

Draft Report

Views of Children in Tipperary, 2016

**Consultation with children for Tipperary Children and
Young People's Services Committee**

June 2016



Tipperary Children & Young People's Services Committee acknowledges the CYPSC seed funding received from the Department of Children & Youth Affairs which contributed to funding the consultation and the production of this report.

Tipperary Children & Young People's Services Committee would also like to acknowledge the respective contributions by South Tipperary Development Company and North Tipperary LEADER Partnership to the consultation and the production of this report under the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme.

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1. Introduction

Burtenshaw Kenny Associates (BKA) carried out this consultation process with children of primary school age across Tipperary from January to April 2016.¹ The purpose of this work was to engage a range of children in a participatory consultation process to inform the Tipperary Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) plan in line with the five national outcomes for children. An information working group of the CYPSC was formed to oversee and guide this process. This report presents the outcomes of the consultation process.

1.1 Tipperary: a short overview

Tipperary is the largest inland county in Ireland and is largely rural with some of the most developed agricultural land in the country. Its population in 2011 was 158,754.

The largest town in the south of Tipperary is Clonmel with a population of 17,908, followed by Carrick-on-Suir (population 5,931). Nenagh is the largest town in the north with a population of 8,439, followed by Thurles (population 7,933). In addition, Roscrea, Tipperary Town, Cashel, Templemore and Cahir function as important district towns.²

Towns	Location	Towns	Location	Towns	Location
Nenagh	North	Thurles	North	Cashel	South
Templemore	North	Cahir	South	Clonmel	South
Roscrea	North	Tipperary Town	South	Carrick on Suir	South

The focus of this research is children aged four to twelve and that population in Tipperary in 2011 amounted to 20,285.³

The rate of population growth in the county is stable and in line with national averages. In 2013 the number was 14.4 per 1,000 with the national average 15.

Tipperary is becoming more multicultural and ethnically diverse. This is particularly apparent in urban centres.

While it is a relatively affluent county there are areas which have high levels of deprivation. In addition there are populations of children who can be identified as more vulnerable to experiencing deprivation and exclusion, including Travellers, children with disabilities and children of lone parent families.⁴

In 2014 as part of local government reform, Tipperary was one of three counties that undertook significant administrative change with the merger of North Tipperary and South Tipperary County Councils. The county is now administered by Tipperary County Council and this research, in line with CYPSC boundaries, is placed in this context.

¹ Tipperary is used to describe the county of Tipperary

²Census 2011

³ibid

⁴Taken from Tipperary Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2020

1.2 Tipperary Children and Young People's Services Committee

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) are key structures identified by the government to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland.

Their overall purpose is to promote local and national interagency working to improve outcomes for children and young people in line with *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the national policy framework for children and young people 2014 - 2020*. They are county-level committees and bring together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children and young people.

Tipperary CYPSC was established in 2015 as an overall CYPSC for the newly amalgamated county. There had been a CYPSC established in south Tipperary without a parallel in the north of the county.

As the initial step in developing their first overall plan, Tipperary CYPSC commissioned this research to gather the views of children of primary school age (4-12 years). A parallel process is taking place with young people 13 -18 years led by Youthwork Ireland Tipperary (formerly Tipperary Regional Youth Service-TRYs).

This approach to planning is in line with national guidance on the establishment of CYPSCs. It is expected that the nature and extent of participation of children will strengthen and develop.⁵ Progress is more advanced nationally in engaging with teenagers, largely through Comhairle na nÓg structures.

The work of CYPSC is underpinned by the five *National Outcomes for Children*:



- Active and healthy with physical and mental well-being
- Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development
- Safe and protected from harm
- Having economic security and opportunities
- Connected, respected and contributing to the world

1.3 Terms of Reference

This consultation process aims to produce a report based on the findings of interviews with a representative sample of primary schools around the county.⁶ In addition, children were sought to engage in the process in out-of-school settings. An important component on planning for this research was to ensure that the views of children were captured from:

- Urban and rural settings
- North and south Tipperary

⁵National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015)

⁶It was agreed at the initiation of the project to focus on 4-12 year olds.

- A range of socio-economic backgrounds
- A range of cultural backgrounds
- A range of abilities

It was agreed at the outset that the report would present an overall analysis and conclusion linked to the five outcomes. Section three outlines the consultation process that took place to inform this report.

1.4 Report Structure

This report presents the policy context, the methodology of the consultation process, the consultation outcomes and how they align to the five national outcomes, and conclusions and recommendations for the CYPSC.

It is structured as follows:

Section 2:	National Policy
Section 3:	Methodology
Section 4:	National Outcome 1-Active and healthy with physical and mental well-being
Section 5:	National Outcome 2-Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development
Section 6:	National Outcome 3-Safe and protected from harm
Section 7:	National Outcome 4-Having economic security and opportunities
Section 8:	National Outcome 5- Connected, respected and contributing to the world
Section 9:	Conclusions and Recommendations.

The drawings included in this report were created by the children as part of the consultation, and those included in section six which were produced by children involved in the Three Drives Family Resource Centre arts project, an initiative which is part funded by the Arts Council.

1.5 Acknowledgements

BJA would like to thank all of the children who were involved in this project and participated so openly in the consultation process. We would also like to thank the principals and staff of the participating schools, the staff and volunteers of the voluntary and community groups, and CYPSC.

We would like to especially thank the CYPSC information sub group, in particular Ruairi O Caisleáin CYPSC Co-ordinator who was our connector for the project and Tomás Ó Slatara, Irish Primary Principals' Network representative on the CYPSC who advised and supported access to schools. In addition we would also like to thank the national office of the Irish Primary Principals' Network for allowing access to its database which supported the distribution of the online survey.

Susan Bookle, MBS

Burtenshaw Kenny Associates, June 2016

2. Policy Context

2.1 Structural Reform

Recent years have seen increasing emphasis on the structures that underpin and inform work with children, as well as some radical reforms. In 2011, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) was established. This consolidated a range of functions previously discharged by various government ministers, bringing together areas of policy and provision for children, young people and families.

In 2014 *Tusla - the Child and Family Agency* (Tusla) became an independent legal entity, comprising HSE Children & Family Services, Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board. It is now the dedicated state agency responsible for improving well-being and outcomes for children.

Tusla represents the most comprehensive reform of child protection, early intervention and family support services ever undertaken in Ireland. The agency operates under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, which foresees a central role for partnership and co-operation in the delivery of services to children and families.

Children and Young People's Services Committees as outlined in section 1.2 aim to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. CYPSCs are well-established in some areas, and at an early stage of development in others, such as Tipperary.

2.2 Policy

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures represents the first overarching national children's policy framework spanning children and young people (0 – 24 years). It adopts a comprehensive approach and is underpinned by a number of constituent strategies in the areas of early years, youth and participation. The policy framework establishes a shared set of outcomes for children and young people towards which all government departments and agencies, statutory services, and voluntary and community sectors should work. These are broadly known as the five national outcomes. They are outlined in section 1.2, underpin the work of CYPSC and correspond to the five consultation areas in this report.

2.3 National Consultation Outcomes

Child-centred approaches to development are becoming increasingly important, and within this is a growing recognition of the importance of children's participation in decision-making. This can be defined as:

'The process by which children and young people have active involvement and real influence in decision-making on matters affecting their lives, both directly and indirectly'.⁷

The *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020* marked a fundamental shift in attitudes to this topic and is consistent with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

⁷ National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015)

While structures exist to support young people's participation in decision-making through Comhairle na nÓg, a mechanism is not in place to involve younger children.

CYPSCs across the country have been engaging with children and young people as part of their county-wide planning processes, but there is no agreed national approach to consultation. We examined this in relation to children in Tipperary during the initial stages of this project.

A study was made of the 2012 national consultation report *Life as a Child and Young Person in Ireland*.⁸ Although its findings were not analysed under the five national outcomes for children, it did provide the three research questions which are replicated in this consultation process (see section three).

The report examined the best and worst aspects of being a child, as well as the areas most in need of change. It found that education, sport, friends and identity are the most positive, the economy, weather, education and anti-social behaviour are the most negative, and education, the economy, social problems and play need the most change.

2.4 Local Consultation Outcomes

As outlined in section 1.2, there was a CYPSC in South County Tipperary, prior to the Local Authority amalgamation. This committee disbanded in 2015. Under its auspices, consultation was based on a targeted survey with children in South Tipperary which had taken place in five primary schools.

Consistent themes that emerged were the importance of:

- Family and home.
- Friends.
- Playing and being physically active.
- Having pets and animals.

Some of the key issues that emerged included:

- Bullying.
- Dynamics with siblings.
- School and homework.

⁸Department of Children and Youth Affairs, *Life as a Child and Young Person in Ireland, Report of a National Consultation*, 2012

3. Consultation Process

3.1 Research Questions

The consultation process involved:

1. School-based focus groups
2. Community-based focus groups
3. An online survey

The information working group of the CYPSC led by the CYPSC Co-ordinator played an ongoing role in agreeing all stages of the consultation design, as well as in informing and supporting access to children for participation. As outlined in the previous section, the consultation questions were informed by the national consultation report commissioned by DCYA in 2012, in the absence of a nationally-agreed process with children as part of CYPSC planning development.

These questions were:

1. What is the best thing about being a child in Tipperary?
2. What is the worst thing about being a child in Tipperary?
3. What suggestions/ideas do you have to make Tipperary a better place to be a child?

All interviews were analysed under the five national outcome areas.

3.2 Participant breakdown

Three hundred and sixty five children from across Tipperary participated in this consultation process. Eight were over twelve as they were part of the schools-based focus groups. The gender and age of the children who participated is broken down as follows:

Table 1: Participant gender breakdown

Boys	Girls	Total
174	191	365

Table 2: Participant age breakdown

Aged 5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total
7	7	59	63	30	41	52	98	7	1	365

3.3 School-Based Focus Groups

School-based focus groups were held to gather qualitative information. Schools were selected by the information working group based on obtaining an urban/rural and north/south sample. A set of age-appropriate research tools were designed for each of the five consultation areas. These were adapted for the younger age group to ensure that they were comprehensive and to encourage participation.

The two age groups agreed by the information working group were:

- Younger children –first and second class pupils (aged 6-8)

- Older children –third, fourth, fifth and sixth class pupils (aged 10-12)

In addition two school-based settings were used to engage with children with disabilities. The first was an autistic unit in a mainstream school and the second was a specialist school for children with disabilities.

To ensure that children from socially excluded communities were included, two DEIS schools participated in the consultation, St Oliver Plunkett's and Toomevara.

Table 3: Participation in School-based Focus Groups

	Group	Age Range	School	Classes	Urban/Rural	Gender	Participation
1	Younger children	Mainly ages 6 to 8	St Oliver Plunkett NS, Clonmel	2 nd	Urban	Mixed	14 children
			Two-mile Borris NS	1 st /2 nd	Rural	Mixed	33 children
			Ballina NS	2 nd	Urban	Mixed	25 children
			Toomevara NS	1 st	Rural	Mixed	17 children
2	Older children	Mainly ages 10 to 12	St Oliver Plunkett NS, Clonmel	6 th	Urban	Mixed	25 children
			Two-mile Borris NS	5 th /6 th	Rural	Mixed	25 children
			Ballina NS	6 th	Urban	Mixed	24 children
			Toomevara NS	4 th /5 th /6 th	Rural	Mixed	18 children
3	Children with Disabilities	Mainly ages	Autistic Unit Ardfinnan NS	2 nd , 3 rd , 4 th	Rural	Mixed	6 children
			Scoil Cormaic	5 th /6 th class	Urban catering for broad geographical area	Mixed	9 children
Total participants within school							196 children

Prior to the commencement of the school-based focus groups, parents and guardians were contacted through the schools for permission.

In all school-based focus group discussions there was a mix of individual participation and group-based exercises and discussion. This was required for quantitative assessment of responses and also to ensure balance in qualitative feedback gathered.

3.4 Community-Based Focus Groups

The following community-based focus groups were held to gather qualitative views:

Organisation	Group Profile	Urban Rural	Gender	Age range	Participation Level
Spafield Family Resource Centre (Cashel)	Two afterschool groups These groups included children experiencing bereavement, lone parent families, families in poverty	Urban	Mixed	5- 11 years	22 children
Youthwork Ireland Tipperary (Littleton)	Two afterschool groups These groups included Traveller children, children of lone parent families and children of families in poverty	Rural	Mixed	7-12 years	8 children
Barnardos (Littleton)	Afterschool group This group included children of lone parent families, disabled children and children of families in poverty.	Rural	Mixed	8-12 Years	12 children
Tipperary Rural Traveller Project (TRTP)	Afterschool Group This group is a Traveller specific group	Urban	Mixed	5-10 years	8 children
Nenagh Afterschools Programme (North Tipperary LEADER Partnership-NTLP)	Afterschool Group This group targeted vulnerable children from lone parent, unemployed and other socially-excluded backgrounds.	Urban	Girls	8-9 years	8 children
Syrian Refugee Homework Club (NTLP)	Homework Club This group works with Syrian children who are part of the resettlement project in Thurles.	Urban	Mixed	7-12 years	5 children
Total participants out-of-school setting					63 children

The process also included an update on the arts programme currently taking place in the Three Drives Family Resource Centre, Tipperary Town, by a small group of the participants. This initiative, which is partly-funded by the Arts Council, is extensive and near to completion. Its outcomes to date were captured and were part of the analysis for this report. However, it is recommended that the CYPSC consider this as a stand-alone project, given the work that has been undertaken, when its planning process is completed in the coming weeks.

3.5 Online Survey

An online survey was developed by BKA in collaboration with the Information Working Group to gather quantitative data. It covered each of the consultation areas and explored a number of themes consistent with the consultation questions.

The survey was widely promoted by CYPSC through all schools in Tipperary by the Irish Primary Principals' Networks extensive database and by CYPSC members. There were 106 respondents. A small minority did not answer all of the questions.

Seventy one children indicated that the nearest big town to where they lived was in the south of the county, with thirty four indicating that it was in north Tipperary with one respondent not indicating.

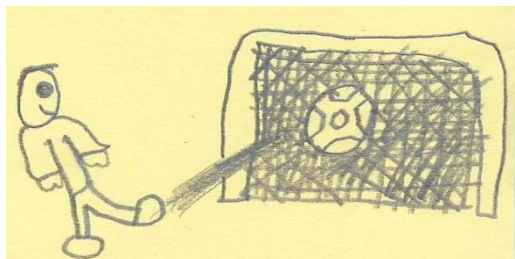
3.6 Limitations

The following were limitations to this consultation process.

- Budget and timeframe.
- Availability of children on the scheduled days and permission to participate
- Time available for focus groups

However, these limitations should not detract from the outcomes obtained from the work that took place which was extensive within the confines of the project.

4. National Outcome One: Active and Healthy with Physical and Mental Well-Being



4.1 Findings

The children consulted as part of this process consistently highlighted playing, sports and activities as among the best things about being a child in Tipperary. All of the focus groups carried out demonstrated the importance of children's participation in:

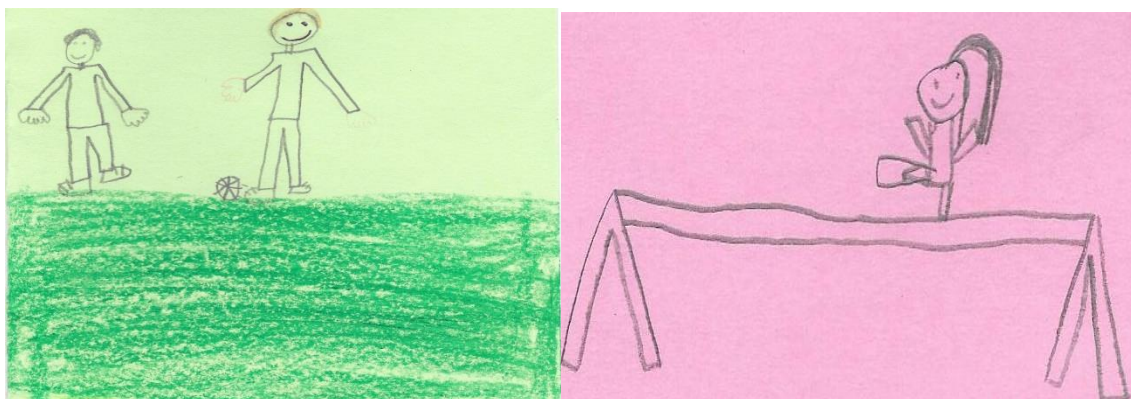
- Organised sports such as soccer, hurling, Gaelic football, athletics and swimming
- Dance
- Gymnastics
- Playing games and general play
- Going to parks and playgrounds

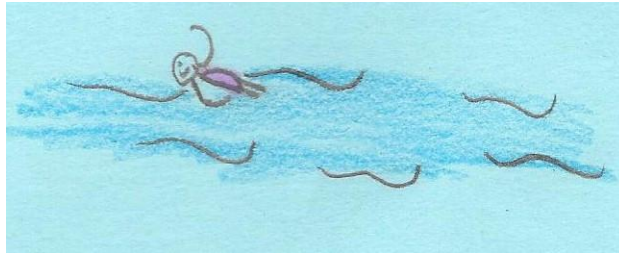
This was mirrored through responses in the online survey where 46 (46%) of respondents said that the best thing about being a child is that there are lots of places to play and be active in Tipperary.

Traveller children consulted particularly highlighted the importance of outdoor activities and playing outside. In contrast, children with learning difficulties did not stress the importance of outdoor play and activity as strongly.

The children consulted were aware of the importance of diet and nutrition, however being active and healthy was more primarily linked to being physically active than eating healthily.

Not surprisingly, children highlighted their use of technology (tablets, PlayStations, X-Box, phones) as important ways to fill leisure time. This was particularly highlighted by children with disabilities.





4.2 Suggestions

The children consulted highlighted the need for more outdoor activities, and for opportunities to be more physically active. This mirrors one of the key priorities in the national report *Life as a Child and Young Person in Ireland*. Our consultation findings highlighted the following needs:

- Playgrounds catering to older children. It was felt by many children in the older age brackets that the existing playgrounds are designed only to meet the needs of children up to the age of seven or eight years.
- More time to be allocated in school for sports, PE and dance.
- Better facilities in schools to cater for physical activities.
- More opportunities to go swimming.

The online survey mirrors these suggestions with 38 children (41%) outlining a need for more places to play.

In relation to healthy-eating children made suggestions that shops should ensure that healthier foods are promoted as well as made more attractive and affordable, and that sweets should be less visible.



5. National Outcome Two: Achieving Full Potential in all Areas of Learning and Development



5.1 Findings:

The children consulted as part of this process recognised that school plays an important role in supporting their learning and development, as well as providing a place to meet friends.

Our focus groups highlighted that:

- Children particularly liked active learning such as projects, drama and other interactive mediums.
- Having access to a range of books was of particular interest to children who like to read.
- Access to culturally appropriate books and books in different languages is particularly important for children from different ethnic backgrounds e.g. Arabic
- The absence of broadband in some more rural areas impacts on children's ability to learn and access information.
- Older children in particular believe too much time is spent on homework. This is in line with the national report, *Life as a Child and Young Person in Ireland*.
- The children who attended homework clubs found them beneficial, and enjoyed attending them. One example was the comment, "I like coming to the club because I get my homework done. It's hard in my house to do homework because I have a lot of younger brothers and sisters and it's very noisy."

The online survey replicated the findings of the focus groups with 41 (41%) respondents believing that schools in Tipperary are great and a place to learn new things. Only 8 (8%) of respondents said that they don't learn much at school.



5.2 Suggestions

The following were suggestions from the consultation to support learning and development:

- Less homework.
- More project-based work at school.
- Greater use of information technology within schools to support learning and make it more fun.
- Better stocked libraries in schools, and better access to libraries in general (particularly in rural areas) with books to cater for local needs e.g. in Thurles the availability of Arabic books for Syrian children were viewed very positively.
- More educational clubs and groups. This was strongly highlighted within the online survey with 39 (42%) of respondents indicating that more clubs/groups to support learning would be beneficial.

"I love reading and the school library is great but the books are not always updated."

6. National Outcome Three: Safe and Protected from Harm



6.1 Findings

Issues in relation to safety and being protected from harm were not raised substantially in the consultation process. There was a general sense that Tipperary, and Ireland more generally, is a safe place to grow up.

"You feel safe around here and compared to lots of places in the world, Ireland is a stable country."

In addition, the role of families in helping to create secure environments for children was highlighted.

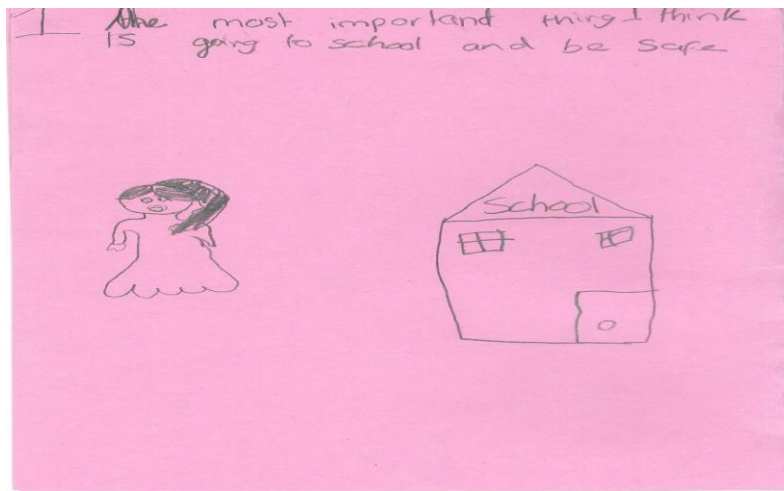
"I like knowing that my mammy and daddy are in the room next to me, especially when it is cold and dark."

Most concerns were raised in parts of Tipperary where rural crime has increased substantially in recent years and has a high profile in the national media. In these areas, the children consulted were more aware of burglaries, the impact of crime on people's lives and the necessity to be vigilant at all times. These children had strong views in relation to imprisoning people who commit crimes for a long time. There was also a sense that there aren't enough Gardaí and isn't enough protection for rural communities in general.

The older children consulted felt strongly that they are often not enabled to be independent, walk to meet friends or to be out late. There was an understanding why this is the case, but a frustration nonetheless.

Road safety was also raised as a concern with many areas not having safe places to walk or cycle, which impacts on children's independence and ability to meet friends outside of school. This was replicated in the survey where 32 (35%) of respondents highlighted the need for safer places to cycle and play.

⁹With permission from the Three Drives Family Resource Centre- this arts based project with children is part funded by the Arts Council



6.2 Suggestions

The suggestions made by the children to make Tipperary a safer place focused on:

- The need for more cycle lanes, footpaths and lighting to improve road safety.
- A greater Garda presence, particularly in rural areas.
- Greater deterrents to crime and criminal behaviour.

"I am not allowed to cycle to training because the roads are too dangerous. I have to get somebody to drive me. I would love to be able to cycle; it would give me more freedom to meet my friends."

7. National Outcome Four: Economic Security and Opportunity

7.1 Findings

The older children consulted were largely aware of the financial responsibilities that adults have.

In addition, younger children from socially-excluded communities were also likely to know that financial security is important to sustain a happy childhood.

"I hate it when there is stress in our house. Everybody fights and I don't talk. It is usually when there are lots of bills, things to be paid and not enough money. Mam and Dad are very tense."

The key findings from the focus groups were:

- A high level of awareness among children of the challenge of paying bills and the pressures this can cause. Water bills, rent, phone bills, clothes and mortgages were highlighted.
- Awareness that the last few years have been difficult economically and those adults have not been able to work, or work as much, to earn money.
- Children highlighted that people who are homeless are particularly vulnerable to poverty and having no money.
- As children, they are aware that financial pressures are adult pressures but that they can impact on the broader household.

These findings were echoed in the online survey, with 35 (36.4%) of respondents saying that not having enough money to do things is one of the worst things about being a child.

"Sometimes mammy has no money. I cannot get the things I want and that makes me sad."

7.2 Suggestions

The key suggestion made throughout the consultations for improving economic security and opportunity was to ensure that adults have access to jobs, and to support people who lost their jobs to regain employment. There were limited suggestions made through the consultations on this outcome area.

"When more parents have jobs there is more money which is good for children."



8. National Outcome Five: Connected, Respected and Contributing to the World



8.1 Findings

The children consulted in Tipperary consistently highlighted the importance of being respected, and of being connected to the world.

The importance of families and friends was constantly raised in focus groups. This was echoed in the online survey with 59 (59%) of respondents highlighting friends and families as the best things about being a child with only 2 (2%) saying that they are the worst thing about being a child.

The focus groups showed that:

- The best thing about being a child was having friends to have fun and play with.
- Parents are central to children's lives and were constantly mentioned as being important to their well-being and happiness. Being together, talking, having fun, watching TV and playing together were raised as positive aspects of these relationships.
- It can be challenging to speak English all of the time, when this is not your first language.
- Grandparents were also highlighted as anchors in children's lives.
- Children appreciate the need to get on well with their brothers and sisters.
- Pets are particularly important and meaningful for children.

"Life is hard since I lost my dad. I look at the world from another angle but the best thing is that I have my dog as a companion. I tell him everything."

"There is too much singing in English, and I prefer to sing in Arabic."

The children who participated in this process also highlighted that:

- Relationships with other children can be complex with bullying mentioned throughout the focus groups as a cause of distress and sadness.
- There were concerns regarding online bullying, and that children need to be aware of how to use technology safely.
- Older children do not always feel listened to and feel that their views are sometimes dismissed by adults as not being important or relevant. Those participating found this frustrating and welcomed opportunities to share their views and have an input in decision-making.
- Parents are often too busy to give their children the time that they want, with many feeling that parents don't play, have fun, or engage in sports or games enough.
- Integration is complex, it takes time to settle into Ireland, build trust with adults and integrate with other children.

- Some older children said that they were scared of the future and growing up. Many of these will enter secondary school in the near future.
- Older children from rural areas also highlighted their frustration at being dependent on lifts from parents to meet friends or attend events. This sometimes impacts on their ability to participate in activities.



8.2 Suggestions

The children who engaged in this consultation process suggested that they need:

- To be supported to stand up to bullying.
- To be listened to by adults when they are being bullied or are afraid of entering situations where they fear bullying behaviour.
- To be listened to more in general, and asked for their views and opinions.
- Greater independence, particularly for older children.
- Parents to spend more fun time with them, playing and engaging in activities.
- Supports for their parents to learn English (when this is not their first language).
- A cleaner county and environment in which to live.
- Better facilities for children with disabilities during holidays when they are particularly isolated. Respondents said that they don't often have opportunities to meet with other children as they don't have clubs or groups within their communities to participate in, and that can respond to their needs. They spend free time on technology and can be quite isolated.
- Ongoing support for refugee children to integrate within local community groups, when they are ready to do so.



9. Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Conclusions

Overall, the vast majority of children consulted as part of this process felt that Tipperary is a good place to be a child. 74 (80%) of the online respondents said that this was the case.

The focus groups mirrored this, but children who were more critical raised issues relating to rural isolation, missing family who live away (predominantly in the case of foreign nationals) and the weather.

While this report has presented its research in terms of the five national outcomes, a number of theme areas also emerged as the key conclusions. They are as follows:

9.1.1 Family and Friends

The consultation process highlighted the importance of parents and the broader family network of the children consulted.

Parents play a central role in making children feel safe and secure, nurtured, encouraged and supported as they move towards their teenage years.

But family can also impinge on children's well-being, particularly their peace of mind, with older and younger socially-excluded children acutely aware of the financial stresses experienced by their parents. These children directly related their economic well-being to that of their parents and where financial struggles existed they outlined the impact these had on their lives.

Parents were also regularly viewed as not having enough time to play, have fun or engage in physical activity because of their need to concentrate on day-to-day tasks.

Older children frequently expressed the view that their parents, and adults in general, do not respect their opinions or seek them often enough, which is relevant when considering future dialogue with younger people.

The parents of refugee children were identified as needing ongoing support to increase English language skills and to integrate into broader society. This supports their children's social, educational and emotional wellbeing.

The importance of parents, siblings and broader families were particularly noted by Traveller children. However, some Traveller children interviewed (girls) highlighted the role that they play in looking after younger siblings as impacting on their ability to play, have fun and interact with other children within their age groups.

In terms of friendships it was clear that children of all ages saw building, maintaining and developing these as central to happiness. Friends are linked to having a good time, having positive experiences in school and having fun more generally.

9.1.2 School

The consultation process highlighted the important role that school plays in supporting children to learn, develop, and build and maintain friendships.

However, while school is largely viewed positively, the impact of bullying was a key concern for children. Its impact and fears about its occurrence were mentioned consistently throughout the consultation process. Older children were particularly aware of cyber-bullying.

On the academic side, children expressed preferences for alternative forms of learning, particularly those that were interactive or used information technology. The value and level of homework was disputed, but children who attended afterschool and homework clubs believed these were important in helping them to manage their workloads and get a range of supports/skills to help their development more generally. The children interviewed who attended afterschool/homework clubs were largely from socially excluded backgrounds (lone parents, Travellers, Syrian refugees, areas of disadvantage).

Older children raised the question of transition to secondary school, which was viewed with a mixture of anxiety and excitement. It was understood that this would have impacts on friendships and support networks, which offered some cause for insecurity. Refugee children were concerned that they will not have the supports that they require to help them integrate when they move from primary to secondary.

9.1.3 Rural Children

Children who live in rural areas raised specific issues throughout the consultation process which need to be considered.

Many socially-excluded children in rural areas felt isolated outside of school and on school holidays as they cannot connect easily with their friends. Reasons given for this included lack of transport and unsafe roads to cycle.

Other children in some rural areas had difficulties accessing broadband at home, which impacts on learning and their ability to connect to other people.

In addition, while having access to green spaces was consistently raised as a positive of rural life for children, some said they lacked the opportunity to participate in activities after school that were not sports-based. This particularly affected socially-excluded children whose ability to travel to towns to access a broader range of groups was limited.

9.1.4 Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities have a range of specific issues that arose during consultation. Many felt very isolated outside of school and lacking adequate opportunity to engage socially with other children. This was particularly the case because of a lack of access to clubs, or clubs with appropriate facilities. Relatedly, children with disabilities were much more dependent on information technology and felt it played a more central role in their lives.

9.1.5 Refugee Children

The refugee children interviewed highlighted that while they are largely very positive about life in Ireland, the complexities that they experience should not be underestimated. Their resettlement in Tipperary is relatively new (15 months). In this time all aspects of their lives has changed. The importance of ongoing commitment to support the integration of these children and their families is required. This will ensure that their ability to fully participate in all aspects of life in Tipperary is secure and that this transition is fully supported.

9.1.6 Traveller Children

Traveller children interviewed, enjoy playing particularly outdoors. They were less likely to highlight the importance of technology in their lives and centre on physically based outdoor activities. The importance of green spaces within close proximity to their homes was highlighted as being important. They value after-schools participation in homework groups, however it was unclear if the Traveller children interviewed participate in broader clubs and groups within their communities.

9.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed to Tipperary CYPSC for consideration:

9.2.1 Tipperary CYPSC Plan

The findings and suggestions presented in this report (sections four to eight) should form a key component in the development and implementation of the Tipperary CYPSC plan.

Incorporating themes that fit across more than one outcome area, for example, the role of families, needs to be considered as part of the planning process. This is particularly important for more vulnerable families who require more targeted supports.

In addition, the significant consultation project through art being undertaken by Three Drives Family Resource Centre, with support from the Arts Council should input into the final planning process.

9.2.2 Consultation with children

A process should be established to collate the feedback of children across the county on an ongoing basis in order to build on this work.

9.2.3 Role of Parents and Families

This consultation report highlighted the pivotal role that parents and families play in supporting childhood development. Tipperary CYPSC should focus on supporting parents to play their role, with particular consideration of those most under stress due to financial, health, integration or other factors.

9.2.4 Resources for children

Children require investment, with children who are socially-excluded requiring most intervention.

The planning process of Tipperary CYPSC needs to consider where resources should be targeted. This consultation process highlighted specific challenges within some services targeting children with disabilities, socially-excluded areas (e.g. Tipperary Town), Syrian, Traveller children, and those in rural areas.

However, a broader assessment by Tipperary CYPSC is required to ensure that the most vulnerable children receive supports and services to meet their needs as part of the final plan.

9.2.5 Role of Play and Physical Activity

Play and physical activity is highly important in children's lives. Tipperary CYPSC needs to consider the infrastructure, supports and services that will enable children across the county to play in both structured and unstructured ways. Supporting older children to continue to play is a key consideration, as is supporting children with disabilities to play within their own communities.

9.2.6 Learning

Homework clubs can play an important role in supporting children's learning, particularly those in more vulnerable situations. Tipperary CYPSC plan should consider the availability and accessibility of homework supports.

Children are also responding well to alternative methods of learning, particularly interactive ones or those that make use of information technology, and these should be promoted.

The transition to secondary school is a key time of concern for children. This is important to consider particularly for more vulnerable groups e.g. Travellers, Syrian, children with learning difficulties.

In addition, the role of libraries and their accessibility should be explored.

9.2.7 Safety and Bullying

Safe and secure communities are particularly important for children's well-being.

In addition, Tipperary CYPSC should consider how children are informed and supported to respond to bullying. Working within schools and with parents are key components to raising awareness and agreeing responses to bullying when it emerges.

Online safety is now an additional concern for the children consulted, most importantly because of cyber-bullying, which needs to be factored into planning.

9.2.8 Economic Security

Many children interviewed had an understanding of the impact of the economy on their parents and their lives. They were impacted by financial struggles in the family and placed high priority on the availability of paying jobs for parents.

The affordability and availability of services and supports was also important. Interventions into the economy are required to support families who are struggling financially to give their children security and opportunity.

9.2.9 Friendships

Friendships with other children form a core part of their development. Tipperary CYPSC should ensure that children have enough arenas to build and maintain strong friendships, particularly outside of school. Children consulted, highlighted the importance of the availability and access to a range of community based groups. Having opportunities to meet, socialise and learn new things outside of school with friends in community based settings was highlighted as being very important to the children consulted. While sports groups can provide these opportunities, this is not always the case,

and a broader range of groups to develop other skills was identified as being important to the children consulted.

9.2.10 Integration

Children should be supported to integrate across socio economic, educational and cultural groups. In particular, specific groups require targeted supports e.g. Traveller, Syrian and disabled children. Existing initiatives to support integration should be fully supported to continue this work, alongside plans to develop and extend integrated approaches for children across the county more generally.

10. Appendices

10.1 Appendix One: Organisations who directly supported the consultation process:

The following outlines the key connectors for the schools and organisations who helped to organise the consultation opportunities with the children:

Schools

St Oliver Plunkett's National School, Clonmel	Paul Murphy	Principal
Ballina National School	Margaret O' Sullivan	Principal
Toomevara National School	George Frend	Principal
Scoil Mochaomhog Naofa, Two Mile Borris	Joan Doherty	Principal
Ardfinnan National School	Mairead Condon	Principal
Scoil Cormaic	Lorraine Lowry	Principal

Community Based

Spafield Family Resource Centre (Cashel)	Julie White	Co-ordinator
Youthwork Ireland Tipperary (Littleton)	Catherine Donaghy	Youth Worker
Barnardos (Littleton)	Olive Carter	Project Manager
	Mags Hogan	Facilitator
Three Drives Family Resource Centre (Tipperary Town)	Terry O' Connor	Project Manager
	Teresa Normile	Youth Art Worker
Nenagh After School Programme (North Tipperary LEADER Partnership- NTLP)	Michelle Putti	Social Programmes Manager
	Mary Boyd Ryan	Co-ordinator
Tipperary Rural Traveller Project (TRTP)	Siobhan Bradshaw	Project Worker
Syrian Refugee Homework Club (Thurles)	Sally Daly	Co-ordinator

10.2 Appendix Two: CYPSC Information Sub Group Members

The Sub group members involved in overseeing and supporting this project were as follows:

Cora Horgan	Youthwork Ireland, Tipperary
Ann Ryan	Tipperary County Council
Anne Delahunty	HSE
Aileen Healy	Tipperary County Childcare Committee
Fionnuala Kenny	Túsla
Ruairí Ó Caisleáin	CYPSC Coordinator