**Meitheal & Practice Working Group Minutes 15th September 2020**

**Attendance**

Eleonora Sozzi, (TUSLA CFSNC) Frank Mulville (YPAR), John Peelo (TUSLA/NYP1), Ruth Breen (CASPr), Pamela Cooper (TULSA/Senior CFSNC), Dave O’Hara (ASP), Anita White (HSE), Gemma Madden (TUSLA Social Work), Charlie Armstrong (Garda Inspector), Mary Meehan (YPAR), Mark Shinnick (Holy Child Pre School), Brid Shanahan (Summerhill Practice) and Steven McCarthy (Dept SP).

Eleonora welcomed everyone and introduced the meetings purpose and task. A sub group had looked at adapting the Meitheal and Practice group to be more inclusive, focussed on children and families and have a membership that could inform, support and critique the Meitheal. worked on restructuring this working group.

There are two groups this group:

* The Core Group-us. Will look at gaps and blocks. Advise and sign posting to relevant services/agencies strengths and developments required. This group can also give feedback re the Meitheal to Tusla
* Open group where practitioners can attend and bring concerns and/or ideas, receive and offer support to/from peers. They could bring difficult anonymised case concerns for support etc.

This is part of YPARs work of supporting people in their work, and of the TULSA Child and Family Support Network (which YPAR undertakes in the NEIC). Both the Core group and Open group will meet three times per year.

**Discussion**

* Meitheal Practice Model. National practice model. Elenora gave information on this:
  + A way of working together in supporting families where there are needs but not at the level of child protection. Where anyone can be a Lead Practitioner for a child or young person, ideally, but not necessarily, if you know the family well.
  + At this stage, because of Covid etc, any worker can act as Lead, even if they haven’t done the training, and will be supported in this by Eleanora.
  + Meitheal training and briefings are provided as needed. There was a 2-day training scheduled recently, – but had to be cancelled due to Covid. TUSLA are looking at running this online, in a new format, 1-day training, followed after 6 weeks with case discussions.

There will be an email sent around re interest for the Meitheal briefing or training

* John Peelo has 5 Meitheals running, and has linked DCC and social protection which has benefitted speedy changes in families’ circumstances, and having contacts there has proved very useful.
* Steven, was concerned that people with disabilities, that cannot leave their homes have extra difficulties during this time. He also explained that there is a backlog social welfare claims at present. People are entitled to supplementary payment, while waiting on a claim and this can be accessed through social welfare offices.
* Accessing therapeutic supports, including psychological assessments, educational assessments, speech and language etc, and there are long waiting lists
* Gemma asked about why a Meitheal group supporting a family should cease to operate when a child protection referral is made. This is particularly difficult for the family as it may be the core support they receive. Frank agreed, and this had been discussed last year at this meeting, and although the Meitheal as such pauses/stops the group meeting around the family will continue and the child protection social work invited or at least kept informed of the supports that are ongoing. Gemma also said that their teams appreciate the support from Meitheal.
* It was suggested that if referral goes in to child protection, and Meitheal is operating there is a need for a quick turn, in order not to disrupt the supports being provided to the family and continuity maintained. Pamela agreed to raise this within the management structure of TUSLA.
* Where a family is being supported by social work, when the child protection concerns are addressed, they can be offered a Meitheal (NB Meitheals are voluntary for families and they can not be required to participate).
* There are ongoing worries that children falling through the gaps, some groups may be losing out on services because they are not as well linked in, e.g. people with poor or no English, contact could be made with the New Communities Partnership to ease this.
* City Connects, a new Primary school-based service is beginning and they would be a very useful member of this group. to Meitheal working group meetings, contact Gerry Cullen, City connects Director.
* Link in with Anita re the work being done in the Social inclusion Service in Summerhill.
* Garda working closely with youth workers and this will continue, some good work on the relationships between young people and Gardai, a ‘Dialogue’ process led by CAN is in process now.
* Charlie to look at Garda presence in the area and come back on next meeting

**Worker support, some thoughts for further discussion.**

* How do we support workers is there a piece we can do as a network? There will be a serious impact on them and on the children and young people with whom they work. Where should this be addressed?

**Next meeting: November 12th @ 12 noon**