a definition that would underpin the guidelines.

The agreed definition which has been used for the development of the guidance is:

'A therapeutic intervention is an intentional interaction(s) or event(s) which is expected to contribute to a positive outcome for a child or young person, which is selected on the basis of his/her identified needs, and which is underpinned by an informed understanding of the potential impact and value of the interaction/event involved.'

Given the complexity of children in out of home care and the range of services that children can receive, the task of making the guidelines universal and generic was quite a hard one. The main author of the guidance was Gráinne McGill, CAAB Advisory Officer supported by a member of the steering committee and involving consultation and advice from the other members of the steering committee and other professionals in the child care sector (both at home and abroad). Invaluable external assistance was provided by Ian Milligan from the Scottish Institute of Residential Child Care and Dr. William Crouch of The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, London. In addition, many professionals read various drafts and commented, advised and supported the project.

What they are Not

The guidelines do not examine specific therapeutic models and the definition was purely developed to assist in the development of the guidelines and does not purport to be a universal definition of a therapeutic intervention.

Future Review

As with all guidance it is important that they are reviewed in the context of experience, and the CAAB is hopeful that this review will be undertaken under the auspices of the OMCYA in two years.

Best Practice Guidelines in the Use of Physical Restraint

This report is a review of the 2006 *Best Practice Guidelines in the Use of Physical Restraint (Child Care: Residential Units)*. These guidelines were endorsed by the HSE, Department of Education and Science, SSI and the SRSB. The guidelines were intended to inform best practice and also to address concerns expressed by practitioners. The overall aim was to provide guidance in circumstances where a child or young person's behaviour presented a serious risk of harm. The CAAB undertook to carry out the review with a steering group comprising of representatives from the key agencies. The main objective of the steering group was to carry out a short review of the guidelines, to establish the need or otherwise of any amendments required and to identify any key issues arising in the operational implementation. Some of the key points are as follows.

- The guidelines should remain intact without any amendment/changes – with a renewed commitment to their full implementation; they should be subject to biennial review.
- The guidelines are sufficiently robust and set out the key areas where guidance on the issues of physical restraint are/may be an issue in the delivery of child care residential services.

- Inspections carried-out by the SSI have found uneven awareness of the guidelines and some instances of intervention, such as physically escorting young people, not being qualified as physical intervention and recorded as such. There is a requirement to have a consistency in application and recording.
- The availability of relevant and timely statistics in the use of physical restraint (with relevant commentary) in the application of these guidelines needs to be addressed at a national policy level by the relevant agencies. In a selection of reports examined, there were difficulties in analysing records of incidents as differing recording methods were used.
- An independent impact study of these guidelines (in the use of physical restraint in residential centres) should be considered in the future by the OMCYA.



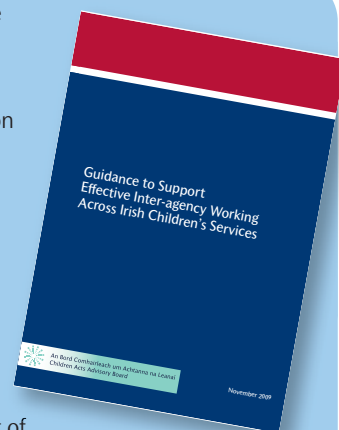
Guidance to Support Effective Inter-agency Working across Irish Children's Services

The overall purpose of this guidance document is to provide succinct but comprehensive, evidence based, guidance to support effective inter-agency working across Irish children's services. To fulfill this purpose the guidance:

- explains what inter-agency co-operation is, in terms of definition, the range of actions it covers and different levels of co-operation;
- provides guidance on why inter-agency co-operation should be used, in terms of the rationale for its use, alternatives to using it and the possible benefits and negative consequences of its use;
- provides guidance on how inter-agency co-operation can be implemented, in terms of the tools available to support inter-agency working, factors that facilitate and inhibit inter-agency

working, and tips for effective inter-agency working.

The guidance document was developed by the CAAB based on an extensive literature review, a comprehensive consultation process and detailed organisational case studies (for details see the research reports section of this newsletter). A two-page executive summary of the guidance is available online as is the full guidance document along with a web-cast of our launch and explanation of the guidance.



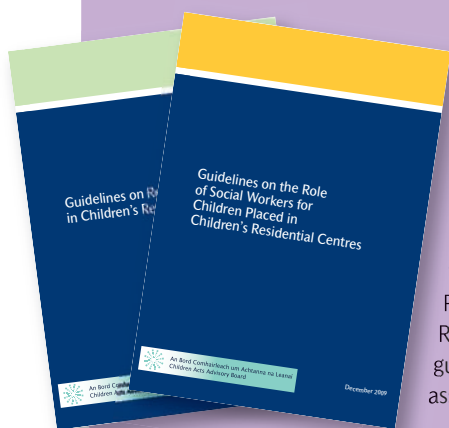
Social Care Guidance

In association with HIQA/SSI the CAAB has published two guidance documents to support workers in the care of children in residential settings. The first publication is *Guidelines on the Role of Social Workers for Children Placed in Children's Residential Centres*. These guidelines have been issued to assist social workers, residential

care staff and other relevant parties in clarifying the role of social workers. Most importantly the guidance is designed to assist social workers in their work with children in care.

The second publication is titled *Guidelines on Recording in Children's Residential Care*. The main focus of these guidelines is to promote positive child care practice that will assist residential staff in both collating and recording relevant and timely information on children and young people placed in the care of the HSE.

It is envisaged that HIQA/SSI will make reference to these guidelines in their inspection of residential settings. Copies of the guidelines are being distributed widely and are available for download from the CAAB website www.caab.ie.



Overview of the Research Programme

Promoting Awareness and Use of Research Evidence

The third of the CAAB's three strategic objectives was to increase the knowledge base of the child care sector. In order to do this we aimed to promote increased awareness and use of research evidence.

We sought to achieve this through five key activities, namely by:

- helping to identify and access relevant research;
- helping to communicate 'key messages' from research;
- undertaking 'new' research to fill information gaps;
- helping to promote confidence in research evidence;
- providing supports to integrate evidence into practice.

This article provides an overview of our work under each of these activities.

Helping to Identify and Access Relevant Research

We developed three **online research databases** of Irish research from the years 1980 to 2008 as follows.

- **Children in Detention and Out of Home Care:** Irish literature on children in detention, children in care, and other related areas, e.g. homelessness.
- **Inter-agency Co-operation:** Irish literature across children's services, Irish public sector initiatives and international literature reviews of inter-agency co-operation.
- **Child Protection:** Irish literature on physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

Helping to Communicate Key Messages from Existing Research

We communicated messages from existing research through **literature reviews** and **CAAB events**.

We summarised key messages for **inter-agency co-operation** from previous research on Irish children's services, Irish public sector initiatives and Irish and international literature reviews of inter-agency co-operation (see *CAAB Research: Report No. 4*). For services for **'at risk' children** key messages were communicated through research on children in detention, children in out of home care and related areas such as homelessness (see *CAAB Research: Report No. 6*).

Our events presented practical evidence and models for: child protection and family support through a Differential Response Model (see *CAAB Events: Report No. 3*); assessment (see *CAAB Events: Report No. 4*); repairing harm and restoring relationships through restorative practices (see *CAAB Events: Report No. 7*); and inter-agency co-operation (see *CAAB Events: Report No. 5* and *No. 8*).

Undertaking New Research to Fill Information Gaps

We concentrated on filling research gaps in three priority areas. For 'at risk' children we reviewed and identified how to improve the operations of the special care applications process (*CAAB*

Research: Report No. 1), we traced the previous service history of children for whom an application was made to special care in 2007 and tracked their post-application outcomes (*CAAB Research: Report No. 8*), and we audited Irish child protection literature and identified key knowledge gaps (*CAAB Research: Report No. 7*).

On the practice of **research utilisation** we collated the views and experiences of Irish managers and practitioners across children's services, we categorised knowledge brokering mechanisms used internationally relative to key issues in Ireland, and we recommended how to increase research utilisation in children's services (see *CAAB Research: Report No. 2*).

With regard to **inter-agency co-operation** we collated the views and experiences of Irish managers and practitioners of inter-agency co-operation (*CAAB Research: Report No. 3*) and we provided detailed organisational cases studies of inter-agency working in the delivery of services to children (*CAAB Research: Report No. 5*). We had also planned to systematically gather information on children's experiences of inter-agency working but did not proceed with this project given the Government decision of October 2008 to subsume the CAAB into the OMCYA and other agencies.

Helping to Promote Confidence in Research Evidence

We sought to promote confidence in CAAB research through:

- focusing on issues relevant to managers and practitioners;
- developing detailed invitation to tenders for our commissioned research projects;
- utilising quality 'analysts' when commissioning research;
- the executive engaging with and challenging researchers/consultants;
- using steering/advisory committees for research and guidance projects;
- subjecting our research and guidance to independent peer review.

Other aspects that helped to support confidence in CAAB research stemmed from the independent status of the Board, the evidence based focus of our events, the open and positive nature of interactions with stakeholders, and the relationships and trust we built with colleagues across children's services.

Providing Supports to Integrate Evidence into Practice

We supported the integration of evidence into practice by:

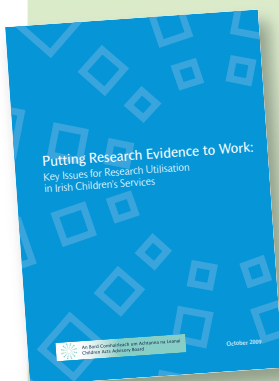
- producing written guidance and guidelines on the guardian ad litem, therapeutic interventions and inter-agency co-operation (see *CAAB Guidance: Report No. 1, No. 2* and *No. 3*);
- facilitating reflection and pursuing commitment from stakeholders. For an example of this work see the article in this newsletter on the follow-up to our seminar on restorative practices;
- providing direct independent personnel and expertise, see our article on the garda case management process;

- providing 'seed' funding to help unblock organisational obstacles. For instance, supporting restorative practices training with gardaí, schools and others and supporting a restorative practices project in Galway;
- supporting evidence 'integration' projects through a package of supports. See the accompanying article on the piloting of a differential response model in Dublin.

Concluding Comments

The type and nature of our research activities were driven by our Strategy 2007–2010 and the range of actions were agreed and prioritised through a Research and Communications Programme. Implementation was achieved through the work of our executive and Board members; a number of important advisory structures (our 'events group', research committee, and communications committee), and through internal and external (researchers and consultants) personnel. While we have communicated and provided a considerable amount of useful research evidence to the sector within a relatively short period of time it is perhaps most fitting to conclude this article by noting 'a lot done, a lot more to do!'

Putting Research Evidence to Work: Key Issues for Research Utilisation in Irish Children's Services

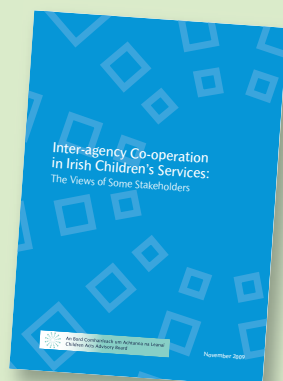


The aim of this study was to assist in the development of initiatives to make research evidence more accessible to practitioners, managers and policy makers. It was undertaken by the School of Social Work and Social Policy and the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin. The report made key findings in relation to evidence based/informed practice, the extent and nature of research use, barriers to and facilitators for research use, and mechanisms to promote the use of

research. The report provides recommendations to research commissioners, service provider organisations, research providers and also recommendations in relation to the establishment of a knowledge brokering service.

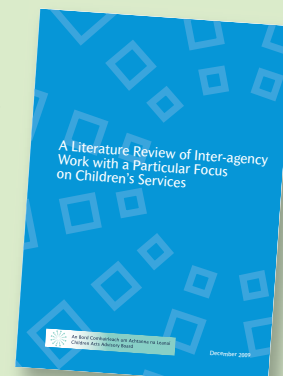
Inter agency Working – the Views of Some Stakeholders

The purpose of the study was to obtain information on the inter-agency co-operation experiences of workers in Irish children's services and to seek their views on how more effective co-operation can be achieved. The report was produced by Hibernian Consulting. The report identified the participants' involvement and understanding of inter-agency co-operation as well as their perception of benefits and barriers. The findings point to a clear rationale for central expertise to support better and more effective inter-agency co-operation, and particular areas where central support would be beneficial are identified in the report.

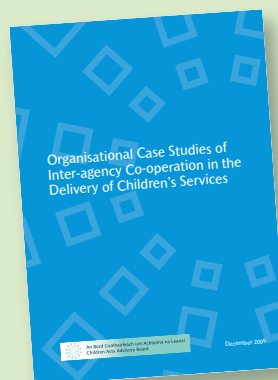


A Literature Review of Inter-agency Work with a Particular Focus on Children's Services

The overall objective of the literature review was to produce a summary analysis of research literature on inter-agency co-operation in public services, with a particular focus on inter-agency co-operation in children's services. The review was conducted by WRC Social and Economic Consultants Limited. The analysis of the available literature allowed for the identification of key learning from a wide range of initiatives and is presented in terms of its relevance to children's services in Ireland.



Organisational Case Studies of Inter-Agency Co-operation in the Delivery of Children's Services



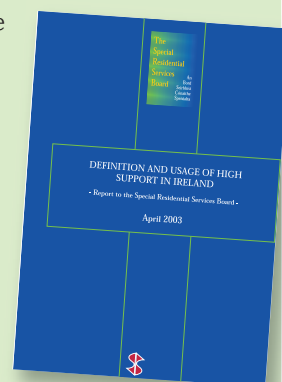
This study provides six case studies (three Irish and three international) of inter-agency co-operation in the delivery of services to vulnerable children. The overall objective of the study, which was conducted by Mary Rafferty and Anne Colgan, was to produce a number of organisational case studies illustrating examples of inter-agency co-operation in the delivery of services to vulnerable children. The study identifies key

findings across all six case studies in terms of motivations, approach, benefits and lessons. The study draws on findings from existing reviews, evaluations and reports on the six projects and on a focused number of consultations with key people from each project.

Definition and Usage of High Support in Ireland (SRSB 2003)

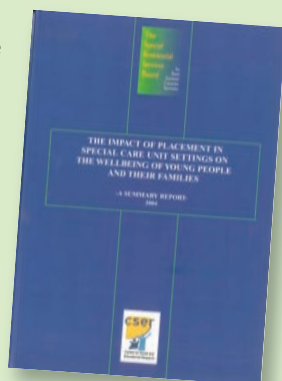
High support units are an intermediate residential care service in the continuum of care between mainstream residential care and special care (i.e. secure residential care). The former SRSB commissioned Social Information Systems Limited to examine the use of high support units throughout Ireland and to help to develop, in conjunction with the former health boards, proposed criteria for entry into and exit from high support units.

This research involved a review and analysis of high support developments in the former health board areas and the development of criteria for admission to and discharge from high support residential units.



The Impact of Placement in Special Care Unit settings on the Well-being of Young People and their Families (SRSB 2004)

The former SRSB commissioned the Centre for Social and Educational Research (CSER), Dublin Institute of Technology, to conduct research on the impact of placement in special care units on the well-being of young people and their families. The CSER undertook this work between 2001 and 2003. A number of key methods were used in the collection of information for this research, including the use of a 'quality of life scale'. As part of the research young people, their family members and/or 'significant others' were interviewed, young peoples' key workers completed questionnaires and relevant professional and key stakeholders were consulted. The report was published in 2004.



Ireland. The study was carried out by Eustace Patterson Limited. The key findings of the report are identified by theme, e.g. outcomes for children, practice issues and participation. The conclusions of the report identify key features of good practice and recommendations are also provided in relation to policy development and service provision, developing a strategic approach to research, developing a performance monitoring system and pointers for consideration in future research.

Report of an Audit of Child Protection Research in Ireland 1990–2009

The Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin undertook an audit of Irish child protection literature for the period of 1990–2009. The project produces an audit of Irish child protection literature, identifies the main funding sources for research on this topic and formulates conclusions about gaps in research literature. The audit reveals a number of shortcomings in the availability and accessibility of Irish research, and the project represents an important step in bringing together existing material and should provide a starting block for the development of a national agenda for research on child protection.

Review of Special Care Applications 2008



This research conducted by Social Information Systems Limited covered 36 applications for special care made between January and June 2007. The study found that females were more likely than males to be subject to both an application for special care, and for that application to lead to an admission. The research also identified those circumstances that increased the likelihood of an application being successful. The report contains a range of

recommendations reflecting issues relating to management of practice, processes and monitoring.

Research Scholarships

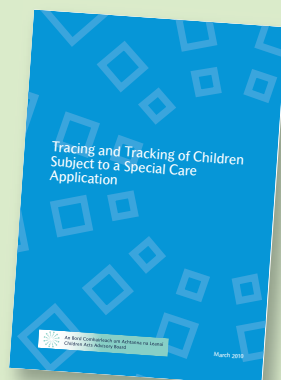
In December 2004 the Board of the then SRSB decided that it would fund two scholarships to encourage students to carry out research in the children's sector. Two research scholarships were awarded in 2005 and 2006, however when the new Board was appointed to the CAAB, it was decided to defer the award of any further scholarships pending the development of a research strategy. Events however overtook us and before any further scholarships could be advertised the decision was taken to subsume the Board into the OMCYA. The following two scholarships were awarded.

Responding to Risk Behaviour in a Special Care Residential Setting: Andy Denton

In 2005 Andy Denton was awarded a research scholarship into models of special care. Andy completed his studies in November 2006 and his M.Soc. Science degree was awarded by the Department of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork for his thesis entitled 'Responding to Risk Behaviour in a Special Care Residential Setting'. The study investigated which professional methods and interventions used in a special care programme were effective in assisting young people to reduce high risk behaviour. From a review of literature, together with analysis of empirical data collected during the study, two clear themes emerged. It was found that the involvement of parents in the programme and the professional relationships developed between staff and young people had a positive impact on moderating the risk behaviours of the young women who were the subject of the study.

Tracing and Tracking of Children Subject to a Special Care Application

Social Information Systems Limited was commissioned to undertake a study in respect of children who were subject to special care applications in 2007. The overall objective of this study was to produce a comprehensive account of children's experience of special care and the experience of some of the professionals involved with those children and to identify key findings with regards to the outcomes of children subject to special care applications over a 12–24 month period. This study is in the process of being finalised and will be published in the near future.



A Study Investigating Young People's Experiences of Offending and Victimisation: Mary Louise Corr

In 2006 Mary Louise Corr was also awarded a research scholarship for her PhD studies at the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin. This work is currently in progress and the working title is: 'A Study Investigating Young People's Experiences of Offending and Victimisation'. To date, 30 young people have participated in the study and Mary Louise hopes to have completed the work in September 2010.

Thematic Analysis of Irish Literature on Children in Detention and Out of Home Care in Ireland

The objective of this study was to audit and analyse research literature on children in detention and out of home care in

Special Care Criteria

Criteria for Appropriate Use of Special Care Units

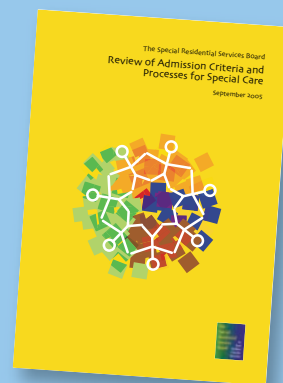
The purpose of a special care unit is to provide a facility where young people who are in need of special care or protection are placed with the explicit objective to provide a period of stabilising short-term care that will enable them to return to less secure care as soon as possible. The CAAB has a specific legislative function to prepare and publish, in consultation with the HSE, criteria for the admission and discharge of children from special care units subject to special care and interim special care orders. It was within this context that the former SRSB and the HSE reviewed and agreed a set of criteria for the appropriate use of special care units in November 2006 which were further reviewed in 2008.

Discharge Criteria

These guidelines are being developed by the CAAB in consultation with the HSE (and taking into account the views of other parties) to establish a baseline for the appropriate discharge of children from special care. These guidelines are being finalised and will be published shortly.

Review of Admission Criteria and Processes for Special Care (SRSB 2005)

The criteria for the appropriate use of special care were devised by agreement between the special care units, the HSE and the former SRSB to guide units, practitioners and the courts as to when special care may be an appropriate placement for a young person. The former SRSB commissioned Social Information Systems Limited to carry out research into the criteria in order to establish whether the criteria were effective in identifying children who are in need of special care or children for whom a special care placement would be appropriate. The version of the criteria used for the review was dated the 22nd of April 2005 and the report was published in September 2005.



Databases

Areas

In 2008 and 2009 the CAAB commissioned research on three aspects of children's services as follows:

- children in detention and out of home care;
- inter-agency co-operation;
- child protection.

Each research project included an in-depth search for literature covering the period 1990 to early 2009. In each case a comprehensive bibliography of the referenced literature was produced. The relevant references can be accessed from the CAAB website in the form of three searchable databases.

Scope of Referenced Material

The children in detention and out of home care database references over 230 Irish documents. The inter-agency co-operation database references over 140 Irish and international documents and the child protection database has over 180 references. The three databases are available free of charge at <http://www.caab.ie/Research/publications-database.aspx>

Searching a Database

Each database offers a keyword search facility. In addition, each database may be searched by category such as 'sector', 'publisher', 'author', or 'year'. The categories presented will differ depending on the database being accessed.

These categories may be further sub-divided to facilitate a more in-depth search. In the case of children in detention and out of home care database, for example, the out of home care section's sub-divisions include, inter alia, 'foster care', 'mainstream residential care' and 'special care and high support'.

Each search produces a table containing references to the documents that meet the search criteria. The table contains the author, title and year. Table 1 shows a small extract of the references available when a search choosing the sector 'foster care'.

Author	Title	Year
Brady, B., Canavan, C., Dolan, P.	Working for Children and Families Exploring Good Practice	2004
Browne, D.	An Evaluation of Foster Parents Attitudes Towards Birth Parents	2002
Browne, D., Moloney, A.	Contact Irregular: a qualitative analysis of the impact of visiting patterns of natural parents on foster placements,	2002
Browne, D., Taylor, M., Moloney, A.	Irish Foster Parents Perception of Services Required to Improve Fostering Practices: A qualitative analysis	2000
Buckley, K.	Allegations of child abuse in foster care: incidence, intervention, support and outcomes in one community care area, 2000, in Buckley, H., (ed), Child Protection and Welfare. Innovation and Interventions, 2002, Institute of Public Administration, Dublin	2000

Table 1

On selecting a reference from Table 1, a short summary of the topics covered and information sources appear along with an option to access and/or download the publication, if it is available free of charge. Table 2 gives details on one of the publications selected from Table 1.

Title	Working for Children and Families Exploring Good Practice, 2004
Category	Statutory sector
Author	B., Canavan, C., Dolan, P.
Year	2005
Publisher	Department of Health and Children Joint initiative between the Western Health Board and National University of Ireland, Galway
Research Body	Advisory Group and Project Team from Child & Family Research and Policy Unit, National University of Ireland, Galway
Topics Covered	Policy context; good practice; child and family services; key theories influencing practice; set of principles of good practice; examples of good practice implemented
Information Sources	26 models of good practice from health boards around Ireland each described including four case studies on children in care
Link To Website	http://www.dohc.ie/publications/working_children_families.html

Table 2

Evidence to Practice Seminars

Evidence to Practice Seminars were hosted by the CAAB to assist services to children in achieving positive outcomes by improving areas of practice. Crucial to this is the provision of rigorous national and international evidence relating to areas of concern for practitioners, managers and policy makers.

A Different Response Model: Refocusing from Child Protection to Family Support



The first Evidence to Practice Seminar was held in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin, on the 22nd of May 2008.

The seminar was entitled 'A Different Response Model: Refocusing Child Protection Towards Family Support'. This seminar sought to alert stakeholders to the current experience of child protection across a number of jurisdictions, providing real life examples from Minnesota, USA and the Foyle Trust, Northern Ireland, with research from Northern Ireland and an overview of the current experience in Australia and New Zealand.

The seminar was attended by approximately 175 people from a wide range of backgrounds including social work, family support, education, youth justice, Traveller services, local authority, voluntary sector, community groups and the research community. Reaction to the presentations was very positive and the event concluded with a sometimes robust question and answer session.

The event was followed on Friday 23rd with a half-day meeting attended by all of the presenters and representatives from the OMCYA, the HSE, IYJS, the research community and CAAB. This event was designed to review the implications of the presentations and consider what the next steps would be if this approach was considered to be appropriate for the Irish child care sector. Arising from this process a project has been developed in north Dublin which is further described in the projects section of the newsletter.

Assessed – So What!: Reflecting on the Approach to Assessment and its Benefits to Children and their Families.

The second Evidence to Practice Seminar was held in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin, on the 19th of November 2008. This seminar sought to engage with practitioners and decision

makers with the purpose of reflecting on the current approach to assessment of children and young people and to consider moving toward a more focused assessment framework throughout the sectors, ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and their families.

The seminar was attended by approximately 245 people from a wide range of backgrounds including social work, family support, education, youth justice, Traveller services, local authority, voluntary sector, community groups, social workers and academia. The event concluded with a robust questions and answers session, details of which can be seen on the seminar report on the CAAB website.

Reaction to the seminar was very positive with a 64% response of feedback forms. From this feedback when asked if the delegate felt there was a need for change in relation to assessment in Ireland, 91% said yes, 1% said no and 8% did not answer. When asked if the delegate felt a national assessment framework is necessary, 87% said yes, 6% said no and 7% did not answer.



Follow-up to this seminar resulted in agencies requesting more time to further develop their work on assessment within their own organisations before they could commit to the development of a common assessment framework.

Restorative Practices – A Collaborative and Proactive Approach to Behaviour Management

The third Evidence to Practice Seminar was held in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin, on the 21st of May 2009. This seminar sought to engage with practitioners and decision makers with the purpose of introducing a new focus across all children's services, to engage children and young people in behaviour management and to restore healthy relationships. Barry Andrews, T.D., Minister for Children and Youth Affairs opened the seminar. Restorative practices describes a set of behaviours and practice that seek to capitalise on the strengths in social networks and relationships and improve social discipline through inclusive learning and decision making. Essentially it seeks to involve those most affected by decisions as closely as possible in the decision making process, but in a structured framework that



provides high support and high challenge/control. Restorative practices can be used in and across a variety of settings including education, care and welfare, and justice.

The seminar was attended by approximately 235 people from a wide range of backgrounds including social work, family support, education, youth justice, Traveller services, local authority, voluntary sector, community groups, social workers and academia.

The event was followed by a half-day discussion forum on the 17th of September 2009, facilitated by the CAAB, at the Gresham Hotel (see article under projects for details of work undertaken since that date).

Network Events

The SRSB/CAAB held a number of network events from 2006 through to 2008 with the aim of providing an opportunity for consultation and networking by professionals working in the area of children's services.

The first SRSB network event was held on the 25th and 26th of January 2006 in the Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore, Co. Offaly and was entitled **Programmes in Care**.

This event sought to assist the sharing of best practice in programme development, the identification of programmes in existence in the five children detention schools, three special care units and 11 high support units in Ireland today. Information was shared through a series of presentations and workshops.

The second SRSB network event of 2006 was held on the 22nd of November 2006 on the following topic: **Working with Young People Who Will Not Engage**.

This event looked at the difficulties encountered by staff when working with young people who will not engage with the juvenile justice system, services provided by the Department of Health and Children/HSE, the education system or with community based interventions. Methods of working to enable or to motivate the young people to engage with the services provided were explored.

The SRSB held its first network event of 2007 on the 18th and 19th of April in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone on the topic: **Special Care: Overview and Future Developments**.

The purpose of this event was to provide information and promote discussion regarding special care (Children Act, 2001). The event included both presentations and interactive workshops on various topics including legislation, family welfare conferencing, the role of the SRSB/National Special Care Admissions and Discharge Committee, the criteria for entry into special care, and, refusals to special care: the implications and alternatives.



The first network event to be hosted as the CAAB was held on the 21st and 22nd November 2007 in the Radisson SAS Hotel, Dublin Airport on the topic of **Leading Change – Improving Outcomes**.

A number of presentations were given by various parties involved in children services, including the HSE, NEWB, CAAB, Dr. Helen Buckley of the School of Social Work and Social Policy in Trinity College Dublin, Donegal County Development Board, Garda National Juvenile Office, IYJS, the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee, HIQA, Youthreach and the OMCYA.

The CAAB held four regional network events (based on the HSE regions) during May and June 2008.

The topic of the 2008 network event series was **Implementing the Agenda for Children's Services: Inter-agency Co-operation and Putting Evidence into Practice**. The events explored the experiences and views of practitioners, managers and policy makers of inter-agency working. They presented the opportunity for regional children's services to hear from other services in their area and assisted in outlining the roles and responsibilities of statutory agencies in the delivery of services to children and young people.

Projects

A number of projects were undertaken by the CAAB with the objective of assisting agencies to make progress with innovative ideas and initiatives that may not have advanced without this support.

Garda Case Management

In 2006 An Garda Síochána in conjunction with the CAAB carried out an assessment of young offenders appearing before the Dublin Children Court having been charged or summoned on criminal offences. This assessment focused on prolific offenders who were amassing a high number of charges before the court. The scope of this original assessment concentrated on offenders residing in the Dublin north inner city. The available evidence was that the north inner city had historical problem in dealing effectively with young offenders.

The outcome of the assessment by An Garda Síochána and CAAB was to provide a co-ordinated and consistent management process to deal with the appearances of young persons before the Dublin Children Court. A pilot project in case management began in October 2006 and concluded in August 2007. The process places one garda as a case manager for each individual young person. They are responsible for leading, co-ordinating and managing the young person's charges. The case manager is responsible for bringing all the charges before the court and takes the lead on prosecuting the young person.

Main goal:

- to manage the process of young offenders before the court.

Aims:

- to identify juveniles at risk of offending;
- to promote accountability for offending;
- to divert young people from offending;
- to create an effective services network for juvenile offenders;
- to promote inter-agency co-operation;
- to build and maintain positive relationships between stakeholders;
- to provide an efficient and effective mechanism for addressing juvenile crime and criminality;
- to streamline the courts process for juveniles;
- to provide support for juvenile offenders and their families.

Objective

The main objective is to provide appropriate interventions and services necessary to meet the needs of the children and to co-ordinate, manage and assess the impact of those services with a view to engineering those children out of the criminal justice system. Case management also addresses inefficiencies in the criminal justice system and in particular those associated with the Children's Court and Children Court sittings, ensuring that all juvenile offending issues before the court are co-ordinated and managed to deliver appropriate, efficient and effective short-term, medium-term and long-term outcomes for all stakeholders.

Evaluation of the pilot project indicated that at the end of a nine-month period the number of live charges for the sample of

young persons had dropped from 219 to 80, a drop of 63%.

Following the evaluation, the Garda Commissioner directed that case management for juveniles be rolled out in the Dublin Metropolitan Region, Cork and Limerick. In addition, Donegal and Galway Divisions, on specific request, were included in the project. A training programme was developed and facilitated by An Garda Síochána and the CAAB in the Garda College, which was delivered to continuing policing development gardaí, who in turn will now deliver the training to garda case managers within their divisions.

NEWSFLASH!

The Garda Case Management Project has been awarded a Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Award for 2010.

A Different Response Model

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to design, implement and evaluate an Irish version of the differential response model (DRM) in child protection and welfare services, which emphasises community and family strengths within the local health office (LHO), north Dublin.

The project is facilitated by the Child and Family Research Centre, NUI, Galway. (CFRC) and supported by the CAAB. The CFRC has two roles: support/advice in planning and implementing the pilot in LHO north Dublin; and developing and implementing an evaluation plan to go alongside the pilot.

Progress to Date

1. Mark Yalloway has been assigned as DRM Project Manager. This is a significant development and shows the level of commitment from HSE in north Dublin.
2. Project team meetings continue to be held regularly, involving Primary, Community and Continuing Care (PCCC) Services north Dublin (HSE), CFRC, Assistant National Director, HSE and the CAAB.
3. An internal working group has been formed representing social work staff to support the planning and implementing of the model in north Dublin.
4. There have been internal meetings with north Dublin children and family staff to engage, consult and inform them regarding the project.
5. There have been meetings and consultations with external key stakeholders in north Dublin to engage and inform them of the project.
6. A two-day course was delivered in September 2009 in 'Signs of Safety and Solution Focused Child Protection Practice'. This involved 40 HSE staff and is supported by the CAAB.
7. Project team staff have presented a paper on the project at the UCC Child Protection and Welfare Conference in October 2009.

8. Sue Lohrbach from Child and Family Services, Olmsted County, Minnesota returned to north Dublin in the autumn for further training.
9. A commitment has now been made by the HSE to the national roll-out of this approach.

Restorative Practices

Following a one-day Evidence to Practice seminar on restorative practices held on the 21st of May 2009 in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin (see article under Evidence to Practice Seminars for details) there has been significant interest in introducing the model across children's services in Ireland.

The CAAB facilitated a half-day discussion forum on the 17th of September 2009 at the Gresham Hotel. Members of agencies who enquired into and are interested in introducing the restorative practices model into their service and/or at an inter-agency level had the opportunity to meet with: Estelle MacDonald, Project Leader, Hull Centre for Restorative Practices, 'Restorative City'; Mark Finnis, Project Consultant and Lead Trainer, Hull Centre for Restorative Practices, 'Restorative City'; and Les Davey, Director, International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP), UK.

Estelle presented her work, as a head teacher, leading a school from being in 'special measures' in 2004 to being judged to be 'outstanding' by Ofsted in 2006. This work has since evolved into a whole-city project to develop restorative practices in Hull.

Estelle and Mark discussed their experiences. They gave advice on implementing the restorative practices model in response to key questions/issues raised by attendees. In addition, Les introduced the work of the IIRP and the training in restorative practices they provide.

The CAAB committed to developing a restorative practices support network in Ireland. The aim of the network is to provide a support for services and 'champions' in implementing and developing restorative practices by creating links between network members to discuss and motivate one another, provide information on training, implementation and motivation for restorative practices and to encourage inter-agency support in these areas.

The meeting ended with those interested signing up to become members of the Restorative Practices Ireland Support Network and committing to further consider how they could introduce/champion this model of practice.

Restorative Practices Training

Over the past seven years the former SRSB and the CAAB have sponsored six staff members and three JLOs in the Garda Síochána to attend an intensive training course in the USA on restorative practices run by the IIRP, Buxmont Academy, USA. The CAAB consulted with the IIRP UK in relation to facilitating

some inter-agency training in restorative practices. The IIRP has been very generous in its offer to co-fund this training with the CAAB.

The purpose of this is to help those trained in restorative practices get a greater understanding of the model and gain skills and knowledge to assist them in introducing the model into their service/project.

Members of the Restorative Practices Ireland Support Network were invited to make submissions of interest to the CAAB for the first phase of this training plan, to be implemented by March 2010, which involves two three-day facilitating restorative practices conferences and training courses with 12 students on each (total 24 places).

Following this the IIRP UK will invite all those trained in phase one, together with those already trained on other IIRP courses, to apply for one of 12 places on a training of trainers course. IIRP UK will then select the most experienced and suitable 12 to attend the course, which will be held by June 2010.

The successful delivery of this plan will provide Ireland with a cadre of 12 trainers ready to roll restorative practices out both 'in-house' and 'externally' across Ireland. This cadre will be added to and supported by the eight gardaí the IIRP UK trained as trainers in November 2009, making a total of 20. All will then be able to deliver IIRP UK RP training at much reduced cost and with the full back-up and support of IIRP UK, using its resources under licence.

In addition and following the CAAB seminar on Restorative Practices a number of teachers expressed an interest in using restorative practices in schools in the Clondalkin area of West Dublin. The schools in question are a cluster of three primary and one secondary school.

CAAB staff and other interested parties subsequently visited Collingwood Primary School in Hull where the goal is for everyone who works with children and youth in Hull, one of England's most economically and socially deprived cities, to employ restorative practices. In 2004, before Restorative Practices implementation, Collingwood was given Ofsted's (Britain's Office for Standards in Education) lowest ranking: 'needing special measures.' Within two years of Restorative Practices implementation, the school achieved Ofsted's highest ranking: 'outstanding.' Inspired by this result CAAB consulted with staff at all four schools in Clondalkin and the IIRP with a view to sourcing training in Restorative Practices for staff members. It was eventually agreed that a number of IIRP accredited trainers would deliver an introductory one day training course in the use of Restorative Practices for all staff of the four schools and that the CAAB would meet the cost of this training.

Children's Services Awards

Background to the Awards

The CAAB established the Awards for Services to Children and Young People in 2007 in order to recognise the invaluable work and contribution made by service providers to children and young people nationally under the relevant Children Acts in Ireland. The overall objective of this programme is to promote and bring together agencies working in partnership with children and young people, acknowledging their individual and collaborative efforts and further support effective practice in service delivery.

Following the Government decision (Oct 2008) to subsume the CAAB into the OMCYA, the latter confirmed the future continuation of the National Awards for Services to Children and Young People.

The CAAB in association with the OMCYA co-ordinated the National Awards for Services to Children and Young People 2010 with the awards ceremony to be held in Dublin Castle on the 9th of March 2010.

Award Aims

The aims of this awards programme are:

- to recognise and reward the many 'silent successes' of teams and individuals operating under the Children Acts in delivering services to children and young people in Ireland;

- to promote excellence and effective practice;
- to seek out initiatives and practices that are transferable, thus promoting a sharing and learning environment across agencies delivering services to children and young people.

Award Categories

In 2010 the categories under which entries are made are amended as follows:

- Effective practice in inter-agency working:** practices that have improved services to children and young people through collaborative working across agencies/sectors/nationalities.
- Effective practice in community:** practices that are community-based, people-centred, equitable and accountable.
- Effective practice in education:** practices that are education-focused, people-centred, equitable and accountable.
- Effective practice in juvenile justice to effective practice in youth justice:** practices that are offender-based or take preventative measures with children/young people at risk of offending. They should be people-centred, equitable and accountable.
- Effective practice in residential care to effective practice in out of home care:** practices within residential care/out of home care that are proven to enhance the lives of young people, capitalising on their resilience. They should be equitable and accountable.

Previous Winners

2008 Awards



OVERALL WINNER

Service Title: Londubh Project
Organisation: Londubh Project

For the full report including category winners of the 2008 Awards for Services to Children and Young People please see our website.



2009 Awards



OVERALL WINNER

Service/Practice Title: Kilkenny Community Early Years Project
Organisation: Carlow and Kilkenny Local Health Office

For the full report including category winners of the 2009 Awards for Services to Children and Young People please see our website.



2010 National Awards – CAAB in association with the OMCYA

The 2010 Awards Ceremony was held in Dublin Castle on Tuesday March 9th. 10 finalists from an original field of 37 projects presented to a large and highly appreciative audience.

The finalists were presented with their awards by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Mr. Barry Andrews, TD.

The overall winner was *The Adventure Therapy Project, Trinity House School*

The Category Winners were: Curragh Youth Project, Kildare Youth Service; Quality School Education Model, Trim Youthreach Centre of Education; Pre-School Special Needs Regional Committee, HSE, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal; Bessborough Centre Residence, Bessborough Centre Ltd., Cork.



Conferences

International Conferences

SRSB/CAAB staff were invited to present at the following international conferences:

2003: 6th International Institute for Restorative Practices World Conference, Vancouver, Canada.
Rose Sweeney, Court Officer: 'Developments of the Irish Children Act, 2001'.

2006: XVII World Congress of the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
Finbarr O'Leary, Deputy Chief Executive: 'Children in conflict with the law, children in custody'.

2007: Family Group Conference Forum (NI) Conference: 'All Ireland Conference – Because Families Matter', Cavan, Ireland.
Finbarr O'Leary, Deputy Chief Executive: 'The operation of the Children Act as it impacts on children and young people'.

2008: XVIIth ISPCAN International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect 'Towards a Caring and Non-Violent Community: A Child's Perspective', Hong Kong, China.
Bronagh Gibson, Court Officer: 'Opt Out: Locked Up'.

2009: 12th International Institute for Restorative Practices World Conference, Pennsylvania, USA.
Finbarr O'Leary, Deputy Chief Executive: 'Restorative Practices for Young People in Ireland: historical practices, present developments and future plans'.

SRSB/CAAB National Conferences

2004: 'Education in Care'
The first national conference of the SRSB was held on the 30th and 31st of March 2004 in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone. The conference topic was entitled 'Education in Care'. The conference included a number of multi-disciplinary presentations as well as a personal account of being in residential care by a service user.

2006: 'Stepping Out – Young People Leaving Care'
The SRSB's national conference held in Galway on the 17th and 18th of May 2006 was entitled 'Stepping Out – Young People Leaving Care'. This conference focused on young people leaving care and the seeming lack of overall co-ordination in the aftercare delivery of services. It explored the challenges faced by both the services working with young people as well as the young people themselves. Best national and international practice in the area was examined.

2007: 'Sharing the task - Achieving Child Protection & Welfare through Inter-Agency Working'

The CAAB's 2007 National Conference was held on the 23rd and 24th of October 2007 in the Ormonde Hotel, Kilkenny. The topic for this conference was 'Sharing the Task - Achieving Child Protection and Welfare through Inter-Agency Working'. The theme of the conference was achieving child protection and welfare through inter-agency working and speakers from Ireland, Northern Ireland, UK and Sweden presented on various topics connected to this complex issue.

2008: 'More than Rhetoric: Improving Outcomes for Children and their Families through Inter-agency Working'

The CAAB's 2008 National Conference was held at the Grand Hotel in Malahide, Dublin on the 15th and 16th of October. The theme of the conference was 'More than Rhetoric: Improving Outcomes for Children and their Families through Inter-agency Working'. This conference provided a wealth of national and international evidence on inter-agency working.

Supported Conferences

In addition to hosting its national conference, the SRSB/CAAB also sponsored a number of conferences hosted by other organisations where substantive overlap was shown between the conference topic and areas of SRSB/CAAB activity.

2007: Emotional Intelligence, Mental Health and Juvenile Delinquency Conference, UCD (18th of May, 2007) and sponsored by SRSB/CAAB, The Irish Youth Justice Service and the School of Psychology, UCD.

2008: Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD) 11th Annual Conference (Tower Hotel Dublin, 9th and 10th of October 2008) entitled 'Minorities, Crime and Justice'.

2008: 'Youth Justice - Measuring Compliance with International Standards' UCC (3rd and 4th of April 2008) and organised by Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights at the Faculty of Law, University College Cork.

2009: Child Protection and Welfare Social Work Conference, UCC (23rd October 2009) entitled 'Keeping Children Safe: Critical Times, Critical Issues' and organised by Social Work Development Unit (UCC), Irish Association of Social Workers (Southern Branch), Child Protection and Welfare Social Work Services, Health Service Executive South.

Memories...





The CAAB Chairperson, Jacinta Stewart presents the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Mr. Barry Andrews, T.D. with a copy of the 2008 Annual Report in the presence of the Board Members and the Chief Executive. Minister Andrews was attending a Special Board Meeting held in the Probation Services Offices, Haymarket on the 8th of September 2009 which reviewed the work of the Board since its establishment in 2007 and presented the findings of the Benchmarking Progress Report (on pages 4-9 of this issue).

Back Row Left to Right: Aidan Browne (Chief Executive); Finbarr Murphy; Roger Killeen; Minister Barry Andrews TD; Jacinta Stewart (Chair); Dermot Stokes; Gerry O'Neill; Denis O'Sullivan.

Front Row Left to Right: Michael Donnellan; Cathleen Callanan; Michelle Shannon; Philomena Hanna; Cathal Flynn; Nuala Doherty.

...and the last word!



As we come to the end of our agency life we look back with some degree of satisfaction at the role we have played in the continuous struggle to improve outcomes for children and families. There is a great deal of work we still hoped to do to build on the strong foundation we have laid. We hope that the range of reports and guidance documents will continue to be of value to practitioners, policy makers and managers. We particularly hope that the inter-agency alliances that were developed around the work of the CAAB will continue to flourish.

I am concerned that much of the work we have commenced will not bear the fullest fruit. The production of research findings, reports and guidance is, in real terms, the easy part. The more challenging work is in engaging the hearts and minds of everyone working in the children's sector to commit to implementing these findings. A particular area which I would highlight for ongoing attention is the development of the children's courts. CAAB and its predecessor the SRSB developed a very positive and proactive relationship with the judiciary and were available to provide advice on request on children's issues and the judiciary were regular attendees at our events. It is unclear how this gap will be filled.

As with so many organisations the major asset of the CAAB has been our staff. The relationships they have developed and the expertise they have grown will be carried forward with passion into the agencies to which they have transferred. I am confident that they will continue to advance the programme of work we have commenced.

I want to express my personal thanks to all of the staff of the SRSB and the CAAB who have worked so hard over the lifetime of the two Boards and to wish them well in their new endeavours. I also want to acknowledge the fine contribution of the members of both Boards which was so critical to moving our agenda forward. I would like to thank all those who contributed so willingly to all our committees, working groups, judging panels and advisory groups. Without their generous support we could not have delivered on our task.

Delivering quality services to children and families will always be challenging but when it is done well the rewards are great. I wish the OMCYA and the other agencies who are taking forward elements of our remit every success in the coming years.

Aidan Browne
Chief Executive