

St Ultans Parent Education Partnership Framework

“Supporting Children to meet their full potential through supporting parent’s education development and training”

Context & Commitment – Strategic Plan

The primary purpose of this framework is to give St Ultans a starting point with its ‘Parent Education Partnership Framework’. It is a natural next step in the process of developing the Model of Integration & Care. Family structures are vary varied and multicomplex, we use the term **‘parents’** throughout the piece of work to describe whatever guardian and care arrangements are in place to give it ease of reading.

St Ultans recognises the importance of parental family relationship_for children and young people. We have an important role to create the environment for young people to reach their full potential on campus and to support their parents and families in an appropriate way. *The growing up in Ireland study found that “processes within the family and child characteristics remain the most important predictors of children’s social and emotional outcomes”.*

St Ultans Parent and Family Partnership undertakes to develop a framework of layered approaches through a planned programme of activity of educational programmes both structured and informal. We will attempt firstly, to identify parental and family need and to secondly, respond in a way that is appropriate to St Ultans ethos within our remit and limitations. **“...we know that, in certain circumstances and for a myriad of reasons, some families’ capacity to care for their children can be reduced or compromised, and as a result they require support and assistance in carrying out this fundamental function.”** *(High-Level Policy Statement on Supporting Parents and Families 2015:13)*

Where we cannot directly respond to a need ourselves, we will refer a parent to an identified strategic partner who can give a more appropriate targeted response. St Ultans will build good quality strategic partnerships with other organisations and agencies into the framework to ensure a secure and sustainable referral process that works for Parents and meets their needs.

St Ultans experience shows that relationships with other supporting organisations and agencies is vital to the sustainability of an effective referral process for Parents to achieve their desired outcomes. For some parents, if the referral process is not perceived as seamless and connected to St Ultans, the process can be too daunting, and they do not follow through which can result in a revolving door effect. In addition to this, some organisations have criteria for engagement of ‘three strikes and you’re out’. We have begun the process of developing a set of aims and objectives with other organisations and agencies who we partner with based on this experiential learning.

“It is also the case that good family support has to work to ameliorate the effects of external stressors and for some families these are primarily what is impacting on how the family is functioning. This situation emphasises the critical role of cross-sectoral; cross agency and cross-disciplinary action and co-ordination when looking at families who may present as needing support – both to co-ordinate and manage assessment and supports; but also to recognise and tackle external stressors.” (High-Level Policy Statement on Supporting Parents and Families 2015:14)

Description of St Ultans

Saint Ultan’s is an integrated Campus providing a full suite of services and supports for children and families on one site in Cherry Orchard. The services and supports include nursery, childcare, early education, primary education, social care and therapies and youth facilities all in one Campus. The Campus is unique in that it is one location and creates a safe and seamless experience for children and families as they transition through the stages of early childhood care, education, care and support.

The emphasis is on education as a route out of disadvantage **“Education has the power to transform lives, lift people out of poverty and break down cycles of disadvantage. In Ireland, a person’s socio-economic background remains a strong determining factor of their level of education attainment. A person is almost three times more likely to go on to higher education if their parents have a higher education than someone whose parents have not completed primary-level education.” (Children’s Rights Alliance – Child Poverty Monitor 2022:40) .**

Importance of Positive Relationships to Thrive

The quality and consistency of children’s relationships with significant adults is fundamental to a child reaching their full potential and to gain the best foundation for the building blocks of their lives. Parents want the best for their children, and for the most part, can provide a balanced caring and stable environment, and the resources necessary for a child.

If a child is well balanced, they have the resilience and skills to manage and navigate every day life growing up. **“...there is robust evidence to show that children who are disadvantaged at age three are at risk of disadvantage across the life cycle, resulting in poorer outcomes. Children in poverty do not start on a level playing field and prevention and early years intervention services can play a critical role in closing that gap to ensure that all children get the best start in life.” (Children’s Rights Alliance – Child Poverty Monitor 2022:37)**

However, for some parents, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have impinged on their own capacity to provide the stability and balanced environment a child needs to thrive.

Some parents did not develop their own 'resilience' skills for everyday life and unless they had the opportunity to identify this and gain those skills, they cannot pass them on to their children. **"Parenting and Family Support is directed towards strengthening the capacity of families to nurture children and to function well for all members. It is a crucial element of the effort to improve outcomes for children and young people."** (*High-Level Policy Statement on Supporting Parents and Families 2015:6*)

So why Parent Education Partnership?

"Parenting and Family Support is promoted in law, policy and practice in Ireland and it is being delivered on the ground. Strengthening the structure, integration and evidence-base of these efforts will harness the available resources to best effect." (*High-Level Policy Statement on Supporting Parents and Families 2015:9*). During the development of the integrated model, it became very clear that St Ultans needed a system that could effectively respond to presenting needs of parents and families to support the child. **"St Ultan's is unique in that is more than just a school and a care setting. It is a Campus and both a tangible and intangible presence in the community."** (*St. Ultan's Campus A Beacon of Hope for Children and Families prospectus 2019:6*)

Our Vision

We strive to support Families to build and develop resilience and confidence in everyday life which promotes positive relationships and agency in both their own lives and the lives of their children.