



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of
Children and Youth Affairs

Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Statement of Strategy 2011-2014

MARCH 2012

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

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Mission Statement of Department of Children and Youth Affairs

To lead the effort to improve the outcomes
for children and young people in Ireland.

High-level Objectives of Department of Children and Youth Affairs

- Develop, strengthen and align policies, legislation and resources in order to achieve better outcomes for children and young people and provide support for parents and families.
- Monitor and evaluate performance through strong governance and accountability systems in respect of the responsibilities of the Department and its agencies.
- Support the Department and key stakeholders in accessing better evidence and facilitating the active participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their individual and collective lives.
- Improve systems for supporting families, safeguarding and protecting children, providing alternative care and assisting those young people whose behaviour poses a risk to themselves or others.
- Support children and young people so that they can fully engage in active learning, including through the provision of high-quality early childhood care and education, youth services and addressing issues of school attendance and participation.
- Collaborate with stakeholders, including across Government, in monitoring and promoting the physical, emotional and economic well-being of children and young people and reducing inequalities.
- Be recognised as an organisation where, on an ongoing basis, high performance is achieved and personal development is supported.

Values of Department of Children and Youth Affairs

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs will:

- As the basis for excellent performance, value our staff and create an environment where they learn, develop and contribute to the goals of the organisation to the very best of their abilities.
- Be child- and youth-centered, with children, young people and families at the heart of its work. Childhood and youth will be respected and valued as important life stages.
- Place outcomes for children and young people in Ireland at the centre of policy and service delivery, informed by evidence.
- Support prevention and early intervention approaches that help children, young people and their families realise their true potential.
- Collaborate and innovate across the organisation and with other departments, agencies and sectors to improve outcomes for children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable.
- Be individually and collectively accountable, open to change, customer-focused and respectful in our dealings with the public and work colleagues.

We will seek to demonstrate these values to the public and work colleagues in all that we do.

Programme for Government

The Government has established, for the first time, a dedicated Department to drive delivery of key commitments in relation to children and young people. The Programme for Government commitments include:

- The holding of a Referendum in relation to the rights of children under the Constitution.
- The establishment of a Child and Family Support Agency on a statutory basis in order to fundamentally reform the delivery of child protection services and remove responsibility for these from the Health Service Executive (HSE).
- Implementing the recommendations of the Ryan Report, including putting the *Children First Guidelines* on a statutory footing and legislating for the use of 'soft information'.
- Maintaining the free pre-school year and improving its quality as resources allow.
- Enacting legislation to consolidate and reform the law on adoption.
- Investing in a targeted early childhood education programme for disadvantaged children, building on existing targeted pre-school supports for families most in need of assistance, such as the 'young Ballymun' project.
- Ending the practice of sending children to St. Patrick's Institution.

The DCYA also has a very significant role to play in working with other Departments in relation to a range of other Programme for Government commitments (see *Appendix 6 for details*).

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Foreword

by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

The decision to establish the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) demonstrates the vision of Government: that growing up in Ireland means you have the best start in life available anywhere in the world.

That starts with understanding. We need to understand our children – their lives, their experiences, their expectations. This is one area where we, in Ireland, are world leaders. The type of research being conducted by my Department's Research Unit and by other institutions is providing us with a wealth of valuable data.

We must also understand the historical legacy the Department has inherited. The publication in recent years of a number of high-profile reports into both past and contemporary cases of abuse, most notably the Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan Report), has brought children and families sharply into focus. This focus has allowed us to identify massive areas of missing data and a lack of connection between services. The report also placed considerable emphasis on ensuring that all children are listened to, respected as individuals and protected against any type of abuse.

The Department will lead the effort to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. It will concentrate in making sure that the voice of children and young people are always at the core of evolving policies. We will build on the previous innovation and learning by the former Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the Irish Youth Justice Service and the Prevention and Early Intervention Programmes.

This Government has had to take very difficult decisions in the long-term and strategic interests of Ireland and its people. Ireland is bound by our commitments to our international partners, having suffered an unprecedented economic crisis. We do not have the resources to fund all the services we want to provide. In this regard, the Department has carried out an in-depth analysis and assessment of all programmes of expenditure to identify priorities for scarce resources in the years ahead.

Much has to be done with the resources we do have available. The Department has now very clearly set out its objectives over the coming years and the values to which it will adhere in meeting those objectives. Children and young people are the concern of everybody in our society. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs and I as Minister invite you to share our ambitions for the children and young people of Ireland.

Frances Fitzgerald, TD
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
March 2012

Introduction

by Secretary General

The creation of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) gives those of us fortunate enough to work for the new department the opportunity to contribute to improving the lives of children and young people.

The Department was set up in June 2011 with a mandate to put in place a unified framework of policy, legislation and provision across Government in respect of children and young people. The Programme for Government sets out an important range of commitments in respect of children and young people, which the Department is charged with implementing. The Department will work to ensure that the range of services which are its direct responsibility are the best they can be within the resources available. More broadly, the many dimensions to the well-being of children and young people require us to work across Government and with a wide range of stakeholders to harmonise policy and service delivery.

We have already embarked upon meeting these challenges in the first six months since the Department was established. An immediate priority has been to integrate a range of responsibilities and resources newly acquired from other Government departments. This involves building a unified organisational architecture of people, systems and structure, and developing the new functions that are required of a Government department on the most efficient basis possible.

We are keenly aware that the wider economic situation places responsibilities on a new department to meet its mandate in a way that, in so far as is possible, avoids the need for additional resources. Through the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) process, we have sought to formulate options for operating effectively within this environment of reduced resources.

The harmonisation of policy and programmes across Government, based on evidence of what works for children and young people, requires a strongly collaborative approach, both on the part of this Department and our partners. We will work persuasively and unselfishly in the interests of children and young people to identify and promote the benefits of this collaboration.

The priorities in this Statement of Strategy have been informed by the Programme for Government and the CRE process. We will now embark upon policy and service re-engineering, designed to significantly improve outcomes in these priority areas and make the maximum use of available resources.

Stating overall strategic goals will guide the Department in responding flexibly and innovatively to changing circumstances. This Statement of Strategy will be a benchmark against which to review priority actions and resource deployment over the next three years.

Our staff, while relatively small in number, are talented and committed. It is through their efforts that the ambitions for children and young people set out in this strategy will be brought forward. Leading and managing people to give of their best is the most important means by which managers across the Department can contribute to realising the goals set out here – accordingly, it will be central to the evaluation of individual and organisational performance.

I look forward to all staff delivering this strategy with energy, commitment and innovation.

Jim Breslin
Secretary General
March 2012

1. Context

The mission of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) is to lead the effort to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. Our approach will be based on the best possible evidence of what works in meeting needs. Therefore, we will begin this Statement of Strategy by reviewing what the evidence currently tells us about children and young people in Ireland.

Children and young people in Ireland

The lives of children and young people, as well as the context in which they live, have changed significantly in recent years. Ireland's comparatively young population combined with an increasing birth rate create an urgency around ensuring that services and supports to meet health, welfare, education and social needs are effective and efficient in supporting children's outcomes. Findings from the biennial *State of the Nation's Children* report and also from a range of national and international surveys such as *Growing Up in Ireland*, provide important understandings of their lives. Key findings emerging include:

- The vast majority of children and young people in Ireland are healthy and there has been a notable decrease in both infant and child mortality rates over the last few years (OMCYA, 2010). There are, however, some areas of concern, such as levels of respiratory problems, obesity and mental health issues (Williams *et al*, 2009; Layte and McCrory, 2011).
- Children in Ireland are doing well educationally compared with their international peers, although recent reports suggest literacy and numeracy levels have decreased (Perkins *et al*, 2010).
- Most children live in supportive households where their parents adopt positive parenting styles (Halpenny *et al*, 2010).
- Care and protection of vulnerable children remains an important issue and data from the Health Service Executive (HSE) show that on an annual basis nearly 27,000 child welfare and protection referrals are made to the HSE, with just under 2,000 cases confirmed as abuse and neglect (OMCYA, 2010).
- Income matters and children in low income households are more likely to have higher levels of chronic ill health, to be overweight and obese, and to miss school more often compared with those in high income households (Williams *et al*, 2009; and *Growing Up in Ireland*, 2011a).
- An analysis of deprivation by age group in 2009 and 2010 showed a significant increase in the deprivation rate for children (aged 0-17), which was 30.2% in 2010 compared to 23.5% in 2009 (CSO, 2011). Data from *Growing Up in Ireland* (2011b) show that almost two-thirds of all families with 3-year-old children reported that the recession had had a 'very significant' or 'significant' effect on them.
- According to international surveys, children in Ireland are more likely to have friends and to spend time with them, to be happy and to take vigorous physical exercise; they are slightly less likely to smoke regularly compared with children from many other countries (Kelly *et al*, 2008).
- Some other health findings are troubling, particularly in respect of alcohol and drug use (Haase and Pratschke, 2010). The health and social impacts of alcohol misuse on young people are well documented elsewhere (Newbury-Birch *et al*, 2009). There is also a significant relationship between alcohol and youth crime and alcohol-related offences account for a significant proportion of referrals to the Juvenile Diversion Programme (OMCYA, 2010).
- A recent study showed that children and young people in Ireland perform well above average in terms of their civic knowledge, ranking 7th across 38 countries (Cosgrove *et al*, 2010).

In summary, there are a number of areas where children and young people in Ireland are doing well compared with their international peers. Some areas of concern continue to emerge and

persist. The Department will be a key player in leading the effort to reinforce positive gains made to date and in improving outcomes for those children and young people whose development and life chances have been impaired by personal and social circumstances. The many dimensions of children's lives cannot be adequately reflected within one department's mandate. However, the DCYA is committed to using its direct service capability and its capacity in mobilising the efforts of others to bring about meaningful and positive change for children and young people.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs – Its Mission, Mandate and Structure

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) was established on 2nd June 2011 following a Government decision to consolidate a range of functions that were previously the responsibilities of the Ministers for Health, for Education and Skills, for Justice and Law Reform, and for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The DCYA now brings together a number of key areas of policy and provision for children and young people, including the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA), and responsibility for the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), the Family Support Agency (FSA) and – from January 2012 – the detention schools operated by the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS). Two important organisations are also included in the overall structure: the Adoption Authority of Ireland and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children.

The decision by Government to establish the Department indicates a clear commitment to prioritising policy and service delivery across Government in order to improve the lives of children and young people. In doing so, it builds on the architecture already put in place in this area through the OMCYA and the IYJS, and augments it with a range of related and complementary functions. The establishment of the Department was part of a longer term vision – that this country would be among the best in the world in which to grow up. It has a key leadership role in promoting integration at the level of policy and service delivery, which will be necessary to achieve this vision. For these reasons, the Department has set out in its Mission Statement a high-level approach designed to provide an underpinning rationale for action in the future, focused on the well-being of children and young people in Ireland.

Mission Statement

To lead the effort to improve the outcomes for children and young people in Ireland.

Mandate

The responsibilities of the Department encompass a wide range of policy and service activity, both direct and indirect, for children and young people in Ireland. It has a complex mandate, comprised of a number of separate, but interrelated strands:

- the direct provision of a range of universal and targeted services;
- ensuring high-quality arrangements are in place for focused interventions dealing with child welfare and protection, family support, adoption, school attendance and reducing youth crime;
- the harmonisation of policy and provision across Government and with a wide range of stakeholders to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

Structure

The current organisation chart for the Department and its agencies is provided in Appendices 3 and 4. In adopting this structure, the aim has been to ensure that the resources available are directed to meet the priorities of the Minister and Government, and to allow the staff of the Department to focus on the achievement of their goals and objectives within a strong management and governance framework. Given the short time since the establishment of the Department, this structure will be kept under review to ensure that it proves effective in supporting the organisation to achieve its mission and mandate.

A unique feature of the Department's architecture is the co-location at its headquarters of the Early Years Education Unit of the Department of Education and Skills and those sections of the Irish Youth Justice Service responsible for community programmes which remain under the Department of Justice and Equality. This physical proximity facilitates close working relationships on key issues of mutual concern and common purpose.

Operating environment

A number of key aspects of the DCYA's operating environment are reviewed below, including the policy and legislative framework; economic environment; social and cultural lives of children and young people; adopting a focus on prevention and early intervention; interagency working at national and local level; scrutiny and oversight of the Department's work; and working with key external partners and stakeholders.

Policy and legislative framework

(a) Programme for Government

The establishment of a dedicated Government department for children and young people is in itself a manifestation of the priority attached by Government to improving the effectiveness of supports and services for this population group. The Programme for Government goes on to set out an ambitious action plan for the DCYA, which includes (*full details given in Appendix 6*):

- the commitment to hold a Referendum in relation to the rights of children under the Constitution;
- the establishment of a Child and Family Support Agency on a statutory basis in order to fundamentally reform the delivery of child protection services and remove responsibility for these from the Health Service Executive (HSE);
- implementing the recommendations of the Ryan Report, including putting the *Children First Guidelines* on a statutory footing and legislating for the use of 'soft information';
- maintaining the free pre-school year and improving its quality as resources allow;
- enacting legislation to consolidate and reform the law on adoption;
- investing in a targeted early childhood education programme for disadvantaged children, building on existing targeted pre-school supports for families most in need of assistance, such as the 'young Ballymun' project;
- ending the practice of sending children to St. Patrick's Institution.

The DCYA also has a significant role to play in working with other Departments in relation to other Programme for Government commitments (*see Appendix 6*).

(b) Other national policy considerations

The core activities of the DCYA operate within a well-developed policy and legislative framework, covering delivery of early years and pre-school provision; child protection and welfare; school attendance and retention; youth service provision; and arrangements for dealing with young people who commit criminal offences. A list of the relevant legislation and the Transfer of Functions Orders is provided in Appendix 2. The DCYA is directly accountable to the Minister and the Oireachtas for the ongoing governance of these policy and service areas, and more generally the delivery of its strategy.

As recognised in the Programme for Government, there are critical weaknesses in services that are central to the development and support of children and families, particularly vulnerable children. The publication in recent years of a number of high-profile reports into both past and contemporary cases of abuse, most notably the 2009 Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan Report), has brought the children and families' programme sharply into focus and reinforced the need for the State to ensure that children are never vulnerable to such abuses of power again. Work is currently underway to provide further legislative underpinning for improvements in the areas of the child protection and welfare system, and a significant programme of reform is now underway to achieve the necessary operational improvements.

(c) International Framework for Action

The DCYA must also operate in a global context and framework, provided primarily through its membership of the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe. International human rights norms ratified by Ireland, in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Convention on Adoption, provide a framework for domestic policy and practice relating to children's rights. For example, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child spells out the basic human rights to which children everywhere are entitled, including the right to survival, the right to the development of their full physical and mental potential, the right to protection from influences that are harmful to their development, and the right to participation in family, cultural and social life.

Economic environment

The serious economic situation facing Ireland and the Government's Programme to underpin recovery provide a challenging backdrop to the actions to be taken by the DCYA over the period of this strategy (2011-2014). It is clear that resources will be severely constrained, including financial and human resources, and that more will have to be done with less. The DCYA has used the opportunity provided by this Statement of Strategy, by the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) and by the Public Service Reform Programme to clarify its mandate, to state its priorities and to initiate the re-engineering of services so as to ensure that its services are designed to meet need and to provide value for money.

In this context also, the DCYA will identify how it can contribute to the broad agenda of national recovery, particularly in relation to jobs. An integrated approach in response to the very high incidence of youth unemployment will be an important focus. Integrating the lessons learned from the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme combined with an Area Based focus can provide a starting point for this work. The role of affordable childcare in supporting labour market activation will also provide opportunities for the DCYA to contribute to the jobs agenda.

The OECD in its 2011 Economic Survey of Ireland emphasized the importance and great potential of our 'human capital' – in particular our young people as our future workforce, innovators and leaders. The OECD recommended that 'to preserve its strengths in human capital, Ireland needs to ensure a high quality of education'. It further highlighted the importance of pre-school education in having 'both a positive impact on later educational performance and an equity-enhancing effect'. The DCYA therefore has a key role to play in supporting Ireland's economic recovery through supporting the development of Ireland's human capital, starting with the care and education of children in early years. The free pre-school year is an investment in our 'human capital' and in the country's future prosperity.

Social and cultural lives of children and young people

There is also an important social, recreational and cultural dimension in the lives of children and young people, which the DCYA would like to develop and promote. This is the wider cultural, artistic and sporting environment in which we live and which can do so much to enrich individual lives and help children and young people to reach their potential. Much work has been done in this area by various organisations including the Departments of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and Transport, Tourism and Sport. The DCYA plans to build on these important foundations and to propose actions aimed at mainstreaming these activities in the lives of children and young people.

Adopting a focus on prevention and early intervention

While many resources are currently and necessarily deployed to secure moderate remedial outcomes (often too late in a child's life), significant research evidence indicates that in many cases targeted earlier interventions would result in much improved outcomes. The shift in balance from *short-term remedial* planning to *longer term prevention* planning is complex in a situation where resources are currently fully committed. The DCYA is committed to meeting the twin strategic challenges of improving effectiveness in terms of existing arrangements while actively planning and implementing change to bring about more significant transformation. It will seek to leverage the lessons emerging from the pilot 'Prevention and Early Intervention Programme', operating in partnership with philanthropic sponsors. Programmes and services currently receiving State funding will be reviewed and possibly redesigned, or indeed curtailed, in the light of the research evidence on effectiveness and available resources.

Interagency working at national and local level

A major challenge for the DCYA will be to make the connections between national policy development and supporting local/front-line service delivery. The former OMCYA had developed a major programme of work in this area of multi-agency working through the National Children's Strategy and in particular the establishment of a number of Children's Services Committees. Working across a range of agencies at national and local level to support and improve an integrated approach to planning for children has revealed a number of important issues that will require resolution and a problem-solving approach.

Using technology to best effect

The DCYA is committed to making the best use of available technology to improve outcomes for children and young people and to building its knowledge base and expertise to take best advantage. A major issue in the operating environment which has limited the use of technology to its full advantage is the use of data and the need for effective data sharing protocols. There is no doubt that sharing of appropriate data with safeguards would improve the quality and timeliness of delivery. Important issues of privacy have arisen in this context and these will need to be resolved.

The DCYA's own technology and information platforms will also require examination to ensure that they support integrated working across the organisation.

Working with key external partners and stakeholders

In order to achieve its goals, the DCYA works in close partnership with other Government departments, statutory agencies and non-governmental organisations on a range of cross-cutting issues in relation to both policy and provision as they relate to children and young people. The scope of this collaboration includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Department of Education and Skills (e.g. early childhood education, numeracy/literacy and skills development);
- Department of Justice and Equality (e.g. crime prevention, community sanctions, detention, diversion and equality);
- Department of Health (e.g. disability; health promotion, including nutrition and drugs policy);
- Health Service Executive (e.g. child welfare and protection, care and social services);
- Department of Social Protection (e.g. social inclusion, income support and the activation agenda);
- Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (e.g. employment creation and youth entrepreneurship);
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (e.g. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and Council of Europe measures);
- Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (e.g. initiatives involving sustainable development and communities).

In relation to the community, voluntary and not-for-profit sector, the DCYA has a wide range of interactions with key organisations and is committed to developing and deepening these relations over the time of this strategy. The DCYA has received many submissions in the context of preparing this strategy (see *Appendix 5*) and a number of the points made are contained in this report. Others will be implemented in the various business plans for individual units.

Scrutiny and oversight of the Department's work

The DCYA must ensure that its operations are compliant with both international obligations and respective domestic authorities charged with the oversight of service quality and redress of maladministration. It must also ensure that it has effective governance arrangements in place at all levels to ensure transparency and accountability, and to underpin value for money.

2. Strategic Objectives, Values and Critical Success Factors

On the basis of the contextual analysis described in Chapter 1, we now set out the DCYA's 7 strategic objectives for the period covered by this Statement of Strategy (2011-2014).

Strategic objectives

1. Develop, strengthen and align policies, legislation and resources in order to achieve better outcomes for children and young people and provide support for parents and families.
2. Monitor and evaluate performance through strong governance and accountability systems in respect of the responsibilities of the Department and its agencies.
3. Support the Department and key stakeholders in accessing better evidence and facilitating the active participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their individual and collective lives.
4. Improve systems for supporting families, safeguarding and protecting children, providing alternative care and assisting those young people whose behaviour poses a risk to themselves or others.
5. Support children and young people so that they can fully engage in active learning, including through the provision of high-quality early childhood care and education, youth services and addressing issues of school attendance and participation.
6. Collaborate with stakeholders, including across Government, in monitoring and promoting the physical, emotional and economic well-being of children and young people and reducing inequalities.
7. Be recognised as an organisation where, on an ongoing basis, high performance is achieved and personal development is supported.

The specific activities and outputs to achieve these objectives are set out in Appendix 1.

Values

To guide and support the organisation in carrying out its mandate, the DYCA has adopted the following values. It will:

- As the basis for excellent performance, value our staff and create an environment where they learn, develop and contribute to the goals of the organisation to the very best of their abilities.
- Be child- and youth-centered, with children, young people and families at the heart of its work. Childhood and youth will be respected and valued as important life stages.
- Place outcomes for children and young people in Ireland at the centre of policy and service delivery, informed by evidence.
- Support prevention and early intervention approaches that help children, young people and their families realise their true potential.
- Collaborate and innovate across the organisation and with other departments, agencies and sectors to improve outcomes for children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable.
- Be individually and collectively accountable, open to change, customer-focused and respectful in our dealings with the public and work colleagues.

We will seek to demonstrate these values to the public and work colleagues in all that we do.

Critical success factors

Since the DCYA is a new Government department, it will be essential to integrate its complementary functions into a cohesive policy and administrative framework that delivers for children and young people. In order to ensure that we will achieve our goals, the following critical success factors have been identified:

Goals and objectives

- shared understanding of objectives and goals and outcomes;
- visible leadership in the Department and its agencies;
- clarity of responsibilities for actions towards defined outcomes;
- commitment to operating on a day-to-day basis within this strategic framework in the setting of priorities and the allocation of resources;
- mutually supportive relationships with external partners necessary to the achievement of goals.

Effective resource allocation and governance

- effective governance arrangements with all agencies and bodies in receipt of funds from the Department;
- effective risk management, budgetary controls and accountability within the Department;
- allocation of limited resources to be based on strategic priorities and compliance with accountability requirements.

External service delivery

- effective communications with all customers/stakeholders, internal and external;
- a focus on quality service delivery;
- effective arrangements for listening to the voice of children and young people.

Internal capacity

- effective management and deployment of available knowledge, human and financial resources;
- capacity to learn and flexibility to implement change as necessary.

3. Making things better for children and young people in Ireland – The challenge of implementation

The preparation of this Statement of Strategy has provided a valuable opportunity to take stock of the resources available to the DCYA, to set out clearly its key areas of priority and to communicate, both internally and externally, how it proposes to achieve its mandate and mission. Recognising and meeting a number of implementation challenges will be central to how well the DCYA manages itself to achieve the outcomes sought.

1. The DCYA is a new Government department and attention needs to be paid to the process of integrating its functions

The DCYA has been created with a clear policy agenda – to improve outcomes for children and young people – and it brings together a range of organisations, agencies and professionals. These bodies have historically focused on delivering specific services in specific settings or sectors. Integrating these functions and harnessing this collective effort to improve outcomes for children and young people will be the DCYA's primary task in this formative stage. This exercise will require expertise and internal capacity to lead and focus this effort.

Children must be the core focus of this integration. The DCYA will build on core competencies and experience with the child-centred approach it has built up over recent years in important areas such as participation and research.

The requirement will be to continually review and deploy available expertise and resources flexibly across the organisation, based on the best strategic contribution that can be made to delivering on this Statement of Strategy.

2. To work effectively, the DCYA must harmonise policy and service delivery across a range of stakeholders

Many of the resources required to bring about positive change for children and young people lie outside the DCYA's direct control. Therefore, it will need a high level of skill and legitimacy in order to lead the effort across Government and external stakeholders in support of better outcomes for children and young people. The DCYA's capacity to secure the changes necessary for children and young people is reliant upon a dynamic, demanding and productive relationship with key Government departments, agencies and other stakeholders.

3. The DCYA has responsibility for the governance of a wide range of professional service provision

The DCYA has acquired significant service provision responsibility, particularly in the areas of child welfare and protection, youth services, children in care and aftercare, family support, education welfare and youth justice. While the arrangements for the local management and delivery of these responsibilities vary, there is clear Departmental governance accountability to ensure that day-to-day services are fit for purpose and that risk is adequately managed. The varying size, function and discretionary responsibility of these bodies will demand individually tailored governance that works and is appropriate.

Significantly, responsibility includes the establishment of the new Children and Family Support Agency and the reform of child welfare and protection services. The delivery of professional services, some of which carry statutory accountability, will place additional demands on the DCYA to ensure effective oversight and stewardship.

A key feature of the reform process will be the introduction of greater consistency in assessment, planning and management in the delivery of the range of services for which the DCYA now carries policy responsibility.

In addition, the DCYA will need to assure a wide range of stakeholders – critically the children and young people it serves and the political system it is accountable to – that it is performing to a high standard.

4. The DCYA's success will be judged not just on its day-to-day performance but on how it uses the resources available to achieve better outcomes for children and young people in the long term

The DCYA has a clear mandate and responsibility, over and above its day-to-day service delivery function, to help bring about transformative change for children and young people. A body of evidence now exists indicating which interventions work best in delivering better outcomes and the means to implementing these changes. The DCYA is challenged to think and act beyond current structures, to mobilise a wide range of stakeholders in terms of securing this vision. This will require clear articulation of its mandate and mission and how it proposes to deploy resources to achieve its objectives. To do this, it needs to create and sustain an effective implementation architecture and establish an active process of engagement with children, young people and other stakeholders, so that implementation is a recognised stage and the experience of implementation on the ground informs and develops policy.

5. Finally, the DCYA must develop its internal capacity to meet the challenge of implementation

One of the greatest tasks facing the DCYA in the short to medium term is building on the resources that have transferred into it to ensure it has the capacity to meet the challenges of the future. The DCYA itself is relatively small in terms of its core staffing and administrative operating costs. For example, its annual administrative budget is around €7.4 million, which is approximately 3% of the overall Vote. At the end of October 2011, there were 113 (whole time equivalent) staff employed in the DCYA. It is expected that the final staffing complement of the DCYA will be around 133 staff, with the transfer of certain functions relating to the Irish Youth Justice Service in January 2012. As a small department, the commitment, skill and knowledge of the people working there are critical assets and an integral part of the organisation's resources. As such, the human resources policies over the lifetime of this strategy will provide for ongoing training, re-skilling and professional development, with the aim of fully developing, motivating and encouraging staff.

There are many areas of policy and service delivery to be improved and, subject to internal resources, all opportunities will be taken to do so. We are hopeful that the ambitious agenda the DCYA is charged with and its earliest achievements will influence the support and staffing available over the life of this strategy to fully exploit reform possibilities.

Successful implementation of the objectives contained in this Statement of Strategy will be challenging and demanding, but are considered essential to the creation of a system that is accountable, effective, efficient and capable of responding to the emerging and ongoing needs of children and young people.

4. Building internal capacity

The creation of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) unites a number of important areas of policy and service provision. As a result, the DCYA itself, which was created in June 2011, comprises staff transferred from four other Government departments: Health and Children; Education and Skills; Justice and Equality; and Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs. This means that there are different methods of working, different corporate styles and governance arrangements, all of which have to be formed into a cohesive policy and unified administrative framework.

The Department will also need to take account of an ageing workforce. It is estimated that 18% of staff will reach retirement age during the period 2011-2015 and 23% in the period 2016-2020 – i.e. 41% within the next 10 years. Many of these people will be in the middle and senior management category, with the associated implications for corporate knowledge, experience and 'know-how'. This will take place during a period of limited recruitment opportunities due to public service employment controls. The DCYA will therefore develop a comprehensive workforce and knowledge management plan, providing for succession management and knowledge transfer initiatives. In a small organisation, retirements and other departures can have a disproportionate effect and it may be necessary for key commitments and priorities to be reviewed in light of such developments.

In the short to medium term, the DCYA will work at building capacity in the following areas:

Leadership and communication

The Department needs to articulate clearly and persuasively the objectives and priorities for the overall sector. These need to be grounded in national and international evidence and robust policy analysis. It is also essential to ensure the system delivers on national priorities by mobilising support and resources from a complex network of organisations and individuals. Providing leadership in such a complex environment requires a particular focus on relationship capital, networking and influencing, and clear communication pathways.

The Organisational Review Programme has identified leadership deficits across the Civil Service and over the lifetime of this strategy, the DCYA will build on its leadership capacity and develop leaders at both middle and senior management level.

The importance of communication, both internal and external, will be emphasized in delivering this strategy. Hierarchical organisations, such as Government departments, can suffer from inappropriate distance between senior management and more junior staff. As a new and small organisation, the DCYA's senior management is committed to undertaking regular formal and informal communication processes so that all staff are engaged in offering feedback, both on their day-to-day work and on the broader organisational challenges. Externally, the DCYA will communicate its role and activities through a planned and evaluated process of relationship management with key stakeholders.

Governance and accountability

The Department will further develop robust, well-thought-through governance arrangements for agencies, offices and organisations funded and involved with the department. These will focus on outputs and outcomes, and bring clearer insight to the performance of these bodies and the levels of service user satisfaction. Without this plan, the ability to monitor and evaluate effectively will be greatly restricted.

In addition, we will seek to mobilise the resources of Departmental agencies in implementing key priorities and generating capacity within the DCYA to take on its expanded remit. The scope for

devolution of functions will be examined and monitored in the context of the significant organisational reform programme being implemented by the DCYA and the initiative already undertaken in 2010 to establish the Adoption Authority as a separate statutory body.

We also support the Minister in accounting to the Oireachtas and to the public. Meeting this political accountability constitutes one of the most significant areas of the department's workload due to the amount of time and resources invested. This work will continue to absorb considerable staff resources and time, and we will continuously monitor to ensure best use of available resources.

Policy evaluation, review and development

Information is a key driver for improving the delivery of services. In the current economic climate, with reducing resources, better analysis of performance information will be essential in achieving the most value from use of these resources.

Policy review and development is designed to support and drive ongoing improvements in services. Over the lifetime of this Statement of Strategy, we will improve our capacity to develop evidence-based policy that takes greater account of the views of stakeholders, including children and young people. We will develop our skills in setting clear output and outcome targets for each policy in order to assist robust evaluation and value-for-money reviews.

Legislative skills

Providing a strong legislative framework for services and the protection of children and young people is a major element of the DCYA's role. It necessarily takes time to develop, draft and enact legislation, and drafting such legislation requires specific skill sets and competencies. The DCYA is facing into a particularly challenging series of legislative drafting, such as a referendum on children's rights, adoption, the *Children First Guidelines* and the creation of a new Child and Family Support Agency. Over the lifetime of this strategy, we will invest in developing our legislative capabilities.

Next steps – Monitoring progress

The priority activities and outputs for the DCYA's strategic objectives are set out in Appendix 1. These reflect Government policy, as set out in the Programme for Government 2011-2016. We will assign responsibilities and monitor progress through the business planning process and will describe progress each year in the DCYA Annual Report.

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Appendix 1: Objectives, Activities and Outputs, 2011-2014

Strategic Objectives	Priority Activities	Outputs (PfG = Programme for Government commitment)
<p>1. Develop, strengthen and align policies, legislation and resources in order to achieve better outcomes for children and young people and provide support for parents and families.</p>	<p>1.1 Prepare and publish an integrated policy framework to coordinate activities and underpin the achievement of improved outcomes for children and young people.</p>	<p>1.1.1 Evidence-based strategy published in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early childhood • children • young people <p>supported by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Justice Strategy developed and implemented • Youth Homelessness Policy reviewed (PfG) • publication and implementation of a national policy on children and young people's participation in decision-making.
	<p>1.2 Develop and put in place a comprehensive programme of legislation.</p>	<p>1.2.1 Children's Referendum held (PfG).</p> <p>1.2.2 Legislative implications of the Children's Referendum (if carried) brought forward and enacted (PfG).</p> <p>1.2.3 Legislation developed and enacted in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Children First Guidelines</i> (PfG); • adoption (information and tracing) (PfG); • Child and Family Support Agency (PfG). <p>1.2.4 Child Care (Amendment) Act fully commenced.</p> <p>1.2.5 Regulations for Special Care developed and promulgated.</p> <p>1.2.6 Review the Children Act 2001 and appropriate follow-up.</p>
	<p>1.3 Put in place the processes and procedures which will reorientate funding provision to align with identified policy objectives set out in the DCYA's estimates and output statement.</p>	<p>1.3.1 Evaluate programmes and reconfigure the funding streams for early childhood, children and young people in order to maximise outcomes.</p> <p>1.3.2 Implement the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) and funding decisions.</p> <p>1.3.3 Oversee and report on financial management and identified performance indicators for the DCYA and key statutory agencies.</p>

	<p>1.4 Ensure that arrangements are in place to support the DCYA to meet its external obligations in relation to children and youth.</p>	<p>1.4.1 Preparation and submission of Ireland's 3rd and 4th combined reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and other international commitments met, including on adoption.</p> <p>1.4.2 Active participation in International fora/networks relating to children.</p> <p>1.4.3 Active role in the development of EU youth policy, including participation in Council of Europe/EU Youth Working Group Party meetings, participation in 'Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013' and preparation for the advancement of youth issues during Ireland's upcoming Presidency of the EU in 2013.</p> <p>1.4.4 Prepare for and undertake DCYA's role in EU Presidency 2013.</p> <p>1.4.5 Promote North/South cooperation in the area of child and family services and Youth Justice Services through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completion of existing work programme; • identification of new areas of cooperation.
<p>2. Monitor and evaluate performance through strong governance and accountability systems in respect of the responsibilities of the Department and its agencies.</p>	<p>2.1 In line with Public Service Reform Objectives, ensure that best practice governance and accountability arrangements are in place in respect of the DCYA, its agencies and other service delivery providers.</p>	<p>2.1.1 Reconfigure agencies and governance arrangements in line with Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) and the Public Service Reform Programme.</p> <p>2.1.2 Guide service planning/business planning processes for the DCYA, HSE (Children's Services), FSA, NEWB and AAI services, and identify and analyse key performance indicators.</p> <p>2.1.3 Identify and put in place requisite arrangements for governance in advance of the establishment of the standalone Child and Family Support Agency.</p> <p>2.1.4 Govern day-to-day service quality through improved structures, processes and culture to ensure front-line professionals can deliver to the best of their capacity.</p> <p>2.1.5 Promote commitment to evaluation and feedback among service providers and stakeholders.</p> <p>2.1.6 Identify and put in place requisite arrangements for Minister's relationship with HIQA.</p> <p>2.1.7 Put in place revised arrangements for Internal Audit function, including establishment of Audit Committee.</p> <p>2.1.8 Continue to develop internal systems and procedures in key areas.</p>

	<p>2.2 Put in place revised institutional structures to govern the Child and Family Support Agency and local delivery of children's services.</p>	<p>2.2.1 Oversee and support the Task Force for the establishment of a new Child and Family Support Agency (PfG).</p> <p>2.2.2 Develop and implement a transition plan in conjunction with the relevant agencies for the establishment of the new Child and Family Support Agency (PfG).</p> <p>2.2.3 Put revised arrangements in place at local level through the Children's Services Committees to improve services at local level.</p>
<p>3. Support the Department and key stakeholders in accessing better evidence and facilitating the active participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their individual and collective lives.</p>	<p>3.1 Research and data</p> <p>(a) Build on existing infrastructure to ensure that research and data on children's lives are available, accessible, robust and timely.</p> <p>(b) Improve transfer of knowledge from research and data on children and young people's lives so that their lives are better understood and services improved.</p> <p>3.2 Children's voices</p> <p>Oversight and development of national and local structures for participation by children and young people in decision-making.</p>	<p>3.1.1 Implementation and oversight of the National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives, 2011-2016.</p> <p>3.1.2 Continued governance of the National Longitudinal Study of Children, <i>Growing Up in Ireland</i>.</p> <p>3.1.3 Publication of the <i>State of the Nation's Children</i> report.</p> <p>3.1.4 Completion and dissemination of ethics guidance on children's research.</p> <p>3.1.5 Support increased utilisation of both survey and administrative data sources to inform policy and the Department's functions.</p> <p>3.1.6 Develop internal information management processes and technology platforms in order to support integrated working and evidence-based service development.</p> <p>3.2.1 Develop improved structures for participation by children and young people in decision-making.</p> <p>3.2.2 Publication and dissemination of the report of consultations with children and young people on the Children and Young People's Strategy (2012-2017).</p> <p>3.2.3 Utilisation of findings and data from the IRCHSS/DCYA research on children and young people's participation in decision-making.</p> <p>3.2.4 Establishment of the Voice of Children in Care Implementation Group.</p>
<p>4. Improve systems for supporting families, safeguarding and protecting children, providing alternative care and assisting those young people whose behaviour poses a risk to themselves or others.</p>	<p>4.1 Drive systems change to improve quality and consistency of supports to parents, safeguarding of children generally, and the quality of care of children in the care system.</p>	<p>4.1.1 Oversee the reform of child welfare and protection services, including review of the implementation of the following key items (PfG):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standardised business processes; • stated operational policy improvements identified in child protection practice; • introduction of a Child Protection Register; • introduction of the National Child Care Information System; • introduction of stated workforce development priorities;

	<p>4.2 Ensure implementation of the Adoption Act 2010 in conjunction with the Adoption Authority of Ireland and the HSE.</p> <p>4.3 Strengthened policy framework and implementation arrangements to support a reduction in youth crime and reduced demand for children's detention.</p> <p>4.4 Provide appropriate, safe and secure custody with improved outcomes in health, well-being and education for all children in detention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design and implementation of a family support network model. <p>4.1.2 Develop implementation framework and drive implementation of <i>Children First Guidelines</i> (PfG).</p> <p>4.1.3 Review and report on the implementation of the Ryan Report (PfG).</p> <p>4.1.4 Review and report on historical reviews relating to the provision of children's services.</p> <p>4.1.5 Liaison with HIQA and HSE on the implementation of the regulatory framework for child and family services.</p> <p>4.2.1 Adoption Act, 2010 and the AAI corporate plan implemented with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy guidance provided as required; • structured liaison arrangements established. <p>4.3.1 Clear youth crime outcomes set for interventions with children and young adults in terms of reduced offending and behavioural changes (PfG).</p> <p>4.3.2 Effective public communications tools developed on issues regarding youth offending and IYJS performance to key audiences.</p> <p>4.4.1 Implementation plan to integrate services, management and policies in children detention schools developed and implemented in accordance with the programme of Public Service Reform.</p> <p>4.4.2 Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service (ACTS) and Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service established, available to children in detention and appropriately resourced.</p> <p>4.4.3 Protocol for working together agreed by Children and Family Services, HSE and the children detention schools.</p> <p>4.4.4 Detention school model extended to all children in detention up to the age of 18 years, subject to Government financial decision (PfG).</p> <p>4.4.5 Protocol developed and agreed between IYJS and Irish Prison Service on exchange of best practice for children in detention.</p>
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<p>5. Support children and young people so that they can fully engage in active learning, including through the provision of high-quality early childhood care and education, youth services and addressing issues of school attendance and participation.</p>	<p>5.1 Implement a comprehensive programme of work to secure the provision of quality and accessible early childhood care and education places for children aged from birth to 6 years.</p> <p>5.2 Work with a range of stakeholders to support delivery of the Government’s priority of achieving improved standards of literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>5.3 Develop a continuum of targeted service interventions designed to maximise pupil attendance, participation and retention/combat poor school attendance, disaffection and early school-leaving.</p> <p>5.4 Promote quality and effective youth work provision and practice, including by means of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvements in information and knowledge base to support and enhance youth provision; 	<p>5.1.1 The implementation of funded childcare/early childhood education programmes that deliver quality early childhood experiences for children and sustain the viability of the service provision (PfG).</p> <p>5.1.2 Streamlined and coordinated administration and delivery of funded childcare/early childhood education programmes (PfG).</p> <p>5.1.3 Integration of national standards of quality in practice in early childhood care and education into oversight protocols for early childhood settings (PfG).</p> <p>5.1.4 Review of existing regulations, tools and processes pertinent to the early childhood care and education sector and development and implementation of supportive regulatory framework (PfG).</p> <p>5.1.5 A range of practical supports for the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in the implementation of the Workforce Development Plan for the early childhood care and education workforce.</p> <p>5.2.1 Implementation of DCYA commitments in National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (PfG).</p> <p>5.2.2 A range of practical supports for the DES in the implementation of national practice guidelines as expressed in Siolta, the national quality framework, and Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework.</p> <p>5.2.3 National Quality Standards Initiatives implemented and adhered to by national voluntary youth organisations, staff-led services and projects, and local volunteer-led youth groups.</p> <p>5.3.1 Ensure integration of the existing three service streams within the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) and explore positioning of NEWB in respect of other supports for ‘at risk’ children.</p> <p>5.3.2 Agree priority educational welfare outcome measures at national and local level.</p> <p>5.3.3 Liaise with the DES in making existing expenditure on educational disadvantage more effective (PfG).</p> <p>5.4.1 Robust information and financial management systems in place to support enhanced planning, delivery and assessment of quality youth provision.</p> <p>5.4.2 Youth Affairs funding schemes renovated and reoriented, ensuring responsive, policy and evidence-Informed service provision.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhanced coherence and continuity between youth policy, provision and practice. 	
<p>6. Collaborate with stakeholders, including across Government, in monitoring and promoting the physical, emotional and economic well-being of children and young people and reducing inequalities.</p>	<p>6.1 Develop appropriate structures to contribute to the harmonisation and alignment of policy and service delivery to secure improved outcomes for children and young people.</p>	<p>6.1.1 Put in place mechanisms for collaboration with Departments of Health, Social Protection, Education and Skills, and Justice and Equality to prevent vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, from falling behind their peers and experiencing inequality in later life.</p> <p>6.1.2 Pursue partnership approach to promoting child health and positive health behaviours.</p> <p>6.1.3 Improved planning and delivery of children and young people's services at local level, including social, recreational and cultural activities.</p> <p>6.1.4 Implement a structured approach to external relationship management, with review of existing engagement mechanisms to better support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cross-departmental cooperation on the children and young people's strategy framework; expert advisory input to support policy formulation; stakeholder engagement in policy and service delivery. <p>6.1.5 Road map in place for future direction of Children's Services Committees.</p> <p>6.1.6 Contribute to the Government's policy of job creation (PfG).</p> <p>6.1.7 Contribute to implementation of Government's policy on people with disabilities.</p>
<p>7. Be recognised as an organisation where, on an ongoing basis, high performance is achieved and personal development is supported.</p>	<p>7.1 Put in place the corporate arrangements to support the staff of the DCYA to work to high professional standards; in particular, to equip them with the skills they need to achieve the Department's mandate.</p>	<p>7.1.1 Develop HR policies and practices that provide employees at all levels with a sense of purpose, challenging work and the opportunity to make a difference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a comprehensive and meaningful HR strategy in place; effective mobility policies in place; effective internal communication pathways developed; positive engagement with staff representative groups; regular reviews of organisational structure to ensure best use of human resources, and that work is devolved to the appropriate level; well-defined workforce plans and succession management initiatives in place. <p>7.1.2 Build an organisation that invests in and encourages learning and change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a comprehensive learning and development strategy in place, which focuses on capacity building in key strategic areas; regular training needs analysis conducted;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a ring-fenced training and development budget in place each year;• DCYA's technology and information platforms to be reviewed to support integrated working across the organisation.
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Appendix 2: List of Transfer of Functions Orders

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) was established on 2nd June 2011 by the Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Alteration of Name of Department and Title of Minister) Order 2011. On its establishment, the DCYA became responsible for the Family Support Agency, which had until then been the responsibility of the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs. It should also be noted that the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) will operate as an integrated unit in the new DCYA, with some Department of Justice and Equality staff either co-locating or transferring to the DCYA.

Transfer of certain functions from Minister for Health

On 3rd June 2011, a further Order was made transferring responsibility for the following legislation to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs:

- Adoption Act 2010;
- Subsections (1)(d) and (2) (in so far as they relate to the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund) of Section 2 of the Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007;
- Ombudsman for Children Act 2002;
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998;
- Youth Work Act 2001.

The Order also provided for the transfer of responsibility for the non-statutory functions of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Transfer of Child Care Acts 1991 to 2011 from Minister for Health

Responsibility for the Child Care Acts 1991 to 2011 was transferred by Order from the Minister for Health to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs with effect from 1st October 2011. In advance of this transfer, it was necessary to commence Part 4 of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011, which provides the legislative basis for the provision of information and documents by the HSE to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. (Part 4 was commenced on 8th September 2011.)

Transfer of functions from Minister for Education and Skills

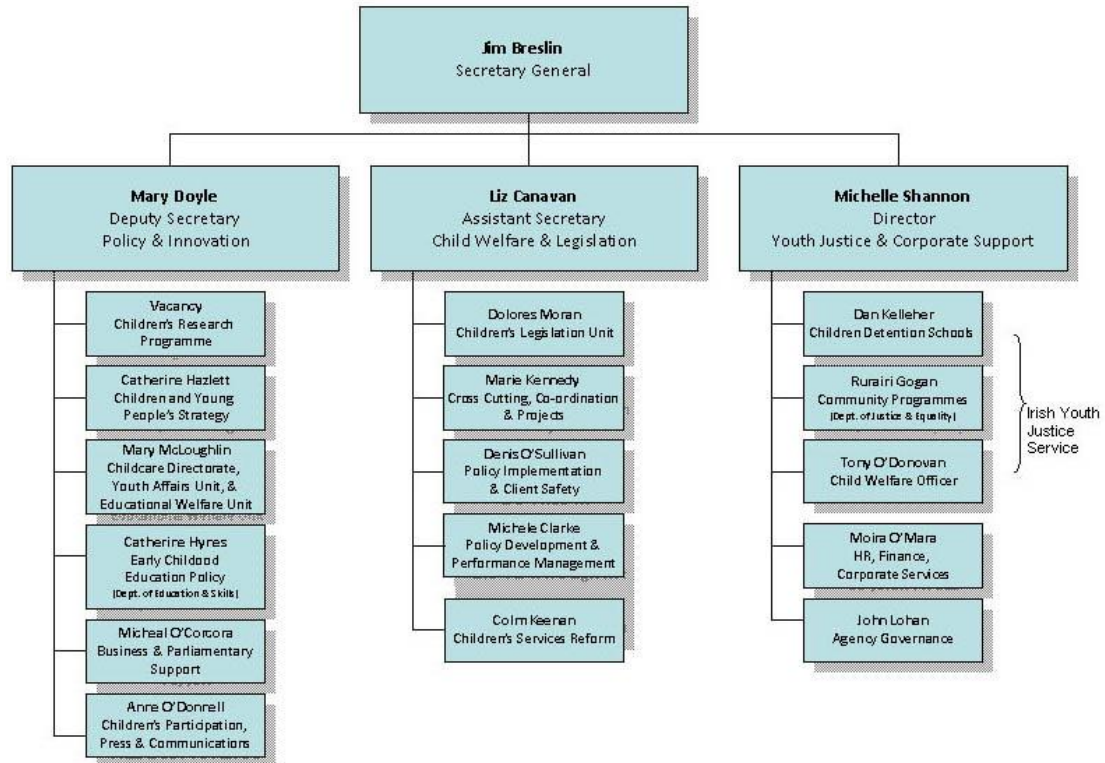
Responsibility for the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was transferred by Order from the Minister for Education and Skills to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on 11th May 2011.

Transfer of functions from Minister for Justice and Equality

The DCYA takes responsibility for the Children Detention Schools (Part 10 of the Children Act 2001) and remand places (Section 88 of the Act – except Subsections (12) and (13) relating to remand places for 16 and 17-year-old boys) with effect from 1st January 2012. The Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) operates as an integrated unit in the new DCYA, with some staff from the Department of Justice and Equality co-located in the DCYA.

Appendix 3: DCYA Organisation chart

Management Advisory Committee and Principal Officer Level Responsibilities



Appendix 4: Agencies Directly Funded by DCYA

Family Support Agency

4th Floor, St. Stephens Green House
Earlsfort Terrace
Dublin 2
Tel: (01) 611 4100

Adoption Authority of Ireland

Shelbourne House
Shelbourne House
Dublin 4
Tel: (01) 667 1438

**National Educational
Welfare Board**

16-22 Green Street
Dublin 7
Tel: (01) 873 8623

**Office of the
Ombudsman of Children**

Millennium House
52-56 Great Strand Street
Dublin 1
Tel: (01) 865 6800

Appendix 5: Submissions received

Submissions were received from the following organisations/individuals:

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Department of Health
Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
Department of Justice and Equality (Gender Equality Division)
Department of Defence
National Disability Authority
Children's Rights Alliance
National Educational Welfare Board
Youth Work Ireland
Crosscare Teen Counselling
Empowering Young People in Care
Children in Hospital in Ireland
Association of Lactation Consultants
National Breastfeeding Committee of HSE
Friends of Breast Feeding
Healthy Food for All
Institute of Community Health Nursing
Young Social Innovators
Start Strong
Ombudsman for Children
Library Council of Ireland
Ms. Catherine Verling
Early Childhood Ireland
HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme
Playtime Ireland
Arts Council of Ireland
Mounttown Neighbourhood Youth and Family Project Strategic Plan
Irish Youth Officers Association
Library Association of Ireland

Appendix 6: Programme for Government

ACTIONS TO BE LED BY DCYA

Actionable Item	Comment/Position as of December 2011
A referendum to amend the Constitution to ensure that children's rights are strengthened, along the lines recommended by the All-Party Oireachtas Committee.	Wording being finalised with Office of Attorney General for submission to Government.
We will maintain the free pre-school year in Early Childhood Care and Education to promote the best outcomes for children and families. We will improve the quality of the pre-school year by implementing standards and reviewing training options.	The free pre-school year has been maintained and funding was increased for 2012 to cater for changed demographics. Work on the quality agenda is ongoing in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills.
As resources allow, this Government will invest in a targeted early childhood education programme for disadvantaged children, building on existing targeted pre-school supports for families most in need of assistance, such as the 'young Ballymun' project.	The evaluation of a number of key pilot early intervention programmes will be carried out in 2012. In the meantime, continued investment in the CCS (Childcare Subvention) and CETS (Childcare Education and Training) Schemes provides supports to low income families in need of childcare.
We will end the practice of sending children to St. Patrick's Institution.	Pending the availability of capital funding, the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress to completion during 2012 the design work and tender documentation for the NCDF project in Oberstown; • continue to work closely with the Irish Prison Service and to explore opportunities for cooperation and sharing of best practice in providing appropriate, safe and secure care for children in detention; • examine the scope for interim solutions to deal with the issue.
We will fundamentally reform the delivery of child protection services by removing child welfare and protection from the HSE and creating a dedicated Child Welfare and Protection Agency, reforming the model of service delivery and improving accountability to the Dáil.	The Minister has appointed a Taskforce on the Establishment of the Child and Family Support Agency, which will make recommendations to the DCYA on the future organisational design of the Child and Family Support Agency and the configuration of child and family services in Ireland. The DCYA is working with the HSE Child and Family Services, other relevant agencies and the Taskforce to ensure reform of service delivery proceeds in parallel with the creation of the new Agency.
We are committed to implementing the recommendations of the Ryan Report, including putting the <i>Children First Guidelines</i> on a statutory footing and legislating for the use of 'soft information'.	The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs chairs a cross-agency steering group which is responsible for overseeing the continuing implementation of the Ryan Report Action Plan. An annual progress report is laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. Work on the development of legislation for <i>Children First</i> is a priority project. The Department of Justice and Equality is leading on vetting/soft information legislation with support from the DCYA.

Actionable Item	Comment/Position as of December 2011
We will enact legislation to consolidate and reform the law on adoption.	The DCYA is advancing work on the Adoption (Tracing and Information) Bill in conjunction with the Attorney General's Office and the Adoption Authority of Ireland. The DCYA is also developing policy to anticipate further changes to adoption law that might arise from the proposed Referendum.

ACTIONS FOR DCYA CONTRIBUTION

We will examine how to make existing expenditure on educational disadvantage more effective.	While most expenditure on educational disadvantage is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Skills, the DCYA's planned review of the School Completion Programme in 2012 is relevant to delivery of this action.
To address the issue of existing homelessness, we will review and update the existing Homeless Strategy, <i>including a specific focus on youth homelessness</i> , and take into account the current demands on existing housing and health services with a view to assessing how best to provide additional services.	While the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is responsible for the overall Homeless Strategy, the DCYA is committed to a review of the Youth Homeless Strategy.
We will give special emphasis to alternative programmes for juvenile offenders through extensions to the Juvenile Liaison Officer Scheme and the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme, and the extended use of Restorative Justice where appropriate.	These functions remain with the Department of Justice and Equality, and the DCYA will support it in implementing this action.
We will also examine outcomes-based contracts with community organisations to help <i>reduce re-offending by young people</i> , based on the social impact bond model in the UK.	These functions remain with the Department of Justice and Equality, and the DCYA will support it in implementing this action.
A new approach is needed to break the cycle of <i>child poverty</i> where it is most deeply entrenched. We will adopt a new area-based approach to child poverty, which draws on best international practice and existing services to tackle every aspect of child poverty. Initially, this model will be rolled out to up to 10 of Ireland's most disadvantaged communities, in cooperation with philanthropic partners to co-fund and manage the project.	The DCYA along with other relevant departments will contribute to delivery of this action, which is being implemented under the auspices of the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy.