



36.

9<sup>th</sup> May 2017

Senator Joan Freeman  
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Dear Joan,

I am writing to thank you for your correspondence inviting me to make a submission to the Consultation Committee on Children's Mental Health in Ireland. I appreciate the work you and the Committee are doing to improve services for children.

Under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency has specific responsibility for "services relating to the psychological welfare of children and their families," but not for more acute services focusing on complex developmental issues, disabilities and more severe mental health problems, which are provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE).

Tusla is currently considering the development of multi-disciplinary therapeutic services in line with its mandate, role and remit, the objective of which is to respond to the needs of its client group.

The issue of the provision of psychological services is the subject of a broader discussion on maximising collaboration between the HSE and Tusla in key service areas. I have asked Tusla to collaborate with the relevant stakeholders to develop a plan and to secure a long-term solution for the delivery of community-based psychological welfare and therapeutic services for vulnerable children in care and those known to child protection and welfare services. These services are required for the comprehensive assessment of children's needs, and to provide the necessary interventions to children and families who may be suffering from bereavement, loss, and trauma from abuse and neglect.

I have also engaged with Tusla to seek its views with regard to the current arrangements for the provision of psychological and therapeutic services and any essential improvements which it considers necessary to enhance these services for children. I am happy to discuss these with you when Tusla reverts with specific views.

Tusla's Annual Business Plan is a formal statement of its business goals for the year, plans for their achievement and alignment with financial and human resources. At my request, Tusla's 2017 Business Plan sets out a number of objectives for the development and establishment of psychological and therapeutic services to support and promote the welfare and protection of vulnerable children.

The HSE and Tusla will continue to engage in relation to the provision of psychological services and clarify further the level and type of service required to

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meet the needs of children including setting up a joint working group.

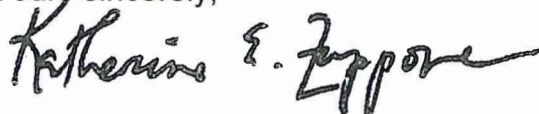
Currently, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are provided by the HSE. Tusla and the HSE have in place both a Memorandum of Understanding and a Joint Protocol for inter-agency collaboration which underpin the provision of these services for children. The purpose of these agreements is to set out the partnership arrangements between the HSE and Tusla for the continued provision of services provided prior to the establishment of Tusla on 1st January, 2014. The objective of the protocol is to specify a pathway and associated responsibilities for children and families whose needs cross between health service divisions and the Child and Family Agency.

As you will appreciate, the mental health and well-being of children is a matter of much public and official concern. While the mental and emotional health difficulties of many of children that Tusla deals with can be assisted by child counselling, play therapy and family therapy, there are some children whose distress is more acute, severe and long term. The mental and emotional health outcomes for children are dependent on the ability of their parents to provide them with secure attachments and to assist them with normal transition periods in their lives and any potential trauma that they may be subject to. Many of the parents that Tusla works with have mental health and addiction problems, leaving their children particularly vulnerable to mental health problems. Some of the children in receipt of services from Tusla have ongoing personality and behavioural difficulties, which are often coupled with learning and attention problems. While these children may not have a specific mental health diagnosis, they often have serious problems which impact on their wellbeing and safety. These children pose ongoing challenges to all professionals who work with them, and for this reason, it is essential that the HSE Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) work closely with Tusla to develop an open approach to providing the necessary expertise and supports to Tusla staff, even where it is not providing a direct mental health service to a child.

I am committed to improving the psychological and therapeutic services for children in care and those known to child protection and welfare services. I will also continue to work with the Department of Health to ensure that these children get the acute psychiatric services that they need.

I look forward to continued engagement with you and your Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Katherine S. Zappone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Katherine" and last name "Zappone" clearly legible, and "S." as a middle initial.

Dr. Katherine Zappone TD  
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs