

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY

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ACRONYMS USED

Note: Where a Government department or agency is given in **bold**, this indicates that it is the **lead agency** for the commitment specified.

AGS	An Garda Síochána
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DAHG	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
DCENR	Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DECLG	Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DF	Department of Finance
DH	Department of Health
DJE	Department of Justice and Equality
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DSP	Department of Social Protection
DTTS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
HIQA	Health Information and Quality Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NOSP	National Office for Suicide Prevention
ODPC	Office of the Data Protection Commissioner
OCO	Ombudsman for Children's Office

Acronyms relating to *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures – The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020*

G	Goal
O	Outcome

SECTION 1: THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

The enactment of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, and consequent establishment of the Agency on January 1st, 2014, represents a significant milestone and a new point of departure in terms of policy and service provision for children and families in Ireland. The establishment of the Agency as a distinct legal entity to deliver services for children and families aims to ensure optimal levels of performance, accountability and transparent governance within all components of service. However, the challenges associated with the formation of the new Agency are complex. The Task Force set up to advise the Government on the establishment of the Child and Family Agency noted that:

"...creating a well-functioning agency is not just about separating policy design from implementation. Rather, it is a complex process that requires consideration of autonomy, control, accountability, and relationship management. The OECD concludes that the strategic role of departments is crucial in their relationships with agencies. However, they caution that the 'performance dialogue' between them is missing in Ireland. Agencies have not been given appropriate performance management frameworks."

It was the view of the Task Force that the establishment of the Child and Family Support Agency represents an opportunity to learn from the past and put clear accountability lines in place that enable a greater focus on performance.

The purpose of this framework is to set out policy guidance, direction and prioritisation parameters for the preparation of the Child and Family Agency's Corporate Plan, in accordance with the provisions of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 as one important aspect of an improved performance process.

PROCESS AND TIMELINE FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE CORPORATE PLAN

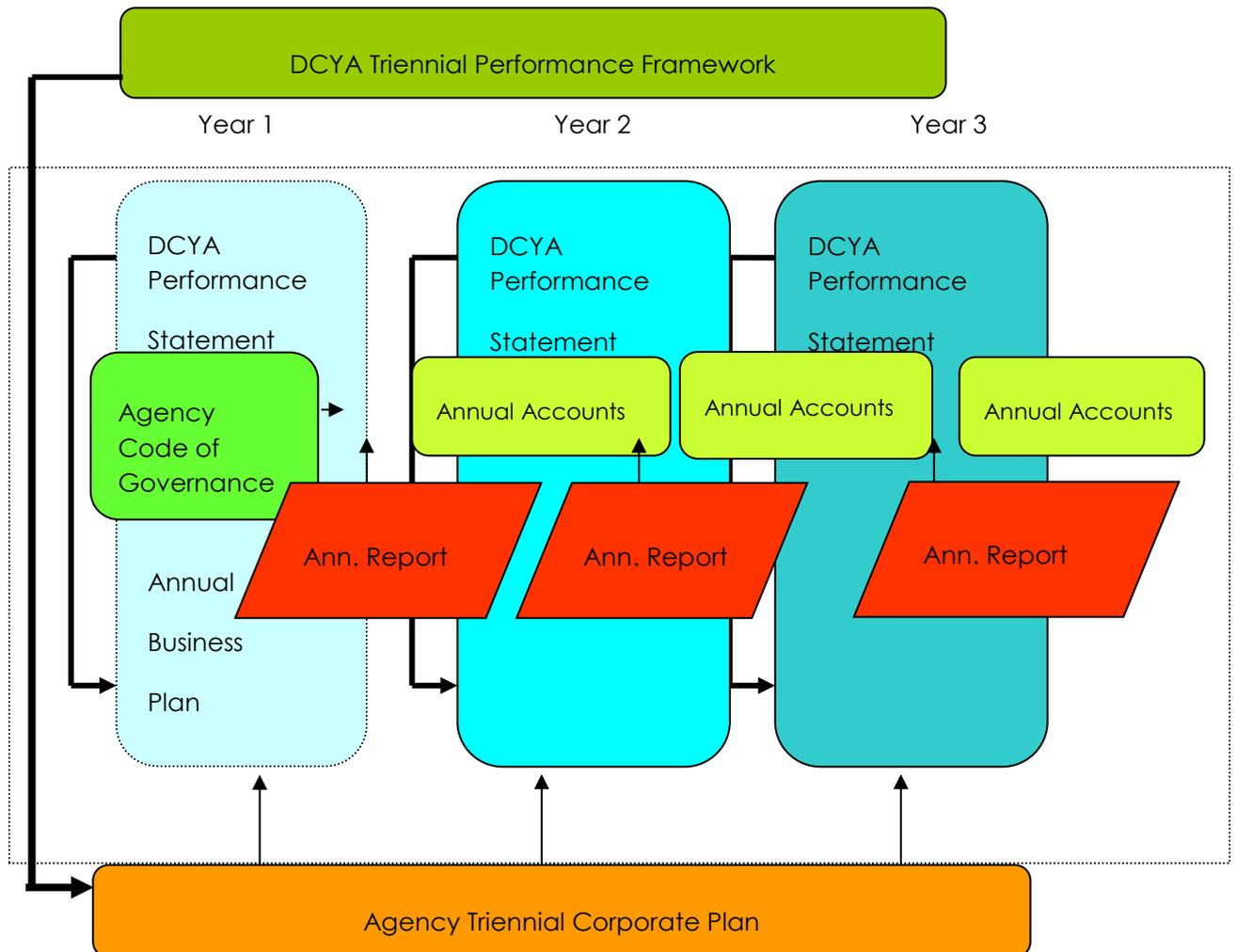
Section 41 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, states that the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs shall develop a Performance Framework to provide the Agency with policy guidance, direction and prioritisation parameters for the preparation of its Corporate Plan, which will in turn include the Agency's key objectives, outputs and related strategies. Under these provisions the Agency is required to produce a Corporate Plan within three months of receiving the Performance Framework.

This will be followed by a "performance dialogue" between the Agency and the Department which will occur in the period prior to the formal submission of the Corporate Plan. This process will be key in establishing an approved Corporate Plan that is fully reflective of the policy priorities and operational needs and responses of the Agency to its roles and functions.

The Performance Framework has also been developed having regard to the range of performance and accountability functions as outlined in the Child and Family Agency Act 2013. (Appendix 1: A Synopsis of Accountability and Performance Functions in the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 may be a useful background reference in this regard.) As this Performance Framework will be developed triennially, it seeks to accommodate and account for the establishment and evolution of the Agency in its first three years and onwards into the

future. It will also provide the backdrop to annual performance statement/business planning and reporting processes.

AGENCY PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK



ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY

The establishment and subsequent development of the Child and Family Agency provides a fresh opportunity to create a strong and authoritative organisation which is appropriately structured and enabled to deliver on the commitment of Government to the reform of child and family services.

The overarching ambition in setting up the Child and Family Agency is to:

- make a real difference to the quality and consistency of children and family services;
- achieve an integrated approach to the way services to children and families are delivered;
- provide clear service pathways and support a collaborative multidisciplinary approach;
- and

- maximise the value of preventive and early intervention approaches - particularly by recognising, supporting and promoting the key contribution that parents make to the lives of their children.

Furthermore, the Agency represents the consolidation of a range of child and family services. This provides new opportunities for integration of expertise and service responses for children and their families. It also provides the potential for devising more outcomes-focused service provision for children and their families. Working optimally, it should offer more comprehensive child and family-oriented safeguards and supports for children and families.

OUTCOMES-FOCUSED POLICY AND PROVISION

The policy context in which the Child and Family Agency is being established is dynamic. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 – 2020*, which sets out the Government's agenda and priorities in relation to children and young people over the next seven years, has been published and builds on the previous National Children's Strategy 'Our Children – Their lives' (2000-2010) in promoting and consolidating a coherent and common approach across relevant policy domains. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* has a whole of Government focus and recognises shared responsibilities for achieving improved outcomes for children and young people.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures has adopted an outcomes approach based on five national outcomes for children and young people. The achievement of each of the outcomes and related cross-cutting transformational goals is an objective which will be delivered over a longer time horizon than the three year period of the Agency's first Corporate Plan. Also, this achievement will require the leadership, resources and the combined efforts of a range of Departments and Agencies of Government, as well as the community and voluntary sector.

The Child and Family Agency has a key role to play in contributing to the achievement of these outcomes and the first Corporate Plan should assist in this process. Over the period of the Corporate Plan, this will involve the Agency, through its activities, creating the conditions to make a significant contribution to some of these outcomes.

THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Performance Framework outlined in Section 2 is designed to guide the format and function of the Corporate Plan.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES

The service improvement objectives listed are designed to prompt and elicit specific development, improvement and change commitments from the Agency for the period of the Corporate Plan. They are not intended to be exhaustive and the Minister and Department welcome the opportunity through dialogue to finalise in the Corporate Plan a complete statement of strategic service improvement objectives. These Agency objectives are contextualised, where relevant, with the outcomes contained in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 - 2020*. The rationale for endeavouring to link these is to illustrate the connection between the work of the Child and Family Agency with that of other forms of policy and provision across Government. While a number of the outcomes squarely relate to the work of the Agency, others are less

directly connected. However, it is intended to offer a useful frame of reference for the work of the Agency and indicate how and where it connects with cognate areas which impact on the lives of children and their families.

The commitments contained within *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 – 2020* for which the Child and Family Agency has been identified as contributing are included in order to ensure associated activities are captured in the Corporate Plan.

The Agency has a lead role in some of these commitments but, in others, is one of a number of other partners. The primary focus will be in respect of the “lead” roles. As a “partner” it will need to reflect on its role particularly where it may require strategic or operational collaboration; in other areas the role as partner relates more to alignment of processes, structures or in some cases merely information exchange.

CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

In addition to service improvement objectives in respect of children and families, it is recognised that there are specific corporate development objectives which are critical to the effective functioning of the Agency and which, particularly at the point of establishment, need to be given attention over the next three years.

For that reason, the Performance Framework sets a number of specific corporate development objectives. These have regard to specific organisational development requirements and corporate “fitness” which derive both from the statutory obligations in the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 and from wider considerations of organisational effectiveness.

The first Corporate Plan should give a clear signal as to the importance of investing in certain aspects of organisational build (workforce development, quality, governance and financial systems) as critical to the Agency’s success, particularly in these first years of its existence.

DEVELOPING THE CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY CORPORATE PLAN IN RESPONSE TO THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The Corporate Plan should outline organisationally and corporately, the work of the Child and Family Agency specifically in relation to its key objectives, outputs and related strategies. It shall have regard to this Performance Framework.

The Plan should contain information in respect of the following key areas for each of the objectives set out below in Section 2 of the Performance Framework.

- (1) **ANNUAL AND THREE YEAR OUTPUTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:** For each of the stated objectives, it should delineate year on year output targets or key milestones; as well as a statement of anticipated achievements by the end of the three year period.
- (2) **ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES:** This should offer detail, at a commensurate level, in relation to the activities and strategies in place, or to be devised or advanced, to achieve the stated outputs.
- (3) **RESOURCES:** Ideally, the plan will outline the specific resources employed and deployed which support the activities, outputs and strategies. It is acknowledged that this may be

challenging in this first iteration of a Corporate Plan for a new Agency. However, major or strategic shifts in resources which it is intended to pursue over the next three years should be clearly signalled. This is an area which should continue to be developed in conjunction with performance reporting and annual reporting over the coming period. In the short term, the Plan should include reference to the current resource profile and should identify areas of priority for the deployment of resources, whether internally generated or in the event that additional resources become available. This should have specific regard to strategies for redeployed resources generated internally from targeted savings in specific areas of service reform or consolidation.

- (4) **SUPPORTING DIRECTORATES:** For each of the stated objectives, identify the units or directorates which exist to serve or deliver the outcome. This can include a broad range of directorates, including both service provision and service support directorates.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS: Where not otherwise specified, the Plan should also reflect, in full, the legal requirements regarding planning, reporting, governance and financial management, the key elements of which are summarised in Appendix 1.

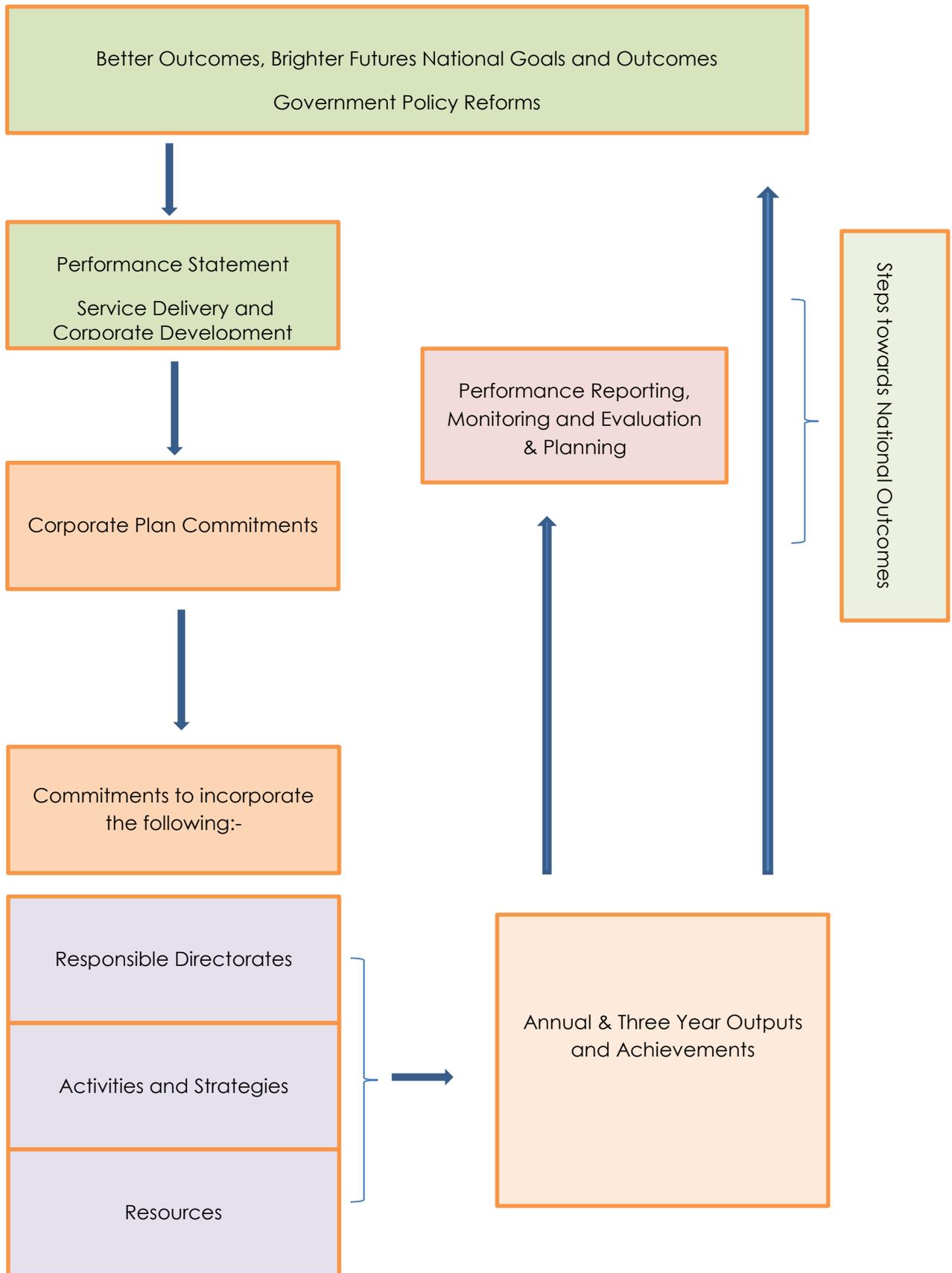
- (5) **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT:** The specific mechanisms and means of measurement relating to reporting, monitoring and evaluation of progress on these objectives and the overall functioning of the Agency should be outlined. This aspect is critical in ensuring an effective and dynamic model upon which the performance and accountability functions can be operationalized and future planning informed.

- (6) **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:** Where not otherwise specified, the Plan should also reflect, in full, the legal requirements regarding planning, reporting, governance and financial management, the key elements of which are summarised in Appendix 1.

It is acknowledged that the establishment of the Agency and its disaggregation from the Health Service Executive has significant implications in very practical ways both at a corporate level as well as local delivery/practice level. The Corporate Plan should reflect on any specific challenges emerging or anticipated which are unique to this phase of development of the organisation.

In any event, the document should provide a clear "dialogue" with the Performance Framework provided so that the finalisation of the document and the approval of the Minister can readily identify the relationship between the matters identified as priority by the Minister in the final Plan.

AGENCY PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK- CORPORATE PLAN MODEL



SECTION 2: CHILD AND FAMILY PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES

1. PARENTS AND FAMILIES ARE WELL-EQUIPPED TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF THEIR CHILDREN

ACTIVE AND HEALTHY

Supporting parents and families is the first step in ensuring children and young people achieve their potential. The clear intent of the Government's initiative to establish the Agency is to drive a shift to prevention and early intervention and to focus on parents and families as the primary agents in promoting the health and welfare of their children.

1. In that context, the Corporate Plan should identify the Agency's plans to organise and develop universal and targeted family support services which are evidence-informed, preventive in nature and should reflect recent research evidence in the Irish context. At a universal level, the plan would be expected to reflect the ways in which the Agency will communicate with all parents and families regarding available advice, resources and services to support them in their parenting role, including matters in relation to positive parenting/discipline.
2. The Plan should indicate how existing family support services (including the Family Resource Centre network) will be integrated and developed to take account of emerging evidence to support parents and families. In turn, the Plan should outline how the commissioning of services under Part 8 of the Child and Family Agency Act will reflect the Agency's strong role and remit in respect of comprehensive family support. The implementation of this approach would be expected to include the appropriate consolidation of grant giving and other service delivery arrangements transferring from the "predecessor" agencies.
3. The Plan should outline how family support is to be a fully integrated element within the National Service Delivery Framework. This should reflect the known requirements for a strong and consistent policy approach underpinning referrals, notifications and transfer of children and their families between providers. Such operational policy relating to family support should provide a clear understanding of how pathways internally (to and from child protection services, education welfare, psychology and domestic violence services) as well as externally (to and from public health nursing, adult mental health, disability services, addiction and other relevant services) will operate. Operational policy development should also consider how to identify and respond to "hidden harm" associated with mental health (including addiction issues), disability, marital breakdown and domestic violence which may be experienced by children within their families.
4. Allied with the development of family support, it is anticipated that there will be a range of implementation arrangements which reflect the important role of other agencies and sectors in providing family support. The Agency should outline planned developments to ensure the integration of planning and provision at local level with other agencies to avoid duplication and maximise the impact of services provided. It is anticipated that the Children's Services Committee structures at local level should be key to this work and the

Plan should provide for a strong leadership role and participation by the Agency via these Committees. A particular focus will likely be required in respect of the role of public health nursing services as they relate to pre and ante-natal support and other services to children and their families in the primary care setting. The Plan should outline an approach to collaboration between the Agency and such services.

5. Regard should also be had to other family and community based intervention programmes in preparation or underway (for example, the Areas Based Childhood Programmes) which may provide insights and lessons for the Agency's mainstream delivery of services.

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ **Ensure planning and coordination of parenting supports at local level through Children's Services Committees. G2 (Tusla, DCYA, DJE, HSE, Local Government)**
- ✓ Work towards a rebalancing of resources to place a greater emphasis on prevention and earlier intervention. G5 (**DCYA, DH**, DJE, DES, Tusla, HSE)
- ✓ The HSE and the Child and Family Agency will explore the provision of an enhanced maternal ante-natal and early childhood development service, building on the review of the Community Nursing Services and related developments in family support provision, incorporating the learning from the "Growing Up in Ireland" study and the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme. G6 (**HSE**, Tusla, DH, DCYA)
- ✓ **Provide and commission both universal and targeted evidence-informed parenting supports and ensure early identification of 'at risk' children and families to strengthen families and reduce the incidences of children coming into, and remaining in, care. G7 (Tusla)**
- ✓ Achieve effective child and family support services through the establishment of the Child and Family Agency;¹ and implementation of the National Service Delivery Framework for child welfare and protection services, with agreed thresholds² and outcome measures. G22 (**DCYA**, Tusla)
- ✓ Continue to improve the quality and timeliness of services for children and young people, ensuring that State-funded programmes and services are outcomes-focused and can clearly demonstrate that they improve outcomes. G25 (DCYA, DH, DES, DSP, DECLG, HSE, Tusla)
- ✓ Adopt an effective interagency approach in relation to cases of child welfare and protection, establishing information and coordinating protocols (including Hidden Harm protocols) between agencies serving children and young people and adult focused addiction, domestic violence and mental health services. G46 (**DCYA**, DH, DES, HSE, Tusla, others as relevant)
- ✓ Tackle the issues of childhood obesity and obesogenic environments through a mix of legislative, policy and public awareness activities and will give active consideration to the

¹ Meitheal - A National Practice Model, CFA 2013; What Works in Family Support, CFA 2013; A Vision for Change: Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, Department of Health and Children (2006)

² Introduction of the Common Assessment Framework 2010

introduction of fiscal measures to support healthy lifestyles in the context of the annual budgetary process. O1.1 (DH, DF, DES, DCYA, HSE, Tusla and others as relevant)

- ✓ *Develop a National Framework for Anti-Bullying, taking a community-wide approach to tackling bullying from childhood through to adulthood. O3.18 (DCYA, All)*
- ✓ *Adopt a multidimensional approach to tackling child poverty, building on the life cycle approach in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, 2007-2016 and informed by the European Commission's Recommendation on 'Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage', as part of the Social Investment Package. O4.1 (DSP, DF, DPER, DH, DES, DCYA, Tusla, HSE)*

2. CHILDREN EXPERIENCE HIGH QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION AND SCHOOL BASED SUPPORTS WHICH EQUIP AND ASSIST THEM TO ACHIEVE THEIR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

ACHIEVING IN ALL AREAS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Early childhood care and education continues to evolve in Ireland. Following a period of substantial investment the focus now is on quality and ensuring the efficacy of services in achieving outcomes for children which are consistent. The Child and Family Agency has a specific role to play in providing an inspection function that supports verification of quality standards being achieved in this important sector. This is against the backdrop of a drive for consistent quality in these services and the important connections with curriculum development and implementation, led by the Department of Education and Skills.

6. The Corporate Plan should articulate in detail the specific imperatives to be led by the Agency including the development and evolution of the existing early years inspection infrastructure in line with legal requirements and national standards. This should map the pathway over the period towards a comprehensive, systematic and consistent inspection regime with nationwide coverage. The organisation and approach to the scheduling, undertaking (including skill mix) and reporting of inspections should be outlined, together with arrangements for ensuring compliance with findings. Collaboration with wider development of quality supports which is under way should also be highlighted.
7. The integration of educational welfare services in the Agency alongside other welfare services for children provides for new opportunities. The Plan should describe how full advantage of these potential synergies is to be achieved. Reform is already underway as initiated in the context of the National Educational Welfare Board. How these initiatives will be continued; as well as how they will be integrated with other services (e.g. in the context of the National Service Delivery Framework), should be clearly delineated.
8. These developments are examples of the requirement for strong working relationships with the education sector. The Plan should reflect how these relationships will be fostered, maintained and further strengthened over the period.

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ Continue to increase investment in high-quality early years care and education for all children, prioritising families on low incomes. Introduce a second free pre-school year within the lifetime of this Framework, once the required quality standards are achieved and subject to resources becoming available. G8 (**DCYA**, DES, Tusla, DSP)
- ✓ Build on existing good practice around clustering of schools to enable better access to educational supports, particularly for children with special educational needs, and explore the potential for further development of cluster arrangements, to encourage greater connections between schools and community and State services, including sharing infrastructure. G50 (**DES**, DH, HSE, Tusla, Local Government)

- ✓ Continue to support accessible and affordable youth and sport activities which encourage young people's overall personal and social development including healthy behaviours and engage young people who might be at risk of early school leaving, or engaging in criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. O1.6 (**DCYA**, DTTS, DH, HSE, Tusla, AGS)
- ✓ Strengthen the connections between pre-school and infant classes at primary level, including through the roll-out of Aistear and Síolta. O2.2 (**DES**, DCYA, Tusla)
- ✓ Implement strategies to improve school engagement and reduce incidences of suspensions and expulsions and early school leaving through engaging parents in schooling, strengthening transitions, promoting different styles of learning to better engage boys, and fostering inclusive school environments where all pupils flourish, irrespective of social and ethnic background or disability. O2.4 (**DES**, DCYA, Tusla)
- ✓ Implement a whole-school approach to health and well-being to bring about a cultural focus on well-being as a basis for effective learning, strengthening the collaboration between the education, health, youth and social sectors to provide multidisciplinary supports when problems arise. O2.9 (DES, **DH**, DCYA, HSE, Tusla)
- ✓ Build on the cross-cutting arrangements in place between the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to enhance collaboration across the three sectors on children's disability issues. O2.18 (**DH**, DES, NCSE, DCYA and HSE)

3. PARENTS, FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES ARE WELL-EQUIPPED TO KEEP THEIR CHILDREN PROTECTED FROM HARM

SAFE AND PROTECTED FROM HARM

The Agency has a central role in supporting families, communities and professionals in keeping children safe. This is achieved primarily through its response to reports of concerns regarding children's welfare and safety. Over the period, the Agency should develop and introduce a comprehensive and integrated approach to its safeguarding and child protection work with particular respect to the upcoming child protection legislation.

9. The Plan should outline proposed plans to develop a comprehensive and accessible information, advice and guidance resource for parents, service providers and government departments in respect of minimum child protection safety standards in the context of *Children First National Guidance* and any related statutory requirements.
10. The Plan should demonstrate how the Agency will be a responsive partner to parents; families; communities; and professionals when they report harm and arrangements for the receipt of reports need to reflect the legitimate needs and expectations of reporters.
11. The Plan should also reflect the Agency's important role in supporting the work of the Interdepartmental Group in promoting the effective implementation of *Children First* including informing the IDG regarding best practice and trends in reporting.

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ Training and upskilling of professionals across formal and non-formal educational settings to be in a position to identify potential child welfare and mental health issues and to provide preventative and early intervention support. G11 (**DCYA**, DH, DES, Tusla, HSE)
- ✓ Implement the *Children First* national guidance in full, including placing elements on a statutory footing, implementing sectoral plans, associated training and ensuring vetting requirements are met. O3.6 (**DCYA**, All)
- ✓ All national public awareness strategies on safety, and accident and injury prevention, including road, water and farm safety, will incorporate and target children and young people. O3.23 (**DCYA**, All as relevant)

4. CHILDREN WHO NEED PROTECTION FROM INTENTIONAL OR UNINTENTIONAL HARM GET A TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THEIR NEEDS

SAFE AND PROTECTED FROM HARM

The Agency's responsibilities to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection are specified in the Child Care Act 1991. These are onerous responsibilities which require a sophisticated approach including workforce support and development. Evidence based systems should be in place for the intake and management of referrals. These systems should be implemented consistently but should also reflect the appropriate level of discretion and accountability that needs to be accorded professional practice. Children and families should be consulted and informed about child protection assessment. Professionals should work to balance interventions between affording parents' supports and opportunities to care appropriately for their children and sufficiently early intervention to protect children. Agreement on the implementation of Government responses to historic enquiries, in particular the Ryan Report Implementation Plan, should be incorporated where relevant.

12. The Plan should outline the roll-out of the Agency's single National Service Delivery Framework and how it will be supported by national standardised methodology for the management and prioritisation of referral or child welfare and protection. This should reflect the pressures deriving from substantial increases in referrals and any anticipated increase arising from the implementation of statutory mandatory reporting.
13. The Agency's activities for the period will need to reflect the continuum of options which are available as a response to concerns of harm – this will include many measures short of court ordered proceedings to remove a child and will also reflect the range of options in which children and their families may best be directed towards appropriate specialist services which may reflect additional needs or needs which underlie child welfare and protection concerns. The Plan should reflect how current activities are monitored as well as any service reviews, operational policy development or process reviews planned over the period.
14. The interaction of the Agency with the Courts system is a distinct feature of its service delivery arrangements. Improved engagement with quality and consistency of social work court practice should be a focus over the period and should be reflected in the Plan, as should measures to minimise costs associated with legal overheads.
15. In addition to protection services, the Agency's plan should reflect commitments aimed at ensuring victims of sexual abuse and child perpetrators have access to the requisite services in a consistent manner in conjunction with other State and non-State service providers.

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ Profile key risk factors for poor outcomes for children and young people and develop practice tools to assist professionals in identifying and – working with families – mitigating these risks. G12 (**DCYA**, DES, DH, Tusla, HSE)
- ✓ Achieve effective child and family support services through the establishment of the Child and Family Agency; and implementation of the National Service Delivery Framework for child welfare and protection services, with agreed thresholds and outcome measures. G22 (**DCYA**, Tusla)
- ✓ **Work towards a common assessment approach within all agencies working with children and young people and ensure that, where necessary, assessment and decision making regarding children coming into care are undertaken in a timely and comprehensive manner. G 24 (Tusla, HSE, DES, DCYA, DH)**
- ✓ Continue to improve the quality and timeliness of services for children and young people, ensuring that State-funded programmes and services are outcomes-focused and can clearly demonstrate that they improve outcomes. G25 (DCYA, DH, DES, DSP, DECLG, HSE, Tusla)
- ✓ Support independent inspection and public reporting by bodies such as HIQA and Tusla, ensuring compliance with National Standards in children's services, such as child protection, foster care, residential care, disability, detention schools and pre-schools. G28 (DCYA, Tusla, DH, HSE, HIQA)
- ✓ Have in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure the identification of all child victims of trafficking. Such mechanisms involve competent statutory and non-statutory agencies/bodies, health practitioners and social workers. O3.15 (**DJE**, DH, DCYA, AGS, HSE, Tusla)
- ✓ Provide an integrated and comprehensive service response to children under 18 presenting as out of home (as for all children in care) in keeping with the findings and recommendations of the Review of the Implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy. O3.16 (**DCYA**, DH, DECLG, DES, DSP, DJE, HSE, Tusla, AGS)
- ✓ Promote the child protection and welfare of all children in the asylum system. O4.8 (**DJE**, DCYA, Tusla)

5. CHILDREN WHO ARE IN ALTERNATIVE CARE ARE WELL-SUPPORTED TO ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL IN TERMS OF HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL AND WELL-BEING OUTCOMES IN WAYS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A POSITIVE LIFE TRAJECTORY

ACTIVE AND HEALTHY

ACHIEVING IN ALL AREAS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

SAFE AND PROTECTED FROM HARM

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND OPPORTUNITY

CONNECTED RESPECTED AND CONTRIBUTING

The Child and Family Agency provides alternative care to over 6,000 children, over 90% of whom receive their care in a family setting. To enable these children achieve the best possible outcome, the Agency should ensure they have appropriate, stable placements in which they can thrive. Research evidence points to educational achievement, good mental health and assistance with the transition as significant factors for children with care experience in living fulfilling lives. Children requiring adoption should have well-matched placements with persons who have been appropriately counselled and assessed. Young people leaving care should have assistance in gaining access to supports commensurate with their needs.

16. Over the period, the Agency should focus on placing children with carers who can sustain them through difficulties and having in place a system which promotes the safety of every child, in all care settings. This will need enhanced recruitment, induction and support of carers and residential care staff as well as early identification and intervention with children whose placement is unstable. This will require on-going assessment of the development and use of a range of placement types. The Plan should reflect how current and planned activities will support these requirements.
17. The educational stability, health status and achievements of children in care should be an integral part of their experience of care provided by the Agency. The Plan should demonstrate how the Agency's activities will provide that focus on supporting best possible health (including health screening and general health promotion) and educational outcomes for these children.
18. The Agency needs to continue to develop the assessment for aftercare planning in line with legislative provision and to provide assistance in keeping with identified needs. This should be reflected in the Plan.
19. The Agency also has a particular role to play in providing for permanent alternative care in the form of adoption for a small number of children and families. Over the period, the Agency should seek to bring about greater consistency and a streamlining of services which support the implementation of the Adoption Act 2010 across all areas of the Agency's activities and anticipate changes which might emerge should the Children's Referendum and related adoption legislation be advanced over the period.

20. The historical aspects of adoption also need recognition in the Plan. Specific consideration needs to be given to the safeguarding of adoption records as more records are transferred to the Agency for safekeeping. The Plan should indicate how and to what degree record management and nationally consistent approaches to access will be developed in this period in order to meet information and tracing needs of adoptees and their birth and adoptive parents within the current legal system.

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ Continue to improve the quality and timeliness of services for children and young people, ensuring that State-funded programmes and services are outcomes-focused and can clearly demonstrate that they improve outcomes. G25 (DCYA, DH, DES, DSP, DECLG, HSE, Tusla)
- ✓ Support independent inspection and public reporting by bodies such as HIQA and Tusla, ensuring compliance with National Standards in children's services, such as child protection, foster care, residential care, disability, detention schools and pre-schools. G28 (DCYA, Tusla, DH, HSE, HIQA)
- ✓ Ensure all young people leaving care, detention or residential disability settings are adequately prepared and supported to negotiate the system and transition to stable independent living, further education, training or employment through the development and implementation of a quality aftercare plan and the development of protocols in relation to accessing housing, education and training. G37 (**DCYA**, Tusla, DH, HSE, DECLG)
- ✓ Tackle the issues of childhood obesity and obesogenic environments through a mix of legislative, policy and public awareness activities and will give active consideration to the introduction of fiscal measures to support healthy lifestyles in the context of annual budgetary process. O1.1 (**DH**, DF, DES, DCYA, HSE, Tusla and others as relevant)
- ✓ Continue to support accessible and affordable youth and sport activities which encourage young people's overall personal and social development including healthy behaviours and engage young people who might be at risk of early school leaving, or engaging in criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. O1.6 (**DCYA**, DTTS, DH, HSE, Tusla, AGS)
- ✓ Continue to provide timely access to educational and therapeutic supports for children who are identified as having special needs O.2.20 (**HSE**, Tusla, DH, DES and DCYA)
- ✓ **Prioritise access to health, education and therapeutic services for children in care. O3.5 (Tusla, HSE, DCYA, DH, DES)**
- ✓ Reduce discrimination and intolerance of all types experienced by marginalised groups (i.e. Travellers, Roma, migrants and asylum-seekers; children and young people with disabilities; those in care and detention; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people; and those from ethnic or religious minorities). O5.6 (**DJE**, DES, DH, DSP, DCYA, HSE, Tusla, Local Government and others as relevant)
- ✓ Implement the principles underpinning the provisions of the Thirty-first Amendment to the Constitution on Children through legislative reform, support for judicial studies and the training and development of staff. O5.11 (**DCYA**, DJE, Tusla)

6. CHILDREN AND PARENTS AND OTHER ADULTS WHO NEED SUPPORTS TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE FAMILY FUNCTIONING GET THEM

ACTIVE AND HEALTHY

SAFE AND PROTECTED FROM HARM

The Agency has been given an important resource in the assignment of key functions relating to psychology services and Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGV) Services. These services are integrally connected with child and family welfare and well-being, though the remit extends to instances where there are adult victims also. The challenge is to ensure that these services operate in an integrated way to allow for holistic responses to the needs of children and their families.

21. The Plan should outline activities on the part of the Child and Family Agency to develop and deliver the psychology service and the domestic, sexual and gender based violence service, in conjunction with the HSE, in a strategic manner. This should reflect the Agency's commitments arising from related National Strategies including, inter alia, participation in the COSC led National Strategy on DSGV.
22. The Plan should articulate what linkages will be established and how and to what degree these services will relate to the National Service Delivery Framework. This should reflect how consistency will be achieved in operational policy approaches underpinning access, referrals, notifications to these services and transfer of children and their families between providers.
23. The Plan should identify requisite operational policy development to ensure clear pathways internally (to and from child protection services, education welfare, psychology and domestic violence services) as well as externally (to and from public health nursing, adult mental health, disability services, addiction and other relevant services). Operational policy development should also consider how to identify and respond to "hidden harm" associated with domestic violence which may be experienced by children within their families.
24. Allied with the development of these services should be a range of implementation arrangements which reflect the important role of other agencies and sectors in providing requisite support. The developments identified in the Plan should demonstrate how the integration of planning and provision at local level with other agencies will be achieved to avoid duplication and maximise the impact of services provided.

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ **Provide and commission both universal and targeted evidence-informed parenting**

supports and ensure early identification of 'at risk' children and families to strengthen families and reduce the incidences of children coming into, and remaining in, care. G7 (Tusla)

- ✓ *Adopt an effective interagency approach in relation to cases of child welfare and protection, establishing information and coordinating protocols (including Hidden Harm protocols) between agencies serving children and young people and adult focused addiction, domestic violence and mental health services. G46 (DCYA, DH, DES, HSE, Tusla, others as relevant)*
- ✓ *Combine mental health promotion programmes with interventions that address broader determinants and social problems as part of a multi-agency approach, particularly in areas with high levels of socio-economic deprivation and fragmentation. O1.10 (DH, HSE, NOSP, DCYA, Tusla, DES and others as relevant)*
- ✓ *Provision of effective and timely protection and support services, including therapeutic services for victims of abuse and crime. O3.10 (DCYA, DJE, DH, HSE, Tusla)*
- ✓ **Ensure perpetrators of abuse, including those under 18, receive effective therapeutic support with the aim of reducing recidivism. O3.11 (Tusla, HSE, Probation Service, DCYA, DH, DJE)**

SECTION 2: CHILD AND FAMILY PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

1. THE AGENCY IS RECOGNISED AS AN ORGANISATION THAT VALUES OPEN COMMUNICATIONS, BOTH IN TERMS OF SEEKING AND OBTAINING THE VIEWS OF ITS KEY SERVICE USERS AS WELL AS IN ITS PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS GENERALLY

CONNECTED RESPECTED AND CONTRIBUTING

Part of the rationale in establishing the Agency has been to promote a more focussed and consistent response to the needs of children and their families and to achieve greater transparency regarding the provision of these services. The Agency should communicate clearly to its clients and the general public and be transparent in its activities. As a new organisation the Agency has both the opportunity and a responsibility to take a strategic approach to its communications.

This must also be guided by the requirements of section 9 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, relating to the views of children and young people. Listening and involving children and young people is a transformational goal of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and should continue to be fully reflected in the organisation's culture and systems.

25. The Plan should identify communication priorities in regard to key stakeholders including children and young people, parents, the Minister and the Department, other public bodies, service providers, the public, the Oireachtas and the media. Amongst the goals should be promoting understanding of the Agency's actions and remit and efficiently relaying key information to important stakeholders.
26. In planning for services and associated delivery, proactive engagement with parents and families, children and service users should be an embedded part of processes. This will enable the Agency to listen and reflect on the views of service users and adapt accordingly. In particular, the arrangements for ascertaining the views of children and young people should be set out.
27. As a funder and commissioner of services the Agency should also demonstrate in the Plan how it will ensure that this policy approach, and the associated standards, is achieved by all commissioned service providers.

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ Consult with children and young people on policies and issues that affect their lives. G14 (DCYA, All)
- ✓ Develop and implement a National Policy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making to strengthen efforts to ensure children and young people are supported to express their views in all matters affecting them and to have those views given due weight, including those of 'seldom heard' children³. G15 (DCYA, All)
- ✓ Strengthen participation in decision-making for health and well-being at community level. G16 (HSE, Tusla, Local Government and others as relevant)
- ✓ **Facilitate children and young people in care to have meaningful participation in their care planning and decision-making, including through training and support of the professionals. G19 (Tusla, DCYA)**
- ✓ Ensure the ethos, policies and practices of Government institutions and State-funded services (including schools) promote equal treatment and interculturalism, and have measures to protect against and remedy all forms of discrimination. O5.7 (DJE, All)
- ✓ Ensure that Ireland's laws, policies and practice are compliant with the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols that Ireland has ratified. O5.8 (DCYA, OCO, All)
- ✓ Implement the principles underpinning the provisions of the Thirty-first Amendment to the Constitution on Children through legislative reform, support for judicial studies and the training and development of staff. O5.11 (DCYA, DJE, Tusla)

³ Concluding Observations by the UN in relation to Ireland's second periodic report on the UNCRC (2006)

2. AGENCY CHANGE AND REFORM PLANS ARE SUPPORTED THROUGH ACTIVE PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

The new Child and Family Agency incorporates some 4000 staff from differing backgrounds, professions and cultures and is seeking to draw all of those together so that a strong sense of corporate identity and purpose emerges in the short to medium term. In order to meet this challenging identity related goal, the Agency should seek to become recognised as an employer that values and effectively manages its staff.

28. The Agency has an immediate priority imperative to continue to develop the organisational culture for its staff. This should be demonstrated by the approach it defines for selection and recruitment of staff and the way it inducts all its employees. The Plan should outline priorities and key milestones to mark the development of these aspects of HR over the period.
29. The Agency should take a strategic approach to managing this considerable resource. It should equip its staff to adapt to, lead and maximise the potential offered by change. The Plan should demonstrate how strategic workforce development will be achieved over the period. This should reflect how training needs analysis; planned opportunities for training and on-going professional development and supervision will be developed and managed over the period.
30. As one of the largest public sector employers the Agency must also comply with and utilise the public sector reform programme to provide for the best possible results from resource deployment and investment in human capital. The Agency should demonstrate in its Plan its capacity to meet the Government's public sector reform and at the same time create the conditions for further jointly sponsored reform with employees and their representatives.
31. The Plan should address the development of management and leadership capability within the organisation so as to enhance performance and promote a range of succession possibilities for different management levels.

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ Develop quality standards and training for all professionals working directly with children and young people, ensuring a highly trained, supported and professionally aligned workforce. G29 (DCYA, DH, DES, HSE, Tusla)
- ✓ Support the development of interdisciplinary and interprofessional training programmes which encourage leadership and collaboration for professionals working with children and young people across the range of service delivery. G38 (**DCYA**, Tusla, DH, HSE, DES, DJE)
- ✓ Develop and implement a multidisciplinary workforce development plan on a phased basis for all professionals working with children and families, including staff within Tusla, The Child and Family Agency and other key professionals. G39 (**DCYA**, Tusla, HSE, DES, DJE)
- ✓ **Collaborate with universities to ensure social work graduates are well equipped to enter practice, having had the experience of good quality undergraduate student placements.** G40 (Tusla)

- ✓ *Promote the provision of customer service training for key front-line staff in all public bodies. G44 (DPER, All)*
- ✓ *Improve legislation, policy and technological support for data use and sharing, including open data for citizens. G60 (DPER, All)*
- ✓ *Implement the principles underpinning the provisions of the Thirty-first Amendment to the Constitution on Children through legislative reform, support for judicial studies and the training and development of staff. O5.11 (DCYA, DJE, Tusla)*

3. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS ARE DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED WHICH ENSURE REQUIRED LEVELS OF CONTROL, WHICH SUPPORT MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING AND WHICH MEET STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

The Child and Family Agency has responsibility for a budget in excess of €600m and a service delivery remit which touches on the lives of very many families in the State.

32. Under its founding Statute* the Agency must, in the performance of its functions, demonstrate high standards of performance, transparency and accountability and use the resources available to it in the most beneficial, effective and efficient manner. The Plan should include reference to the statutory requirements to set down standards of integrity and conduct to be maintained by the Agency in a code of conduct; it must also reflect the requirements to devise a code of governance.
33. The Plan should outline the actions required to ensure the steady development and early implementation of financial and audit systems (including internal audit and audit committee arrangements) that are fit for purpose and provide requisite control, accountability, reporting and management information requirements so as to inform the decision making processes in resource allocation, subject to budget provision, planning, the reporting on key objectives and ultimately the delivery of value for money.
34. The Plan should outline existing and planned developments to ensure appropriate qualitative and quantitative control processes at all levels of the Agency so that funding is spent in a beneficial, effective and efficient manner; that all contracted, commissioned and grant supported services are funded in accordance with best practice arrangements; and that expenditure on directly provided services is managed and controlled in line with public financial procedures.
35. The Plan should address Value for Money requirements as set out in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Value for Money Code. This should include a programme of review of value for money in key spending areas, with initial priorities identified in areas such as legal expenditures and accommodation, building upon the arrangements in place in the three predecessor agencies.
36. The Plan should also outline the development and deployment of risk management mechanisms. These systems should reflect, inter alia, serious incident management arrangements and a strong corporate learning capability arising from adverse events, complaints, reviews or relevant reports (including those of the Ombudsman for Children). This should also consider current capability and controls in respect of record management, data protection and ICT specifically and identify any remedial or development actions required over the course of the Plan.
37. The development of the management information, reporting and evaluation are all critical to effective management decision-making and risk management. This should also reflect the need to develop a relevant and appropriate series of Performance Indicators, in conjunction with the DCYA. These reporting arrangements should also have regard to the

need to ensure that high standards sought in all areas of the Agency's responsibility are transparent and accountable and readily available for communications.

38. The Plan should identify how performance reporting mechanisms will be developed and enhanced over the period to meet all of these requirements. (See Corporate Development Objective – Ensuring Quality Services No. 40.)
39. Over the period, the Plan should demonstrate active planning arrangements to support the migration of the Agency from an organisation in start-up (with disparate elements) to an integrated, focussed and consolidated entity.

* Required under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ Review the scope of functions of Tusla, The Child and Family Agency, having regard to the recommendations of the Report of the Taskforce on the Child and Family Support Agency and experience from the Agency's initial operations. G23 (**DCYA**, DH, Tusla, HSE)
- ✓ Strengthen the performance culture within the public service through continuous improvement of performance management systems and the management of under-performance. G43 (**DPER**, All)
- ✓ Ensure resource allocation is based on current evidence of need and directed towards services and programmes that have evidence of effectiveness in improving outcomes. G66 (DCYA, Tusla)
- ✓ Use the intelligence from Children's Services Committees in relation to local need and priorities to inform the allocation of national and local funding streams. G68 (**DCYA**, DECLG, DH, Tusla, HSE, AGS, Local Government)
- ✓ **Introduce the commissioning of services by Tusla, The Child and Family Agency, moving away from a grants system to outcome-based contracts, and offer support to build capacity within the children and youth sector to respond to the new approach effectively. G69 (Tusla, DCYA)**

4. A STRATEGIC APPROACH SUPPORTS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF HIGH STANDARDS ACROSS ALL SERVICES AND SUPPORTS CONSISTENCY OF SERVICE DELIVERY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES.

The Agency, in its evolution from a start-up organisation must map the shift to a position of consistent quality driven services, having regard to available resources. Ensuring quality services is a transformational goal of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and needs to be fully reflected in the organisations culture and systems.

40. The Plan should describe how a corporate approach to strategic quality assurance will be developed. This should reflect the need for a continuous improvement process based on lessons learned for all directly delivered services; as well as provide for appropriate feedback to policy, planning and future workforce development at a strategic level. The impetus provided by external inspection processes including HIQA, OCO, Child Death Review and other review mechanisms and their relationship with the Quality Assurance Framework should be clearly described. The management of each of these discrete relationships should also be reflected.
41. Understanding system performance is critical to assessing quality and consistency within the system. The development of integrated data and information systems is a clear need for the new Agency. The Plan should identify clear, realisable goals for the roll-out of the National Child Care Information System as a key priority.
42. The Plan should also indicate, over the period, how this initiative will be extended to a fuller strategic review of data information and programme monitoring systems for both internal and external audiences. This might include appropriate research, data collection or like initiatives to support operational policy development; the identification of service needs / gaps; or national policy or legislative change.
43. At a minimum, the Plan should identify a number of specific quality initiatives in the shorter term to drive consistency. These should focus on policy specific or area specific weaknesses identified in existing reports, inspection processes or management data.

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ Develop quality standards and training for all professionals working directly with children and young people, ensuring a highly trained, supported and professionally aligned workforce. G29 (DCYA, DH, DES, HSE, Tusla)
- ✓ Address information-sharing issues across sectors and strengthen the integration of data systems, including, where appropriate, through utilisation of the Public Sector Identifier for children to support greater use of data to inform policy, planning and service development. G54 (**DPER**, DCYA, DH, DES, DSP, HSE, Tusla)
- ✓ Develop information protocols to assist the sharing of information, where appropriate, in respect of particular children who are vulnerable and at risk. G55 (**DCYA**, DES, DH, ODPC, DJE, AGS, Tusla)
- ✓ Implement the National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives, 2011-2016. G58

(DCYA, others as relevant)

- ✓ *Extend Ireland Stat, the citizen-focused public service performance information website, to all Government departments. G59 (DPER, All)*
- ✓ *Improve legislation, policy and technological support for data use and sharing, including open data for citizens. G60 (DPER, All)*

5. THE AGENCY IS A RESPONSIVE PARTNER, COLLABORATOR AND LEADER IN CROSS-SECTORAL AND INTERAGENCY ACTIVITIES

The Agency should continue to develop strong and positive working relationships with both statutory and non-statutory service providers so as to ensure seamless access to the required services for children and families, regardless of required service delivery and response ownership. Cross-Government and Interagency collaboration and co-ordination is a transformational goal of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* and needs to be fully reflected in the organisation's culture and systems.

44. The Plan should reflect how the Agency will develop a strategic approach to building interagency working with key service delivery partners as part of achieving better outcomes for children and their families. This will include statutory and non-statutory partners within the wider health and social care family, the school sector, youth justice and youth work in particular.
45. Such strategic consideration should have regard to the Agency's role in promoting and nurturing interagency cooperation through the Children's Services Committees.
46. In continuing the development and formal strengthening of interagency working models the Plan should have regard to the wider reform agenda – including innovative service design and delivery arising through Government-led reform initiatives or specific programmes such as the Area Based Poverty Programme.

RELEVANT BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES COMMITMENTS:

Note: Government department / agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**.

- ✓ Deliver better and more cost-effective public services through greater use of alternative or innovative service delivery models. G32 (**DPER**, All)
- ✓ Support the development of interdisciplinary and interprofessional training programmes which encourage leadership and collaboration for professionals working with children and young people across the range of service delivery. G38 (**DCYA**, Tusla, DH, HSE, DES, DJE)
- ✓ Implement the Senior Public Service Leadership Development Strategy, 2013-2015 within the civil service and extend these initiatives to senior levels of the wider public service, paying particular attention to the opportunities and challenges associated with cross-Government working. G42 (**DPER**, All)
- ✓ The roll-out nationally of Children's Services Committees (CSCs) in a coordinated fashion, connecting them with Local Government and Tusla, The Child and Family Agency. G47 (**DCYA**, Tusla, LCDCs, Local Government)
- ✓ Put in place an agreed resourcing framework for Children's Services Committees, drawing on existing financial support from Tusla, Local Government and DCYA. G48 (**DCYA**, Tusla, Local Government)
- ✓ Establish integrated services or 'hubs' for children and young people at community level (examples include Primary Care Clinics, Family Support/Resource Centres and Jigsaw Youth Mental Health Centres) and, where appropriate, bring health and therapeutic services into schools. G49 (**DH**, DCYA, HSE, Tusla, Local Government)
- ✓ Streamline planning and decision-making structures at local level, including Children's Services Committees, to be consistent with the Government's public sector reforms, and

specifically the alignment of local Government and Local Community Development Committees. G52 (**DCYA**, Tusla, Local Government, DECLG)



APPENDIX 1: SYNOPSIS OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE FUNCTIONS AS OUTLINED IN THE CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY ACT 2013

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

Section 41 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 states that the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs:

- 1) Shall develop a Performance Framework to provide the Agency with policy guidance, direction and prioritisation parameters for the preparation of its Corporate Plan.
- 2) Shall provide the Performance Framework to the Board within 6 months of the establishment of the Agency and thereafter three months before the end of the period to which the current Corporate Plan relates in line with the requirements of the Agency to prepare a Corporate Plan for each three year period.
- 3) May consult the Minister for Health or the Minister for Education and Skills before developing a Performance Framework which includes matters which relate to the functions of those Ministers.

The purpose of this Framework is to set out policy guidance, direction and prioritisation parameters for the preparation of the Child and Family Agency's Corporate Plan, which will in turn include the Agency's key objectives, outputs and related strategies. This Performance Framework will outline the range of areas and key performance indicators to be addressed in the Corporate Plan over a three-year period. This will also be further detailed along with clear resource allocations in the issuing of the annual Performance Statement.

This Performance Framework is not merely a document prepared on a triennial basis, rather, it should also be taken to comprehend the range of reporting, accountability and performance mechanisms for the Agency as set out in the Act. Each of these functions is viewed as integral to the composition of the Performance Framework and as an idiom in establishing a 'performance dialogue' between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Child and Family Agency. While setting out the Performance Framework at the establishment phase of the Child and Family Agency is predicated on the core functions and comprehends the ambit of the Agency, it also aims to recognise the ambition of the Agency as it establishes and develops.

AGENCY CORPORATE PLAN

Section 42 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 states that the Agency shall prepare and adopt a Corporate Plan to be submitted to the Minister for approval, with or without amendment, for each ensuing three year period.

This section outlines that the Corporate Plan shall—

- a) include the Agency's key objectives, outputs and related strategies,
- b) except in the case of the first such plan, include a review and evaluation of the work of the Agency in the performance of its statutory functions in the previous three years
- c) be prepared in a form and manner in accordance with any directions issued from time to time by the Minister
- d) be prepared and submitted to the Minister no later than—

- (i) in respect of the first corporate plan, three months after the receipt of the Performance Framework, developed in accordance with section 41,
 - (ii) in respect of each subsequent corporate plan, three months from the receipt of the relevant Performance Framework, and
- e) accord with the policies and objectives of the Minister and the Government as they relate to the functions of the Agency.

The preparation of the Agency's Corporate Plan will have regard to this Performance Framework. The Corporate Plan will be submitted to the Minister for consideration, who can approve, issue directions for amendments or refuse the submitted Plan. This Plan can, at any time, be amended by the Minister, or by the Agency subject to the prior approval of the Minister. The Child and Family Agency Corporate Plan will be laid before each House of the Oireachtas and subsequently published on the internet or via such other manner as specified by the Minister.

PERFORMANCE STATEMENT

The Performance Statement is issued annually by the Minister to the Board as soon as practicable following the publication of the annual budget. This Performance Statement has regard to the overall Performance Framework and will include the determination of expenditure and expenditure limits for the Agency. This determination of expenditure may however be amended by the Minister and the Agency notified of same.

BUSINESS PLAN

Subsequent to the issuing of the Performance Statement, the Child and Family Agency will, within 30 days, prepare a Business Plan for the year. Section 46 of the Act states that the Business Plan shall:

- be prepared in accordance with the Performance Statement developed by the Minister under section 44,
- outline the Agency's proposed activities for the period to which the business plan relates and the performance targets relating to those activities,
- detail the proposed allocation of the total resources (both financial and human) of the Agency for the period to which the plan relates,
- include a statement of estimated income and expenditure relating to the plan that is consistent with the determination of the expenditure notified pursuant to section 45 in respect of the period to which the plan relates,
- contain any other information specified by the Minister, and
- accord with the policies and objectives of the Minister and the Government as they relate to the functions of the Agency.

In preparing the business plan, the Agency shall have regard to the Performance Statement developed by the Minister under section 44, any Corporate Plan in operation at that time approved under section 42 and any direction by the Minister given under section 47. The Minister may, however, direct the Agency to amend the plan if it is viewed as deficient or non-compliant.

ANNUAL REPORT

Section 13 of the Act details requirements in relation to the preparation and adoption of the Agency's annual report no later than May 31st in each year. This annual report will relate to the performance of the Agency's functions during the immediately preceding calendar year and shall include:

- a statement of the activities undertaken by the Agency,
- a report in relation to the implementation of the Agency's Corporate Plan approved under section 42,
- a report in relation to the implementation of the Agency's business plan submitted to the Minister under section 46,
- an indication of the Agency's arrangements for implementing the code of governance prepared in accordance with section 50,
- particulars in relation to financial statements,
- other particulars that the Agency considers appropriate or as the Minister after consulting with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education and Skills may require, and
- the report required by section 70.

The annual report will, as referenced above and as outlined in section 70 (1), (2) & (3) of the Act, also include a report on complaints and reviews. The Child and Family Agency will, within 21 days of adopting the annual report, submit same to the Minister. The Minister will, within the same specified timeframe, lay the annual report before each House of the Oireachtas and subsequently publish on the internet or via such other manner as specified by the Minister.

Coterminous with the time-line specified for the preparation and adoption of the annual report, the Agency will, in its year of establishment, and as per section 80 of the Act, prepare a final annual report for each of the dissolved bodies and shall submit that report to the Minister not later than six months after the establishment day.

ADDITIONAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS

POWER OF MINISTER TO ISSUE GUIDELINES TO AGENCY

Aside from the stated reporting requirements under the Performance Framework under section 41 or via the Performance Statement under section 44, the Minister may, at any time, issue additional guidelines in writing to the Agency. These guidelines may relate to—

- additional policy guidance or changes in policy, and
- changes in prioritisation of business plan commitments.

PERMISSION OF MINISTER NEEDED FOR MAJOR CAPITAL SPENDING

Section 49 of the Act specifies that the Agency shall not commit to capital spending above a threshold specified by the Minister without the prior approval of the Minister.

CODE OF GOVERNANCE

Section 50 of the Act states that the Agency shall, as soon as practicable after it is established, prepare and submit a code of governance to the Minister for approval. This code will include an outline of—

- the guiding principles applicable to the Agency as a public body having regard to its functions under section 8,
- the structure of the Agency, including the roles and responsibilities of the Board and the chief executive officer,
- the processes and guidelines to be followed to ensure compliance with the reporting requirements imposed on the Agency by or under this Act,
- the Agency's internal controls, including its procedures relating to internal audits, risk management, public procurement and financial reporting, and
- the nature and quality of service that persons being provided with or seeking services provided by the Agency in accordance with its functions can expect.

The initial code of governance will have regard to the Performance Framework. It will also include details relating to the integration of the governance systems deriving from a transfer of functions from the Health Service Executive and dissolved bodies. The code of governance will be reviewed periodically by the Agency and on occasions where requested by the Minister.

ACCOUNTS OF AGENCY

Section 51 of the Act specifies the accountancy requirements of the Agency in accordance with accounting standards and with regard to:

- all income and expenditure of the Agency,
- the source of the income and the subject matter of the expenditure, and
- the property, assets and liabilities of the Agency.

Annual financial statements will be prepared according to accounting standards as specified by the Minister. The accounts of the Agency, as prepared by the Agency and approved by the Board, will be submitted for audit to the Comptroller and Auditor General. Subsequent to this, the Comptroller and Auditor General will prepare a report on the accounts. These will be presented to the Minister who, within two months after their receipt, will lay copies of same before each House of the Oireachtas.

APPENDIX 2 – SERVICE IMPROVEMENT (SI) AND CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT (CD) OBJECTIVES AS THEY RELATE TO THE NATIONAL OUTCOMES AND GOALS FROM BETTER OUTCOMES, BRIGHTER FUTURES: THE NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2014 - 2020

<p>Active and healthy</p> <p>The aims for all children and young people are that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are physically healthy and make positive health choices - Have good mental health - Have a positive and respectful approach to relationships and sexual health - Are enjoying play, recreation, sports, arts, culture and nature 	<p>SI Objective 1 Parents and Families are Well-Equipped to Support and Promote the Health and Well-being of their Children</p> <p>SI Objective 5 Children who are in Alternative Care are Well-Supported to Achieve Their Potential in Terms of Health, Educational and Well-Being Outcomes in Ways that Support a Positive Life Trajectory</p> <p>SI Objective 6 Children and Parents and Other Adults who Need Supports to Ensure Effective Family Functioning Get Them</p> <p>CD Objective 4 A Strategic Approach to Quality Supports and Enhances Standards Across All Services and Supports Consistency of Service Delivery and the Experience of Children, Young People and Their Families</p>
<p>Achieving full potential in learning and development</p> <p>The aims for all children and young people are that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are learning and developing from birth - Have social and emotional wellbeing - Are engaged in learning - Are achieving in education 	<p>SI Objective 2 Children Experience High Quality Early Education and School Based Supports which equip and Assist them to achieve their Learning Potential</p> <p>SI Objective 5 Children who are in Alternative Care are Well-Supported to Achieve Their Potential in Terms of Health, Educational and Well-Being Outcomes in Ways that Support a Positive Life Trajectory</p> <p>CD Objective 4 A Strategic Approach to Quality Supports and Enhances Standards Across All Services and Supports Consistency of Service Delivery and the Experience of Children, Young People and Their Families</p>
<p>Safe and protected from harm</p> <p>The aims for all children and young people are that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have a secure, stable and caring home environment - Are safe from abuse, neglect and 	<p>SI Objective 3 Parents, Families and Communities are Well-Equipped to Keep Their Children Protected From Harm of Abuse</p> <p>SI Objective 4 Children Who Need Protection from Intentional or Unintentional Harm Get a Timely and Appropriate Response to Their</p>

<p>exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are protected from bullying and discrimination - Are safe from crime and anti-social behaviour 	<p>Needs</p> <p>SI Objective 5 Children who are in Alternative Care are Well-Supported to Achieve Their Potential in Terms of Health, Educational and Well-Being Outcomes in Ways that Support a Positive Life Trajectory</p> <p>SI Objective 6 Children and Parents and Other Adults who Need Supports to Ensure Effective Family Functioning Get Them</p> <p>CD Objective 4 A Strategic Approach to Quality Supports and Enhances Standards Across All Services and Supports Consistency of Service Delivery and the Experience of Children, Young People and Their Families</p>
<p>Economic security and opportunity</p> <p>The aims for all children and young people are that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are protected from poverty and social exclusion - Are living in child/youth friendly, sustainable communities - Have opportunities for on-going education and training - Have pathways to economic participation and independent living 	<p>SI Objective 5 Children who are in Alternative Care are Well-Supported to Achieve Their Potential in Terms of Health, Educational and Well-Being Outcomes in Ways that Supports a Positive Life Trajectory</p> <p>SI Objective 6 Children and Parents and Other Adults who Need Supports to Ensure Effective Family Functioning Get Them</p>
<p>Connected, respected and contributing to their world</p> <p>The aims for all children and young people are that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have a sense of their own identity, free from discrimination - Have positive networks of friends, family and community - Are civically engaged, socially and environmentally conscious - Are aware of their rights, responsible and respectful of the law. 	<p>SI Objective 5 Children who are in Alternative Care are Well-Supported to Achieve Their Potential in Terms of Health, Educational and Well-Being Outcomes in Ways that Support a Positive Life Trajectory</p>

<p>G1. Support Parents</p>	<p>SI Objective1 Parents And Families Are Well-Equipped To Support And Promote The Health And Well-Being Of Their Children</p>
<p>G2. Earlier Intervention And Prevention</p>	<p>SI Objective1 Parents And Families Are Well-Equipped To Support And Promote The Health And Well-Being Of Their Children</p> <p>SI Objective 2 Children Experience High Quality Early Education And School Based Supports Which Equip And Assist Them To Achieve Their Learning Potential</p> <p>SI Objective 4 Children Who Need Protection From Intentional Or Unintentional Harm Get A Timely And Appropriate Response To Their Needs</p>
<p>G3. Listen To And Involve Children And Young People</p>	<p>CD I The Agency Is Recognised As An Organisation That Values Open Communications, Both In Terms Of Seeking And Obtaining The View Of Its Key Service Users As Well As In Its Public Communications More Generally</p>
<p>G4. Ensure Quality Services</p>	<p>SI Objective1 Parents And Families Are Well-Equipped To Support And Promote The Health And Well-Being Of Their Children</p> <p>SI Objective 4 Children Who Need Protection From Intentional Or Unintentional Harm Get A Timely And Appropriate Response To Their Needs</p> <p>CD 2 Agency Change and Reform Plans are supported through Active People Management</p> <p>CD3 Governance And Accountability Mechanisms Are Developed And Implemented Which Ensure Required Levels Of Control, Which Support Management Decision-Making And Which Meet Statutory Obligations</p> <p>CD4 A Strategic Approach To Quality Supports And Enhances Standards Across All Services And Supports Consistency Of Service Delivery And The Experience Of Children,</p>

	<p>Young People And Their Families</p> <p>CD5 The Agency Is A Responsive Partner, Collaborator And Leader In Cross-Government And Interagency Activities</p>
<p>G5. Strengthen Transitions</p>	<p>SI Objective 5 Children Who Are In Alternative Care Are Well-Supported To Achieve Their Potential In Terms Of Health, Educational And Well-Being Outcomes In Ways That Support A Positive Life Trajectory</p>
<p>G6. Cross-Government And Interagency Collaboration And Co-Ordination</p>	<p>SI Objective1 Parents And Families Are Well-Equipped To Support And Promote The Health And Well-Being Of Their Children</p> <p>SI Objective 5 Children Who Are In Alternative Care Are Well-Supported To Achieve Their Potential In Terms Of Health, Educational And Well-Being Outcomes In Ways That Supports A Positive Life Trajectory</p> <p>SI Objective 6 Children And Parents And Other Adults Who Need Supports To Ensure Effective Family Functioning Get Them</p> <p>CD 2 Agency Change and Reform Plans are supported through Active People Management</p> <p>CD3 Governance And Accountability Mechanisms Are Developed And Implemented Which Ensure Required Levels Of Control, Which Support Management Decision-Making And Which Meet Statutory Obligations</p> <p>CD4 A Strategic Approach To Quality Supports And Enhances Standards Across All Services And Supports Consistency Of Service Delivery And The Experience Of Children, Young People And Their Families</p> <p>CD5 The Agency Is A Responsive Partner, Collaborator And Leader In Cross-Government And Interagency Activities</p>