



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Ms. Sarah O'Farrell
Clerk to Committee
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Ref: S1133 PAC33

By email: PAC@Oireachtas.ie

10 February 2023

Dear Ms O'Farrell,

I refer to your correspondence of 19 December 2022 concerning the meeting between myself as Accounting Officer and the PAC on 16 February in relation to the examination of the Appropriation Accounts 2021 for Vote 40 – Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and the Committee's request.

I welcome the opportunity to provide information to the Committee in respect of Value for Money (VFM) examinations in the context of Dáil Standing Order 218(2) and accordingly, enclose the following:

- Completed template forms for six ex-post VFM evaluations (5 completed, 1 underway).
- Response to the eight questions posed regarding the process of selecting and delivering reviews, business planning of projects, and implementation of recommendations and evidence of the economy and efficiency of the Dept. in the use of its resources.

In addition, to demonstrate the depth of policy and programme evaluation activity across the Department in the period since 2015, I am also enclosing a list of DCEDIY programme and strategy evaluations and a sample of policy and programme monitoring reports and reviews conducted by the Department in Appendix 2 attached.

I trust this information will be of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Kevin McCarthy

Kevin McCarthy

Secretary General

Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015



Please complete this template for each *ex-post* review of expenditure completed since 2015. Please include hyperlinks to the reviews where possible and otherwise provide the reviews in soft copy.

- Spending Review 2020 Tusla Residential Care Costs
- Focused Policy Assessment (FPA) of the ECCE Higher Capitation Payment
- Spending Review: Tusla Funded Community and Voluntary Sector Family Support Services
- National Evaluation of the Area Based Childhood Programme Main Report
- 12-Month Review Of The National Childcare Scheme
- Evaluation of the Disability Participation and Consultation Network

VFM Information

Title of ex-post review of expenditure	Spending Review 2020 Tusla Residential Care Costs	Type of review:	Spending Review
Accounting period(s) to which it relates:	2016 - 2019	Authored by:	Ruadhán Branigan & Ciarán Madden, Research and Evaluation Unit, DCYA
Related review(s) previously undertaken:	Spending Review 2020: Tusla: Staffing and Workforce Planning	Started:	April 2020
Quantum of expenditure covered by review:	2016: €145,230,910 2017: €148,739,322 2018: €162,936,879 2019: €183,149,987 2016-2019 total: €640,057,098	Completed:	Completed August 2020, published October 2020
% of total voted expenditure covered by review:	The review covers 12.4% of DCYA's voted expenditure for 2016-2019	Expenditure type:	Current and some capital
Programme line(s):	A - Children And Family Support Programme	Relevant subhead(s):	A.3 - Child And Family Agency
% of total programme expenditure:	20.9% of Programme A (21.7% of subhead A.3) 2016 - 2019	If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance	N/A

Report, please provide year
and page number:

VFM details

Objectives:	<p>The objectives of a Spending review are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To describe the context and rationale for State provision of residential care services for children and young people To provide an overview of government-funded residential care costs in recent years To analyse cost drivers To make suggestions regarding data collection, reporting and analysis.
Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential care has been a significant cost pressure for Tusla in recent years. Both the volume of placements, and the cost per placement have increased. Placements rose by 12%, from 470 to 525, between the end of 2017 and end Q1 2020. Annual residential care costs increased by €40.8m (or 27%) between 2016 and 2019. Approximately 87% of this cost increase was associated with private service provision.
Actions taken:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This review was part of the evidence base informing the development of Tusla's new alternative care strategies. Tusla's Strategic Plan for Residential Care Services for Children and Young People 2022 – 2025 was published in 2022. Tusla's strategy commits to increasing statutory residential care provision, aimed at reducing current imbalances and reliance on more expensive, private residential care providers. Expenditure and activity levels in this area are carefully monitored and the statutory basis for any proposed action in this area is clearly stated. This data can be used to identify where savings have been made or could be made, and to identify opportunities for further investment which would further reduce Tusla's reliance on private providers. The new Tusla Case Management system for Child Protection, Alternative Care will go live on February 24th.

VFM Information

Title of ex-post review of expenditure	Focused Policy Assessment (FPA) of the ECCE Higher Capitation Payment	Type of review:	Focused Policy Assessment
Accounting period(s) to which it relates:	September 2018 to June 2019	Authored by:	Ruadhán Branigan, Ciarán Madden, Research and Evaluation Unit, DCYA
Related review(s) previously undertaken:	N/A	Started:	February 2020
Quantum of expenditure covered by review:	2018/2019: €23.65 million	Completed:	July 2020
% of total voted expenditure covered by review:	The review covers 0.8% of DCYA's voted expenditure for 2018-2019	Expenditure type:	Current

Programme line(s):	B - Sectoral Programmes For Children And Young People	Relevant subhead(s):	B.3 - ECCE And Aim Pre-school Programmes
% of total programme expenditure:	1.9% of Programme B expenditure 2018-2019	If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number:	N/A

VFM details

Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Document the history, aims and administrative model of the ECCE Higher Capitation funding scheme; 2. Assess the extent to which the scheme's administrative model supports the operation of the scheme and, in turn, the achievement of its stated aims; 3. Assess the scheme's ongoing relevance, from a contemporary policy perspective.
Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The analysis presented in the report reveals that the payment meets its primary objective of encouraging the recruitment of graduates. • The rationale also holds, in terms of evidence that graduates will support higher quality ECCE Programme provision. • However, the analysis reveals that the ECCE HC payment is primarily associated with structural measures of quality. • The FPA supports the development of the HC payment into the future, but also makes the case for a broader analysis of quality in ECCE programme settings.
Actions taken:	<p>On foot of recommendations in Partnership for the Public Good, a new funding model for ELC and SAC (which took account of the findings from this FPA), there has been a change in approach to funding graduates in ELC settings. Funding for ELC Graduates is now one element of a larger funding model (Core Funding), which extends funding for graduates beyond the ECCE programme to other aspects of ELC provision and is underpinned by Employment Regulation Orders setting minimum rates of pay in the sector, including differential pay rates for graduates in leadership roles. This ensures that educators and managers with degrees feel the benefits of the graduate premium payment being made to services.</p>

VFM Information

Title of ex-post review of expenditure	Spending Review: Tusla Funded Community and Voluntary Sector Family Support Services	Type of review:	Spending Review
Accounting period(s) to which it relates:	2014-2021 (Primarily focused on 2018- 2021)	Authored by:	Luke Tully, Dearbhla Quinn-Hemmings & Ciarán Madden, Research and Evaluation Unit, DCEDIY
Related review(s) previously undertaken:	Spending Review 2020 Tusla Residential Care Costs Spending Review 2020: Tusla: Staffing and Workforce Planning	Started:	Feb 2022
Quantum of expenditure covered by review:	€1,287,995,000	Completed:	December 2022

% of total voted expenditure covered by review:	The review covers 12.2% of DCYA's voted expenditure for 2014-2019	Expenditure type:	Current
Programme line(s):	A - Children And Family Support Programme	Relevant subhead(s):	A.3 - Child And Family Agency (2014-2021) and A.6 - Child & Family Agency Covid Related Supports (2020 only)
% of total programme expenditure:	20.8% of Programme A 2014-2021	If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number:	N/A

VFM details

Objectives:	The purpose of the Review was to track and assess the level of investment that Tusla makes in FSS, and to understand the extent to which Tusla is supported by the C&V sector in providing these services.
Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2018 and 2021, total annual Tusla FSS expenditure increased from €105.5m to €125.1m, or 18.6%. This was slightly higher than the increase in overall annual Tusla expenditure during this time (16.1%). A large part of the overall increase in FSS expenditure was concentrated among a relatively small number of the highest-funded C&V sector FSS organisations. Additional (once-off) COVID 19 funding provided an additional 4% of annual funding to C&V sector FFS organisations, which contributed to the increase. The Review concludes with recommendations to help strengthen monitoring and evaluation processes. Doing so will help to facilitate the linking of Tusla FSS expenditure to FSS activities at the local and national levels, which is not possible at present.
Actions taken:	While this Spending Review was published recently, it and the comprehensive analysis papers on Family Support Services due for publication by the DCEDIY in Q1 2023; will help policymakers to better understand the diverse policy and practice landscape relating to Tusla-funded FSS, thereby informing ongoing policy decision-making in this key area of Tusla expenditure

VFM Information

Title of ex-post review of expenditure	National Evaluation of the Area Based Childhood Programme	Type of review:	Programme Evaluation
Accounting period(s) to which it relates:	Jan 2015- Dec 2017	Authored by:	Hickey, C., O'Riordan, A., Huggins, S. and Beatty, D, Centre for Effective Services
Related review(s) previously undertaken:	N/A	Started:	

Quantum of expenditure covered by review:	16.9m	Completed:	October 2018
% of total voted expenditure covered by review:	0.5%	Expenditure type:	Current
Programme line(s):	B - Sectoral Programmes For Children And Young People	Relevant subhead(s):	B.6 - Youth Services And Organisations (nat Lottery)
% of total programme expenditure:	1.4%	If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number:	N/A

VFM details

Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess the extent to which intended outcomes were achieved for children and parents participating in the ABC Programme. To assess the implementation of the ABC Programme with reference to four key policy questions.
Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intervention costs represented approximately 64 per cent of total spend across 2015, 2016 and 2017. Spend on salaries and wages, not associated with delivering interventions, remained constant for the ABC Programme, at approximately 26 per cent across 2015, 2016 and 2017. Additional to funder investment (grant funding), areas reported securing at least €5.7 million worth of leveraged resources from consortium and non-consortium partners between 2015 and 2017 Across the three years, ABC areas spent, on average, approximately 30 per cent of expenditure on parenting interventions, 33 per cent on children's health and development interventions, and 33 per cent on children's learning interventions. Spend by the areas on interagency working accounted for four-to-five per cent of all grant funded spend for the same period
Actions taken:	<p>The financial and operational governance of the ABC programme transitioned into Tusla in October 2018. A Transitions working group, with membership from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Tusla, ABC Managers Forum, PEIN and CYPSC met between May 2018 and January 2020 to prepare for and support this transition process. Two new posts, a National Manager and National Support Officer were established and situated within the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) structure in Tulsa.</p> <p>The ABC programme has continued to work at a consortium level, planning, resourcing and delivering a range of prevention and early intervention services with a key focus on improving outcomes for children, pre-birth to six years old in 12 of the most disadvantaged areas of the country.</p> <p>Core approaches and programmes, across the work of ABC, include Infant & Child Mental Health, home visiting, parenting supports, children's learning, and children's well-being. The ABC programme also contributes to building workforce capacity for those working across children's services, working in a coordinated way, alongside CFSN and CYPSC, ensuring communities develop a joined-up approach to local and area plans for children and young people.</p> <p>Through Dormant Accounts Funding, the ABC Programme is currently scaling up several proven models into new areas of high socio-economic need. The programmes being scaled are-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing for Life Home Visiting Programme Early Talkboost, a language development programme Infant Mental Health Networks

A new ABC National Logic Model was developed in 2022 as part of an agreed Outcomes Framework. The initial operationalisation of the Outcomes Framework is commencing in 2023 and will provide outcomes data on several key areas of work across the national programme. The ABC Outcomes Framework is informing work at a national level in Tusla in the development of a whole agency Outcomes Framework.

VFM Information

Title of ex-post review of expenditure	12-Month Review Of The National Childcare Scheme	Type of review:	Programme Evaluation
Accounting period(s) to which it relates:	November 2019-December 2020	Authored by:	Gillian Paull, Frontier Economics
Related review(s) previously undertaken:	N/A	Started:	March 2021
Quantum of expenditure covered by review:	€57,747,778	Completed:	September 2021
% of total voted expenditure covered by review:	3% (approx.)	Expenditure type:	Current
Programme line(s):	B - Sectoral Programmes For Children And Young People	Relevant subhead(s):	B.4 - National Childcare Scheme & Other Childcare Programmes
% of total programme expenditure:	8%	If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number:	2021 p.45

VFM details

Objectives:	<p>The remit for the review was to focus on the follow key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context for the NCS; • The transition to NCS (preparedness of providers and parents); • The structure of support in terms of funding levels and eligibility bands (in terms of child age/education stage, income and standard/enhanced hours); • The financial impact of the NCS, including the amount of subsidies paid, the impact on parental co-payments and the comparative financial impact of the NCS with legacy schemes; • Uptake of the NCS, with a particular emphasis on families from lowest income groups or most disadvantaged households, single parent households, families where one assessable member of the household is not in work or study, families targeted by specific sponsor interventions according to need and uptake of the universal element of the NCS; • The accessibility of the scheme, including national coverage in terms of eligible service provision, clarity and fairness of the NCS, awareness of the scheme among eligible families, usability of the parental application process and impact on parental choices of childcare
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The administrative effectiveness and efficiency of the NCS, including application processing times, administration, and reviews and appeals (both statutory and administrative); and, The issue of sustainability for services in disadvantaged (and other) areas, particularly with regard to feedback from some services that the scheme design has impacted their sustainability.
Findings	<p>Findings from the Review found that overall, 38% of families reported that half or more of their ELC/SAC costs were covered by the NCS, more than half (56%) reported that the Scheme meant they had more money to spend, just over a quarter reported that they were using more ELC/SAC and were working more (with 8% reporting they would not be in work without the NCS). The Review also found that the majority of families applied online for support under the NCS, with 66% of these applications processed within one day and 29% processed within 2 to 10 days. Moreover, most families found the application process easier than expected. Findings from the Review also identified some emerging issues with the Scheme that need to be addressed, including low awareness of the Scheme among parents, administrative issues experienced by providers and barriers for some families accessing supports under the Scheme, including through the NCS sponsorship arrangement.</p>
Actions taken:	<p>The findings from the Review informed enhancements to the National Childcare Scheme introduced in 2022 and 2023. In addition, a series of other actions have been taken including a number of NCS awareness campaigns, engagement with NCS sponsor bodies to improve NCS sponsorship arrangements and engagement with providers to identify ways to streamline NCS administration.</p>

VFM Information

Title of ex-post review of expenditure	Evaluation of the Disability Participation and Consultation Network	Type of review:	Evaluation of consultation model
Accounting period(s) to which it relates:	2020-2022	Authored by:	National Disability Authority
Related review(s) previously undertaken:	N/A	Started:	01.02.2023
Quantum of expenditure covered by review:	€480,500 in total over 3 accounting periods €199,500 – 2022 €140,500 – 2021 €140,500 – 2020	Completed:	31.07.2023
% of total voted expenditure covered by review:	€480,500 was 0.01% of DCEDIY's voted expenditure in 2020-2022	Expenditure type:	Grant payment
Programme line(s):	Disability Equality	Relevant subhead(s):	D10 (from 2022)
% of total programme expenditure:	20% approx. across 3 accounting periods.	If the review is reflected in a Public Service Performance Report, please provide year and page number:	N/A

VFM details**Objectives:**

- An evaluation of the Disability Participation and Consultation (DPCN) model will be conducted between Q1-Q2 2023 by the National Disability Authority.
- The evaluation will be broader than a strict value for money evaluation as the review will make recommendations in relation to continuously advancing obligations in the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in relation to consultation with people with disabilities.
- Nonetheless it will contain an evaluation of the funding structure of DPCN and the general duty to provide value for money in public expenditure, and recommendations will be made in relation to improvements, if any, which could be made to the DPCN model to ensure the most efficient use of resources.

Findings

TBD following issue of evaluation report – expected July 2023

Actions taken:

TBD following issue of evaluation report – expected July 2023

In your reply, please also include, and provide an answer to, each of the following:

- 1. Do you have a systematic/cyclical approach to choosing areas/programmes/expenditure to review? If so, please describe the approach in detail.**

In response to the Committee's request to demonstrate Value for Money in the expenditure under review(as per Dáil SO 218(2)), it is important to highlight the broad range of expenditure reviews and *ex post* evaluations that have been conducted across the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) since 2015. Briefing material relating to DCEDIY Spending Reviews, a Focused Policy Assessment, and *ex post* programme evaluations have been provided in Appendix 1. To demonstrate the depth of policy and programme evaluation activity across the Department, the Committee have also been provided with a non-exhaustive list of DCEDIY programme and strategy evaluations listed in Appendix 2. Further to this list of evaluations, Appendix 2 also provides a sample of policy and programme monitoring reports and reviews conducted by the Department within this time-period.

The Department's evaluation and monitoring activities are conducted systematically, according to time-bound commitments outlined in the Department's Strategy documents, and in fulfilment of Public Spending Code *ex post* evaluation commitments. They are also pursued according to emerging needs identified through the Department's governance systems, procedures and practices. Evaluation and monitoring activities are conducted internally by officials within the Department and through the external commissioning of evaluation expertise. Support for this process is provided by Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) policy analysts, located in the Research and Evaluation Unit, who have completed *ex post* evaluations under the Public Spending Code (see Appendices), and who also engage in the annual Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's (DPER) Spending Review process.

In recent years, the Department has completed two Spending Reviews under this initiative, including an *ex post* Review of Tusla Residential Care services (2020), and Tusla-Funded Community and Voluntary sector Family Support Services (2022). These areas of expenditure were chosen following in depth discussions between the Department's

Research and Evaluation Unit, Finance Unit, Policy Units, and the Management Board. The Research and Evaluation Unit submitted a list of potential review topics to the Management Board, with a recommendation for a topic based on the proportion of voted expenditure represented by a programme area, and, perceived policy need for the review. Once decided by the Management Board, the Review topic was proposed to the DPER Spending Review Steering Committee, which included officials from the DCEDIY vote section. The topic was agreed following bilateral discussion, and any amendments to the Review scope applied. In each case, the Reviews were completed and published by DPER by year end.

2. How and why you choose particular areas/programmes/expenditure to review?

Expenditure reviews may be conducted according to commitments outlined in the Department's Strategy documents, in fulfilment of Public Spending Code *ex post* evaluation commitments, or according to emerging needs identified through the Department's governance systems, procedures and practices. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs, which was established in 2011, was responsible for government policy relating to children and young people. The remit of the Department has expanded considerably in recent years with the transfer of integration, equality and disability functions from the Department of Justice in 2020. Therefore, for six of the eight years covered by the Committee's request (2015 to 2020), the Department's expenditure was concentrated in four key areas:

- Tusla (the Child and Family Agency)
- Early Learning and Childcare
- Youth Programmes
- Children Detention Schools

Since 2015, the Department has conducted and commissioned a broad range of *ex post* reviews and evaluations of the policies and programmes under this remit. As the majority of Department expenditure during the 2015 to 2020 time period related to Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) and Early Learning and Childcare, the bulk of the *ex post* evaluations described in the Appendices, relate to these key policy areas. The Appendix also lists a range of evaluations and reviews that focus on youth affairs grant schemes, children and

young people's participation in decision-making, and the youth justice system. All equality, integration and disability-related reviews conducted prior to the transfer of functions to the DCEDIY have been omitted, however it should be noted that since the transfer of functions, the Department has become increasingly engaged in reviews in these key areas of DCEDIY expenditure. These are included in the Appendices, which reflect the Department's commitment to *ex post* evaluations and reviews across all areas under its remit.

Appendix 2 also includes evaluations of projects funded under Dormant Accounts, such as Educational Champions for Children in Care, Aftercare Support for Unaccompanied Minor Refugees, and The Barnahus project.

Given the nature of the Department's expenditure, and human services-related nature of the Department's policies and programmes, the issues covered in the projects outlined in the Appendices typically include: whether grant/programme objectives are being met; whether implementation processes support the achievement of these objectives; and, how grants/programmes may be improved in order to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness.

In addition to activities within the Department, the agencies under its remit are responsible for *ex post* evaluations and reviews. In this regard, examples of such activities within the National Disability Authority (NDA) include the ongoing 'Review of NDA Research Promotion Scheme'; review of the NDA's 'Someone Like Me' Art Competition; and review of the NDA library. Another example is the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) 'Focused Policy Review of the IHREC Grants Scheme', completed in March 2022 by Crowe consultants.

3. Do you have a schedule of planned reviews? If so, covering what period, and at what level is it signed off?

Although there is not a comprehensive review schedule for the coming years, the Research and Evaluation Unit, as part of its business planning process, has met with all Divisions to inquire about reviews/evaluations they would like to see carried out this year. As a result of these discussions, a list has been drawn up of potential reviews to be conducted in 2023.

The reviews which will be conducted, either in-house or commissioned, will be based on departmental and unit priorities as well as available resources.

Additionally, some externally commissioned reviews are currently in process and are expected to be completed in 2023.

4. The governance arrangements pertaining to the implementation of the recommendations arising from the reviews.

The responsibility for the implementation of recommendations arising from the reviews detailed in the Appendices lies with the Department's senior managers, Divisional and Management Board level. Recommendations are incorporated into the Department's governance process through business planning, risk management, and identification strategic actions.

5. For each of the reviews for the accounting period under examination by the Committee and the preceding two years: • details of implementation to date, • timelines for implementation.

The *ex post* spending reviews, focused policy assessment and evaluations outlined in the templates provided by the Committee under Dáil SO 218(2) summarise the actions taken as a result of these reviews.

Appendix 2 provides a non-exhaustive list of DCEDIY programme, strategy evaluations, policy and programme monitoring reports and reviews conducted by the Department within this time-period.

6. What specific effects have the implementation of the recommendations or conclusions of each review undertaken in the last seven years had in terms of the allocation of funding within the Vote(s)?

As per Question 5, see completed templates in Appendix 1, which summarise the actions taken as a result of the respective *ex post* spending reviews, focused policy assessment and evaluations.

7. In accordance with section 19 of the Comptroller and Auditor General Act 1993, any other evidence you might wish to provide as to: "(b) the economy and efficiency of the

Department in the use of its resources, (c) the systems, procedures and practices employed by the Department for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of its operations”.

The Department strives to ensure that spending across its programmes and projects are managed with efficiency and effectiveness so that the objectives and purpose of the expenditure in question are being met and are on target and stay within budget across all programme areas on the Vote. Ongoing financial reporting to DPER takes place with any variances against profile reported on in the issues report each month and again for the monthly expenditure returns. Furthermore, the Department now meets on a fortnightly basis with DPER and presents a quarterly memo to Government on its expenditure. In addition, the Department complies with conditions of sanction for its current and capital expenditure and is compliant with DPER Circular 13/14 (Management of and accountability for grants from Exchequer funds) in relation to grant funding programmes on the Vote.

There is also a system of internal financial control which assigns responsibility to budget holders at an appropriate level and the internal audit function within the Department assist in the oversight of these internal controls within the Department.

In addition, the agencies under the remit of the Department are subject to the Code of Practice for the Governance for State Bodies and there are oversight agreements in place for each organisation.

Having regard to the largest body under the remit of DCEDIY, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), it should be noted that it has its own system of internal control which includes financial, operational, and compliance controls and risk management systems that support the achievement of the strategic priorities whilst safeguarding the use and deployment of public funds and oversight and control of assets for which Tusla is responsible.

In relation to the systems, procedures and practices employed by the Department for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of its operations, as outlined in response to Question 1 & 2, evaluation and monitoring activities are conducted systematically, according to time-bound commitments outlined in the Department’s Strategy documents,

and in fulfilment of Public Spending Code *ex post* evaluation commitments. Programme areas for evaluation are selected according to emerging needs identified through the Department's governance systems, procedures and practices. Evaluation and monitoring activities are conducted internally by officials within the Department and through the external commissioning of evaluation expertise. Support for this process is provided by Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) policy analysts, located in the Research and Evaluation Unit, who have completed *ex post* evaluations under the Public Spending Code (see Appendices), and who also engage in the annual Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's (DPER) Spending Review process.

8. Any other information that you, in your capacity as Accounting Officer, might wish to add to assist the Committee in forming a view as to whether you can demonstrate VFM in the he context of Standing Order 218(2).

In addition to the reviews and evaluations included in the Appendices, some evaluative work is carried out internally to inform programme and policy development, but which are not necessarily published.

The evaluation activities in DCEDIY take place in the context of a wider programme of research seeks to explore key policy challenges and the outcomes and impacts of specific initiatives. For example, DCEDIY, with the CSO, manages the Growing up in Ireland Survey, data from which has been used across Government to explore a wide range of topics and the impact of a changing policy and service landscape on the lives of children.

Appendix 2 – Sample of DCEDIY Evaluations (since 2015)

The following provides a non-exhaustive list of evaluations completed, or started by the DCEDIY since 2015. The list includes: programme evaluation, strategies evaluations, Dormant Account funded project evaluations, and programme monitoring.

Programme Evaluations

LGBTI+ Youth Capacity Building Grant Programme Evaluation Results

Evaluation authored by the Research and Evaluation Unit covering a quantum of €500,000 in 2018-2020, published May 2021.

End of Year One Review of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)

Interim implementation/outcome evaluation authored by RSM Ireland covering a quantum of €15m in June 2016 – June 2017, completed and published May 2019

End-of-Year-3 evaluation of the Access and Inclusion Model

Implementation, process, and outcome evaluation authored by University of Derby and IFF Research, began in March 2021, covering a quantum of expenditure of €48,522,828 (2017-2020)

Evaluation of the ECCE Programme

A mixed methods evaluation of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, currently being conducted by Stranmillis University College, Belfast. Due for completion later in 2023. Quantum of expenditure (2018/19): €343m

Review of the Cost of Providing Quality Childcare Services in Ireland

Cost review authored by Crowe consultants covering a quantum of approximately €459.2m in 2017-2018, completed March 2020.

Evaluation of The Bail Supervision Scheme for Children (Pilot Scheme)

Outcome and process evaluation authored by DCEDIY, completed and published June 2018.

Evaluation of Little Library 2021 and 2022

Mixed methods evaluation authored by 'S3 solutions' covering a quantum of expenditure of €1.3m, 2021-2022, due to be completed in April 2023

Better Start Quality Development Service Evaluation

Mixed methods evaluation authored by Centre for Effective Services, currently ongoing.

A research and data project examining the lives of children in care and adults who were in care as children

Launched by Minister O’Gorman in January 2022, this project will be carried out by DCEDIY in collaboration with Tusla. It was developed to address Action 65 of the Ryan Report Implementation Plan (2009), which states: ‘the HSE will, with their consent, conduct a longitudinal study to follow young people who leave care for 10 years, to map their transition to adulthood.’

Spending Review: The Irish Governments Expenditure on Children in 2019

Spending Review authored by DCEDIY covering a quantum of expenditure of €1,464,412,000 in 2019, published December 2022. This review aimed to be the first step toward realising the UNCRC's recommendations regarding the implementation of a tracking system for expenditure on children. The review quantifies the expenditure which was allocated to benefit children from DCEDIY in one calendar year, 2019.

Fáilte Care Project Evaluation

Tusla provided this report after receiving funding through the What Works initiative for the Fáilte Care Project. The evaluation aimed to analyse the learnings from the project and to provide recommendations for future undertakings in the area of foster care for separated children seeking international protection. The report also analysed attrition rates of the programme and overall details of those who participated in the programme. Quantum of expenditure: €106,000

What Works Action Learning

A review was undertaken in 2022 by Corporate Communities who facilitated an Action Learning programme under the What Works initiative. The review analysed the success of the programme and key learnings and takeaways from the programme. The review included feedback from participants, which was examined for the advantages and disadvantages of the programme. Quantum of expenditure: €24,000

Evaluations of DCEDIY Strategies

Three-year review of the First 5 whole-of-Government Strategy

Interim strategy review authored by DCEDIY due for completion Q1/Q2 2023.

Review of Equality Strategies: Migrant Integration Strategy, National Strategy for Women and Girls, National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy

Policy Evaluation authored by the Centre for Effective Services due for completion end of Q1 2023.

Process Review of the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy

This evaluation, authored by DCEDIY focuses on strategy action holders' perceptions of the Strategy implementation process. There is a second review (see below) which will evaluate the strategy's implementation. The strategy was to run from 2018-2020, but was extended to 2021 due to Covid related disruptions. This review is due for publication in Q2 of 2023.

Report on the overall implementation of the LGBTI National Youth Strategy 2018 – 2020

This report will provide a final update on implementation of actions based on reports by the relevant lead government departments to DCEDIY. Secondly, it will document learning from a number of commissioned reports and evaluation of programmes initiated under the Strategy, and finally, it will include recommendations to inform decisions on the Department's future strategic direction for LGBTI+ Youth policy. This report is due for completion March 2023.

Final Review of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 – 2020

The aim of this final review is to understand and document the progress made on each of the actions in the Strategy during its lifetime and to identify where further progress needs to be made. This

review also outlines some examples of good practice demonstrated by Government Departments and Agencies in implementing actions under the Strategy and the Phase Two Action Plan.

Dormant Account-funded project evaluations

Educational Champions for Children in Care

Involved three schemes which supported the educational achievement and ambition of children and young people in care and those who are care experienced. 2022 quantum of expenditure €750,000. An evaluation is currently underway, led by Tusla, which is due for completion in 2023.

Aftercare Support for Unaccompanied Minor Refugees

Funding to enable Tusla to provide young people who have come to Ireland as refugee children with additional supports prior to embarking on independent living, and to receive further unaccompanied minors into care on a more regular sustainable basis. 2022 quantum: €800,000. An evaluation of this project was completed by Tusla in 2022

The Barnahus project

A model of service delivery that brings together, in one centre, professionals to provide child protection, policing, forensic, medical and therapeutic services for children who have been sexually abused. 2022 quantum: €782,000. Evaluation of this project will commence in 2023

Fáilte Care

The purpose of the project was to provide an additional, focused resource to identify and recruit specialist foster carers for unaccompanied refugee children and those seeking asylum. The report also analysed attrition rates of the programme and overall details of those who participated in the programme. 2020 quantum: €106,000. Evaluation completed by Mary Egan in 2022.

Aftercare Support for disadvantaged care leavers: Dedicated Career Guidance Counsellor

A 2 Year National Pilot Project of improved services for disadvantaged care leavers, with a built in by design Independent evaluation is now underway within the Waterford / Wexford Aftercare Service. For comparative purposes, a second Tusla Aftercare operational area of Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary has been selected to evaluate the career and further education guidance offered to care leavers who are not beneficiaries in the pilot project.

Given the lack of available evidence concerning the challenges faced for care leavers in progressing from school to further education and professional careers, evaluation of the pilot programme will assist in determining the value of implementing a dedicated Tusla career guidance service tailored to the specific needs of young people / young adults availing of Aftercare Service support. It will also provide insight into the challenges care leavers face in their pathways from full time education to higher education and professional careers. This may result in learning for time-efficient and cost-effective improvements in future Tusla after care career guidance service provision. In turn, this may result in more stable and successful transitions for care leavers into long-term educational and career pathways. Quantum of Expenditure (2021-2023 inclusive): €600,000

Digital Solutions Fund Final Evaluation Report

Evaluation conducted in 2022, to assess the extent that the What Works Digital Solutions Fund was able to support awardees to improve their services or provide additional services through digital solutions. The assessment also aimed to examine the extent to which the chosen programmes were able to deliver outcomes for children and young people and how this impact is measured. Quantum of expenditure (2021-2022): €600,000

Fighting Words

Evaluation conducted in 2022. An interim report was provided by Fighting Words for the Story Seeds programme that received funding from the What Works initiative. The report details the engagement with children and young people, as well as examining geographic areas. The report also looked at the delivery of the programme and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Additional funding from DCEDIY has been provided for 2023 and a final evaluation report will be submitted. Quantum of expenditure: €100,000

The Tusla Traveller Parent Support programme

Evaluation conducted in 2022. The activity, output and achievements of the pilot sites used in the programme were the focus of this process evaluation. The evaluation set out to determine if the initiative had been implemented as intended and had resulted in planned outputs/deliverables, as well as considering programme progress against the objectives listed above. Quantum of expenditure (2020-2023): €466,818

The Traveller and Roma Foster Carer's project

An evaluation report completed in 2021 examined the success of the Traveller and Roma Foster Carer's project delivered by Tusla. The report analysed the outcomes of the programme and the success of specific awareness raising efforts. It delivered learnings from the project that can be applied in the future. Quantum of expenditure (2021): €130,000

Teen Parent Support Programme

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, and Integration has allocated *ESF Plus* funding to Tusla for the expansion for the Teen Parent Support Programme commencing 2023. Tusla was also granted funding under 'What Works' Dormant Accounts to commission a review of the current status and future potential of the Teen Parent Support Programme. This report, which is currently underway, will examine details of current operation and will analyse the advantages and disadvantages of the programme in comparison to other similar programmes. It will identify a range of options for future Programme development. Funding for the programme was provided by Tusla, and DCEDIY provided €25,000 to fund the evaluation; however, in the future core funding for this programme will be provided by ESF.

Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)

A 2020 review was provided by Tusla on the work that was carried out on TESS through funding received from the What Works initiative. The review examined the work carried out so far and detailed the participants of the programme. Quantum of expenditure (2020): €598,669

Evaluation of the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) – Now known as 'What Works'

The objective of this 2016 evaluation was to assess the implementation and impact of the QCBI. Tasks included designing an evaluation framework, undertaking a literature review, process monitoring

(quantitative and qualitative), undertaking evaluation and agreeing and implementing knowledge transfer and learning within the Department upon completion of the project. €11,070 was provided by DCEDIY for the evaluation of QCBI. The programme later secured funding through the Dormant Accounts Fund.

Programme Monitoring

The following provides a non-exhaustive list of DCEDIY policy and programme monitoring projects.

Comhairle Na nÓg Development Fund Annual Report 2021

Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund is overseen by DCEDIY and administered in collaboration with Pobal. The fund supports structures that provide children and young people with a voice on topics that affect their lives at both a local and national level. The fund assists local authorities to support and develop Comhairle na nÓg. The data and information presented in this report is based on the end of year annual reports submitted by each of the 31 Comhairlí na nÓg. Feedback from Comhairle na nÓg Participation Officers also provided additional insight into activities and developments during 2021.

Final Review of the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making 2015 – 2020

The aim of this final review is to understand and document the progress made on each of the actions in the Strategy during its lifetime and to identify where further progress needs to be made. This review also outlines some examples of good practice demonstrated by Government Departments and Agencies in implementing actions under the Strategy and the Phase Two Action Plan.

Report on the evaluation of the LGBTI Youth Forum

The evaluation was commissioned to capture the experience and learning from Ireland’s first LGBTI+ Youth Forum. The report describe the processes involved in progressing the work of the LGBTI+ Youth Forum, the experience of members in participating in the Youth Forum and their ability to progress their work over the course of its lifetime. The report details what worked well, challenges faced, and suggestions for improvement for any future Youth Fora.

Report on the overall implementation of the LGBTI National Youth Strategy 2018 – 2020 (*due for completion March 2023*)

This report will provide a final update on implementation of actions based on reports by the relevant lead government departments to DCEDIY. Secondly, it will document learning from a number of commissioned reports and evaluation of programmes initiated under the Strategy, and finally, it will include recommendations to inform decisions on the Department’s future strategic direction for LGBTI+ Youth policy.

Report of The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020

The purpose of this framework was to coordinate policy across Government with the five national outcomes and to identify areas that, with focused attention, have the potential to improve outcomes for children and young people (0-24 years) and to transform the effectiveness of existing policies, services and resources. The aim of this report is to understand and document the progress made on each of the goals in the Policy Framework during its lifetime and to measure progress toward achieving the five national outcomes for children and young people.