



An Bord Comhairleach um Achtanna na Leanaí
Children Acts Advisory Board

**Meeting of
Children Acts Advisory Board
Tuesday 20th October 2009
Phoenix House
Minutes**

Present: Dermot Stokes (Acting Chair), Nuala Doherty, Cathal Flynn, Roger Killeen, Finbarr Murphy, Gerry O'Neill, Denis O'Sullivan, Michelle Shannon.

Apologies: Jacinta Stewart (Chair), Cathleen Callanan, Michael Donnellan, Philomena Hanna, Finbarr O'Leary.

In Attendance: Aidan Browne, Jane Craig, Robert Murphy.

In the absence of Jacinta Stewart (Chair), Dermot Stokes chaired the meeting.

Declaration of Interest in agenda items, by Board Members

- No conflict of interests declared.

1) Minutes

- The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, and agreed subject to a change on Page 3, 3rd bullet point which has been amended to read '*The CAAB research programme aims not to replicate but to gather evidence based practice. The research carried out has been rigorous, high-quality and robust and has avoided naïve correlations.*' The minutes were subsequently signed by Dermot Stokes.

2) Matters Arising

- Any matters arising were dealt with under agenda items.

3) Chief Executive Report

The Chief Executive reported:

- Implementation of Government decision: the legislation has been published and it is anticipated that it will be passed before the end of the year. The obligations of Board members until the sign off of the final accounts were outlined and a question was raised regarding the position of Board members if the legislation was not passed by

the year end. It was agreed that the executive would pursue the matter with the Department of Health and Children, to arrange for a letter of comfort to be issued.

- Restorative Practice follow-up seminar: a half-day discussion forum was held on 17th September to explore how the approach might be implemented. The implementation process has since started and a number of people willing to take it forward have been identified. The Children Acts Advisory Board is planning a visit to Hull with the Gardaí.
- Launch of Children and Youth Strategy: Members of the executive attended the launch of the Children and Youth Strategy 2009 – 2011, in the Garda College, Templemore on the 13th of October.
- 8th Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion: Aidan Browne made a brief presentation at the 8th European Round Table under the theme of tackling child poverty and social exclusion of children and youth on the 15th and 16th October. The forum was organised and hosted by the Swedish presidency and was attended by delegates from each of the 27 EU countries.
- Research Launches: the first launch will take place in the Gresham on the 13th of November the second will be held on the 24th in a venue to be confirmed.
- Annual Report: this was published on the website on the 2nd of October.
- Final Board Meeting: It was agreed that the final Board Meeting would be scheduled for the 1st of December at 4pm to be followed by dinner. Venue to be decided.

4) Board Functions post dissolution

The report was circulated and it was agreed that the executive would arrange a meeting with the OMCYA specifically to discuss how issues could be addressed and prepare a report prioritising issues for the last Board Meeting. It was remarked that it would be shameful to see all of the advances made during the life of the CAAB and the SRSB go to waste. Concerns were also expressed in relation the natural fit for some of the functions e.g. non-policy issues being brought into a policy making Department; GAL is an operational function how will this fit into the OMCYA.

5) Board Governance update

The updated policy and procedures for Board members and the revised schedule of matters reserved for Board decision and Approval were discussed and it was explained that the codes had been updated due to revisions in the 'Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies'. The Board Members are required to sign a copy of the declaration of understanding and return to Jane Craig. The documents were proposed by Roger Killeen, seconded by Cathal Flynn and subsequently approved by the Board.

6) Subcommittee Reports

a) Audit

The Audit Committee met on the 29th of September. Issues raised during previous internal audit reviews were reported on and are being worked through. Due to the dissolution of the Board it would not be feasible to implement some of the recommendations made and the decision has been made not to proceed with these issues. Other items particularly with regard to security issues have been or are being

currently implemented. A further internal audit on the system of internal financial controls will be carried out in November.

b) Finance

The finance report was circulated and it was noted that the following a projection of expenditure to the end of the year the CAAB will have a surplus of approximately €100,000. It was agreed that the executive would approach the OMCYA to determine if they would consider funding some projects with this surplus.

c) Communication

The Communications Committee also met on the 29th of September and the following points were noted: the Awards are due to be held on the 9th of March in Dublin Castle and are being jointly run with the OMCYA; Board members were invited to notify the executive of any events they are aware of up to the 31st of December, for inclusion in the events calendar.

7) Child Care Amendment Bill, 2009

An overview of the Bill was circulated and discussed. The point was made that the role of the GAL as set out in the Bill appeared to be a missed opportunity. However it was noted that concern over costs was an inhibitor in putting the GAL on a statutory footing. The point was also made that the legislation is to be debated and that there may be changes to the Bill.

8) Therapeutic Interventions Guidelines for Approval

- An overview of the guidelines was given and the Board agreed that the guidelines are an excellent piece of work which is well written and comprehensive. They are based on evidence and had a wide engagement in their compilation. Their use will be two-fold in the future being of use by both practitioners and ISSI inspection teams. Congratulations were extended to Grainne McGill for the production of the guidelines. It was suggested that the Glossary of Terms should include an explanation of Care Orders including Voluntary Care Orders. It was also suggested that the new head of child care in the Health Service Executive should be directly contacted in relation to the dissemination of the guidelines.
- The Guidelines were proposed by Finbarr Murphy, seconded by Michelle Shannon and subsequently approved by the Board.

9) Special Care Discharge Criteria – Overview

- An overview of the discharge criteria was given and it was asked if any consideration had been given to the requirement for onward educational plans when drawing up the criteria. It was replied that although consideration was given it had been felt that it could not be included as a criteria as a child could not be kept in special care for the lack of an educational placement.

- The criteria will now be sent to some academics for review in relation to children's rights;
- It was noted that suitable discharge placements will be critical in the future, and that one of the challenges will be staffing levels.
- It was also noted that it is expected that demand/pressure on special care units will increase due to the legislation, however due to the economic crisis funding levels will be decreased.

10) Review of the Physical Restraints Guidelines

A review of the guidelines found that they were sufficiently robust. It was agreed that the report should be forwarded to the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and other agencies.

11) Guidelines for Inter-Agency Co-operation, draft for discussion.

The guidelines have been sent for peer review and are to be launched on the 24th of November at the 2nd Research Launch event. The document was complimented as a very comprehensive document which is easy to use.

12) PREW Briefing Document

The printed briefing document was distributed to the Board members for information. It was noted that it is intended to produce a similar briefing document for each research project.

13) AOB

- A draft copy of the newsletter was circulated, it is expected that it will go to print by the end of the week. It was noted that one further issue will be published in mid-December.
- The chair requested the Chief Executive to pass on the Board's appreciation for the quality and high standard of the work produced. The comment was made that it is ironic that a lot of the work is only now coming to fruition just before the dissolution of the Board.

The next Board Meeting will take place on the 1st of December at 4pm followed by a Board and staff dinner.