



Office of the Minister  
for Children  
Oifig an Aire do Leanaí

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Office of the Minister  
for Children

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2006

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# ANNUAL REPORT 2006

A new way of working — to improve  
the lives of children and young people



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# Office of the Minister for Children



The Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) was established by Government to bring greater coherence to policy-making and service delivery for children. It is a new and exciting experiment in bringing together civil servants from a number of Government departments to work for the benefit of children and young people.





# Foreword

As Minister for Children, I am delighted to contribute to the first Annual Report of the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC). In December 2005, the Government took the innovative and historic decision to establish the OMC under my direction as part of the Department of Health and Children. The Taoiseach announced that I would have additional responsibilities and attend Cabinet meetings.

The establishment of the OMC is evidence of the commitment of the Government to the interests of children. It is also a new and exciting experiment in bringing together civil servants from a number of Government departments to provide a joined-up government approach in the development of policies and services for children.

During 2006, I worked with the Director General and staff of the OMC on many important developments aimed at improving the lives of children and young people and ensuring that their voices are heard. My attendance at Cabinet has allowed me to ensure that issues affecting children are taken into account across all areas of Government.

In September 2006, I led the Irish delegation at a hearing by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child on Ireland's Second Report under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had been prepared by my Office. In its concluding observations, the UN Committee commented on the comprehensive nature of Ireland's report and welcomed the appointment of an Ombudsman for Children, the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Children and the adoption of the National Children's Strategy. The UN Committee also recommended areas where improvements could be made. At that hearing, I told the Committee I would carry out an article-by-article examination of the Irish Constitution and how it impacts on children.

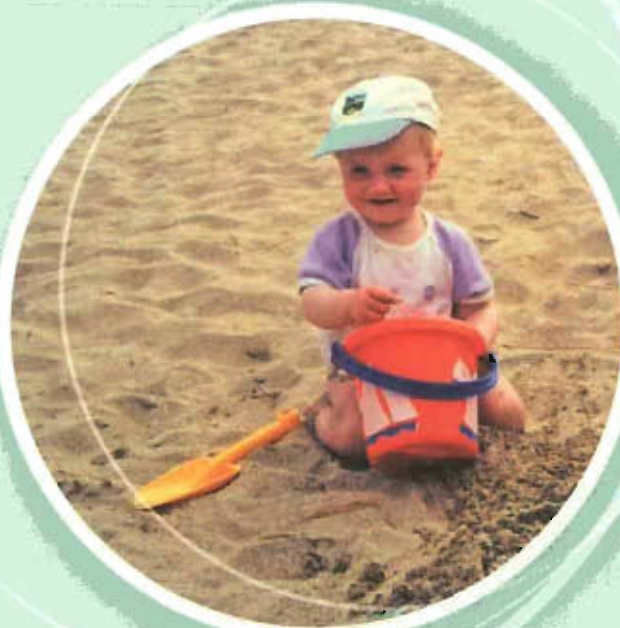
In November 2006, the Taoiseach announced the Government's intention to hold a Constitutional Referendum on children. I initiated a consultation process to seek consensus on a wording for an amendment that would reflect our commitment to value and protect childhood.

In the area of youth justice, I am pleased that significant progress has been made on the implementation of the Children Act 2001 through effective cross-departmental and inter-agency work, spearheaded by the OMC. In November 2006, a Commencement Order was signed amending Part 11 of the Children Act 2001, which relates to the Special Residential Service Board and the changing of its functions and composition in the area of youth justice reform.

A number of other important legislative developments were achieved in the first year of my Office. In July 2006, the Cabinet approved the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2006, which allows foster parents or relatives who have had a child placed in their care by the Health Service Executive for a continuous period of five years or more to apply for a court order to give them greater autonomy in the care of that child. The Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 were signed into law in December 2006 and will come into operation on 3 September 2007. These regulations will raise standards and quality in pre-schools and childcare centres.

During 2006, my new Office has strengthened and developed the evidence-based, cross-cutting policy agenda for children and made significant progress in delivering the National Children's Strategy. I have no doubt that the good work will continue in 2007 and beyond.

**Brian Lenihan, TD**  
*Minister for Children*







# Introduction

The Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) was established by Government decision on 7 December 2005 and on 8 December 2005, I was appointed as its first Director General.

The OMC is a 'first' in terms of public service management, in that three policy divisions dealing with children's issues in three different Government departments (Education and Science; Health and Children; and Justice, Equality and Law Reform) are co-located together with the Minister for Children for the purpose of achieving better outcomes for children. The civil servants from the three departments work strategically together across the whole of public governance in the formulation of policy around early years education, youth justice services, child welfare and protection services, the creation of quality childcare places, evidence-based policy experimentation and in driving the implementation of the National Children's Strategy 2000-2010. The agreed policies are then delivered through the relevant parent department and its agencies.

As civil servants, we are accustomed to working within one Government department and to one Minister. The mandate given to the OMC by Government gives those of us who are co-located within the OMC the authority to take a cross-cutting approach to issues, policies, services and structures for the achievement of better outcomes for children. This mandate was recognised in the new national partnership agreement, *Toward 2016*, which tasks the OMC with enabling all parts of the public service management to work strategically together, at national and local levels, so as to achieve more effective and efficient delivery of children's services. This work requires the development of new competencies and skills. It also requires levels of energy and drive over and above that required for working within the traditional framework of one department.

The Government decision establishing the OMC also provided for the Minister for Children to attend Cabinet meetings. As a consequence, there is now, for the first time, a single, coherent Ministerial input on children's issues at Cabinet level in Ireland.

The end of 2006, the first year of the OMC, saw:

- effective inter-agency work between the departments of Education, Health, Justice and the HSE as the foundations were laid together for the implementation of the Children Act 2001;
- the bringing together of the educational and welfare expertise of the departments of Education and Health and their agencies in laying the foundations for the development of Early Years Care and Education in Ireland;
- the completion of two pieces of work that hold the potential to enhance our understanding of children's lives in Ireland — the bringing to contract of the *National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland* and the publication of the first *State of the Nation's Children* report, which has received international acclaim.

All in all, as the first Irish experiment in joined-up government, the OMC gave a solid performance during its first year.

**Sylda Langford**  
Director General





# 1 Developing a policy and legislative framework for children's health services

## Monitoring the National Children's Strategy

Monitoring of the National Children's Strategy 2000-2010, *Our Children — Their Lives*, was previously the responsibility of the National Children's Office (NCO). The NCO became part of the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) at the time of its inception (2005) and it now monitors implementation of the strategy and improvements in children's lives, taking a broad overview of progress and producing cross-sectoral national reports on developments for children in Ireland. Since the launch of the strategy in 2000, four annual comprehensive progress reports have been published.

The year 2005 marked the mid-point of the 10-year lifetime of the National Children's Strategy and the Minister for Children requested that the National Children's Advisory Council carry out an in-depth review of the progress made on its implementation. This review was completed in 2006 and is available on the OMC website ([www.omc.gov.ie](http://www.omc.gov.ie)).

## Child Welfare and Protection Policy Unit

The Child Welfare and Protection Policy Unit was established as part of the new Office of the Minister for Children, bringing together staff from the former Child Care Policy and Child Care Legislation Units in the Department of Health and Children. The role of the Unit is to develop the policy and legislative framework for care services for children and to work effectively with the Health Service Executive (HSE) to ensure the implementation of policy in the development and delivery of services.

### Policy

In recent years, policy in this area was primarily directed at putting effective child protection systems in place for children in need of care. The focus is now shifting towards developing family and community support initiatives to identify issues at an earlier stage. Where possible, issues of concern need to be addressed within the context of the family, but high-quality care structures must also be in place for children in need of care. Work on a new policy document on children's services commenced in the second half of 2006 and is expected to be completed in 2007.

### Legislation

The Cabinet approved the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2006 in July 2006. The Bill provides that foster parents or relatives who have had a child placed in their care by the HSE for a continuous period of five years or more may apply for a court order which would give them greater autonomy in relation to the care of the child. This legislation was enacted in April 2007.





A Commencement Order was signed in November 2006 amending Part 11 of the Children Act 2001, which relates to the Special Residential Service Board (SRSB). This changed the functions and composition of the Board in the context of broader youth justice reform.

The Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No. 2) Regulations 2006 were signed into law in December 2006. These will replace the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 1996 (S.I. No. 398 of 1996) and the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (Amendment) Regulations 1997 (S.I. No. 268 of 1997). These latest regulations will come into operation on 3 September 2007 and their implementation will enable standards and quality in pre-schools to be further improved.

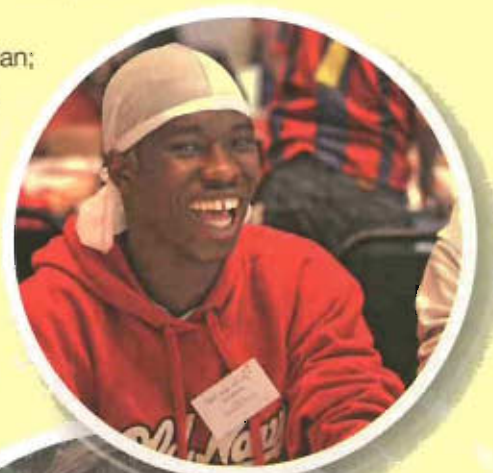
### Service development and delivery

A key function of the Child Welfare and Protection Policy Unit is to develop an effective and responsive working relationship with the HSE and to hold it to account for the delivery of services. This is achieved through regular engagement with the HSE throughout the year, based on its Service Plan. In this regard, the following issues were dealt with during 2006:

- achieving additional funding for the HSE to enhance the delivery of the Teen Parents Support Programme;
- securing a substantial increase in the weekly Foster Care Allowance, to €312 for children under 12 and €339 for children of 12 and over;
- agreeing with the HSE the provision of dedicated funding for the expansion of the Springboard and Youth Advocacy programmes;
- proactively engaging with the HSE in developing its Service Plan;
- optimising the development of statistics on child care through the transfer of responsibility to the HSE for collection of these data;
- agreeing with the HSE the collection of performance indicators across the range of services in order to best inform policy developments;
- consulting on and agreeing new guidelines for Special Care Units and for the Single Separation for Children in Care.

### Ferns Report

During 2006, the Child Welfare and Protection Policy Unit was actively engaged with a range of parties, including the Catholic Church, An Garda Síochána, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, and the HSE in pursuing the implementation of the recommendations of the Ferns Report, published in 2005. This work included a review of Catholic Church Child Protection Practices and the establishment of a National Inter-Agency Review Group.





## National Review of Compliance with *Children First*, National Child Protection Guidelines

In response to the publication of the Ferns Report, the Minister for Children announced a national review of compliance by State bodies and NGOs with the *Children First* guidelines, to be carried out by the OMC in partnership with all relevant Government departments.

This review, which was originally to be carried out by the National Children's Office, became part of the work programme of the newly established OMC.

### The Review Process

- The views of all stakeholders were sought by inviting submissions through advertisements in Sunday and daily newspapers during March 2006. A total of 143 submissions were received.
- Meetings were held with key stakeholders, including the HSE, Department of Health and Children, Department of Education and Science, the Ombudsman for Children, An Garda Síochána and academics.
- Contact was made with all Secretaries General regarding progress to date on the implementation of *Children First* and child protection issues in their departments.

It is expected that the review will be completed during 2007.



## Adoption legislation

In 2006, the OMC continued its work to advance ratification of the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, 1993. Working with the Attorney General's Office, substantial progress has been made on the drafting of a Bill to provide, inter alia, for the creation of the Adoption Authority (replacing the Adoption Board) as the Central Authority required under the terms of the Convention to oversee the implementation of the Convention in effecting intercountry adoptions. It is anticipated that the Bill will be published in 2007.

## Referendum on children

In November 2006, the Taoiseach announced that a Constitutional Referendum on children should take place. The Minister for Children initiated a consultation process to achieve consensus on an appropriate wording for an amendment to the Constitution that would reflect the need to establish robust safeguards for the rights and liberties of children.

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Under Article 44 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Ireland is required to submit a progress report at regular intervals to the UN Committee charged with monitoring implementation of the UNCRC. The OMC submitted Ireland's Second Report in July 2005.



During 2006, the UN Committee continued its work in reviewing Ireland's Second Report, visiting Ireland and meeting with the Ombudsman for Children and the NGO sector. In May 2006, they met with these delegations in Geneva for an oral hearing, at which children and young people were also represented. In August 2006, in response to a request from the UN Committee, the OMC prepared a supplementary report in preparation for the State's examination.

The UN Committee held a hearing to examine the Second Report on 20 September 2006. Ireland was represented by a cross-departmental group of officials, led by the OMC, with the delegation headed by the Minister for Children, Brian Lenihan, TD.

The UN Committee completed and issued its concluding observations on 29 September 2006. It commented on the comprehensiveness of the two reports provided by the State, as well as the fruitful and open dialogue with the high-level delegation attending in Geneva. In its concluding observations, the Committee welcomed, in particular, the appointment of an Ombudsman for Children, the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Children and the adoption of the National Children's Strategy. The Committee also made a number of recommendations where improvements could be made, including the strengthening of children's rights in the Constitution.





## 2 Improving implementation of services and interventions for children at local level

### National Implementation Group on Children's Services

In June 2006, the Government published *Towards 2016: Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015*. The Agreement adopts a lifecycle framework — an innovative approach in the social policy area. The lifecycle approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery, by assessing the risks facing the individual and the supports available to him or her to address those risks at key stages in his or her life. Childhood is one of the key lifecycle stages identified. Key areas to be addressed in relation to children in the Lifecycle Chapter include early childhood development and care; improving education outcomes; improving health outcomes; promoting recreation, sports, arts and culture; income support; and children and their families.

The Lifecycle Chapter also outlines relevant governance frameworks and monitoring mechanisms for each key area. New structures are set out for children, including a National Implementation Group and County-level Children's Services Committees.

The National Implementation Group (NIG) was established by the OMC and held its first meeting in November 2006. Its membership consists of senior officials drawn from the relevant Government departments, the HSE, representatives of local authorities, the education sector and other key agencies. It will have links with the Expert Advisory Group on Children being established by the HSE.

Four sites have been chosen for the initial roll-out of the Children's Services Committees: Dublin City Council (south inner city area), South Dublin County Council, Donegal County Council and Limerick City Council. The aim of this initiative is to test models of best practice that promote cooperative, locally led, strategic planning for children's services. The NIG will work to provide guidance and practical assistance to each of the Committees as they begin their work to establish themselves and develop an integrated plan for children's services in their county/city areas.

### The Prevention and Early Intervention Programme

The Prevention and Early Intervention Programme was established by the Government in February 2006. It is being managed and administered by the OMC and will run for a 5-year period, with funding of €36 million — €18 million provided by Government and €18 million provided by the Atlantic Philanthropies.

The purpose of the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme is to examine innovative methods for improving outcomes for children in an integrated way. The model of approach underpinning this programme is based on evidence of need in the community and an evidence-based approach to what works. The initial focus is on a small number of projects in severely disadvantaged communities.





Three projects were invited to submit proposals to the OMC under the programme:

- *Childhood Development Initiative — A Place for Children in Tallaght West;*
- *Preparing for life* (Northside communities of Belcamp, Darndale and Moatview);
- *Youngballymun.*

In the lead-up to submission of applications, the three projects completed a rigorous and unprecedented planning process. The initial planning process included an assessment of the needs of children and families in the community and the identification of targets and activities to achieve those targets. The projects have developed detailed service plans, involving the linking together of a range of cross-sectoral services, based on proven international models of good practice.

The three projects were evaluated against a rigorous set of criteria by an international expert panel (on behalf of the Government) and separately by the Atlantic Philanthropies. The projects were approved for funding in December 2006.

### The National Play Resource Centre

The National Play Resource Centre was launched in June 2006. It has already added to the momentum of the implementation of Play Policy actions through its training and support for Play Development Officers in local authorities and its awareness-raising and information initiatives around play, including the establishment of a national website ([www.playinireland.ie](http://www.playinireland.ie)).

During 2006, the National Play Resource Centre conducted a survey on the number and location of playgrounds owned and/or managed by local authorities. The survey found that there has been a significant increase in the number of playgrounds in Ireland since the National Play Policy, *Ready, Steady, Play!*, was launched in 2004. There are now 394 playgrounds, representing an increase of 123% since the launch of the policy. In addition, there are 103 new playgrounds planned for completion in the near future. Nationally, the average ratio of playgrounds to population is now 1:9,942, compared to 1:23,317 in 2004.







### National Recreation Policy for Young People

In March 2006, the Minister for Children launched the *Report of the Public Consultation for the Development of the National Recreation Policy for Young People*. The public consultation was undertaken to give all interested parties, including young people, a chance to have a say in developing the policy. Over 900 people responded to the public consultation and young people under the age of 18 accounted for 75% of all respondents.

The consultation indicated broad support among the public for the general direction of the policy, as set out in the consultation document, and provided valuable information on a range of issues relevant to the development of the policy. Some of the key issues emerging from the consultation included:

- the importance of developing a local partnership approach to the development and funding of recreational opportunities for young people;
- consultation with young people on developing recreational opportunities emerged as a key theme;
- the need for both structured and casual recreation in the lives of young people;
- the provision of more recreational facilities was identified as the single biggest need. The most requested facility was somewhere for young people to 'hang out' with their friends — a place that is safe, warm, indoors, affordable, relaxed and legitimate. Youth drop-in centres, shelters and cafés, as well as existing facilities, were all suggested as possible venues where young people could hang out.

Key issues arising from the public consultation and findings from the specially commissioned research by De Róiste and Dinneen, published in December 2005, were considered by the OMC in finalising the National Recreation Policy. The recommendations contained in the policy were approved by Government in December 2006.



### 3 Supporting and advancing best practice in participation by children and young people, children's research and data/information on children's services

#### Participation in decision-making by children and young people

Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy states that 'children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity'. At its inception, the OMC took over the lead role in ensuring implementation of this goal. The following developments took place during 2006 in the area of participation by children and young people.

#### Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg are local child and youth councils, established under the National Children's Strategy in all 34 City and County Development Board areas of the country. The operation of Comhairle na nÓg varies from county to county and many Comhairle are in need of significant support. The development of effective Comhairle na nÓg throughout the country is a major OMC priority for 2006-2008 and is cited in *Towards 2016* as a key innovative Government measure. Effective Comhairle na nÓg in every county will ensure that children and young people can participate in appropriate local and national decision-making. Delegates for the annual Dáil na nÓg (National Youth Parliament) are elected through Comhairle na nÓg.

During 2006, an Implementation Group was established by the OMC to devise a plan for the effective development of Comhairle na nÓg. The group comprises representatives from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government; the Department of Education and Science; the HSE; City and County Development Boards; local authorities; young people; and the youth sector.

#### Dáil na nÓg 2006

Dáil na nÓg 2006 took place on 25 March, with 200 delegates, elected by Comhairle na nÓg throughout the country, attending the session. The themes selected by delegates in advance of the Dáil were 'Facilities for young people' and 'Migration and interculturalism'. Thirty-four young people were elected by their Comhairle na nÓg to serve on the Coiste na dTeachtaí, or Representative Committee, which follows up on the recommendations from the Dáil with the support of the OMC and the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI). During the year, the Coiste na dTeachtaí made presentations to the Oireachtas Committees on Health and Children and on Justice, Equality and Women's Rights, and to other bodies relevant to the themes from the Dáil.





The top recommendation from Dáil na nÓg 2006 was the establishment of a national website providing information about facilities and activities for young people around the country. The Minister for Children asked the OMC to establish such a site, which is expected to be live by September 2007. In cooperation with the OMC, a consortium, consisting of the NYCI, Foróige and Youth Work Ireland, holds the contract to run Dáil na nÓg 2006-2008.

### OMC Children and Young People's Forum

The OMC Children and Young People's Forum (CYPF) was established in 2004 to advise the OMC and the Minister for Children on issues of concern to children and young people within the context of the National Children's Strategy. There are 25 young people in the CYPF, aged 12-18, from Comhairle na nÓg and organisations representing hard-to-reach children and young people. Four representatives of the CYPF are members of the National Children's Advisory Council (NCAC), elected by their peers (see Appendix 1).

Twenty-two members of the CYPF attended a 3-day Summer School in Sligo during July 2006, organised by the OMC and the Health Service Executive, North West. Representatives of the CYPF were involved in planning the Summer School, which was focused on teenage health. Outcomes from the Summer School have been fed into training materials for health service staff.

### Student Councils

Effective student councils are cited in *Towards 2016* as an important measure for increasing participation in decision-making by young people. The *Student Council Resource Pack* and *Diary*, developed by the OMC on behalf of the Student Council Working Group, were launched by the Minister for Children on 6 March 2006. Both publications were sent to every second-level school in Ireland and have proved to be a great success, being in constant demand. The OMC continues to work with the Department of Education and Science to ensure implementation of the recommendations of the Student Council Working Group, which submitted its final report to the Minister for Children in June 2006.

### Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) teaching/learning resource

The OMC is funding a new resource in the CSPE curriculum, entitled *Giving Children and Young People a Voice*. This project is being developed by a partnership between the OMC and the Curriculum Development Unit. It will promote the rights of children and young people to a voice in matters that affect their lives under the National Children's Strategy and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It will also incorporate information about Dáil na nÓg and Comhairle na nÓg, and their potential links with student councils. The establishment or improvement of the student council in each school will be the action project accompanying the resource. This resource is expected to be available for schools during 2007.





## Consultations

In September 2006, the OMC, in partnership with Young Social Innovators, consulted with 80 teenagers from all over the country on behalf of the Task Force on Active Citizenship. The report on the outcome of these consultations was submitted to the Task Force on Active Citizenship as part of its public consultation process.

In October 2006, 210 teenagers, aged 15-18, took part in a consultation on the issues to be considered when examining the age of consent for sexual activity. The consultation was conducted by the National Youth Council of Ireland, Foróige and Youth Work Ireland, in cooperation with and on behalf of the Office of the Minister for Children, at facilitated workshops in Dublin North, Dublin South, Cork, Tullamore and Sligo. Pavee Point also consulted with a cross-section of Traveller teenage boys and girls. The report on the outcome of these consultations was presented to the Minister for Children and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Child Protection on 3 November 2006. A public launch of the report was held by the Minister for Children on 11 November 2006, at which 8 young people spoke and were extensively interviewed by the media.

## Research on children

The OMC has the lead role on Goal 2 of the National Children's Strategy, which states that 'children's lives will be better understood; their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of service'. The following initiatives were undertaken or supported by the OMC during 2006 in researching children's lives.

### National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland

The National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland, *Growing Up in Ireland*, is a Government-funded initiative. Its aim is 'to study the factors that contribute to or undermine the well-being of children in contemporary Irish families and, through this, contribute to the setting of effective and responsive policies relating to children and to the design of services for children and their families'. The study will monitor the development of 18,000 children — a birth cohort of 10,000 and a 9-year-old cohort of 8,000 children — yielding important information about each significant transition throughout their young lives.

This study was commissioned in 2006 by the Department of Health and Children through the OMC, in association with the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Central Statistics Office. A consortium, represented by the Economic and Social Research Institute and Trinity College Dublin, was identified as the preferred bidder for the study and the contract was signed in April 2006.

Preparatory work on the study continued throughout 2006 and the pilot study for the 9-year-old children commenced. It is expected that the main data collection for this cohort will take place in 2007.





This study is being conducted under ethical approval from the Health Research Board's Research Ethics Committee. This involves a rigorous ethical review of each part of the study, including international reports on the project's design and content. This process will ensure that every step possible is taken to safeguard the rights, safety and well-being of those who will participate in the study, as well as the researchers.

### **Report on *State of the Nation's Children***

Ireland's first *State of the Nation's Children* report was compiled by the OMC Research Division, in association with the Central Statistics Office, the Statistics Division of the Department of Health and Children, and the Health Promotion Unit, National University of Ireland, Galway. This report will provide a description of the well-being of children and young people in Ireland as of 2006 and, being the first such report to be produced, will set a benchmark for developments into the future. The report is based on a national set of child well-being indicators developed in 2005 and includes 48 indicators of children's well-being, considered to be important by multiple stakeholders, including children themselves. Background documentation relating to this development is available on the OMC website ([www.omc.gov.ie](http://www.omc.gov.ie)).

The report is published in fulfilment of a commitment given in the National Children's Strategy that a regularly updated statement of key indicators of children's well-being would be made available. This commitment reflects a more global effort to measure and monitor child well-being. *State of the Nation's Children* reports are now a feature of a number of other countries, including Canada, the USA and New Zealand.



### **National Children's Strategy Research Fellowships**

In 2001, the National Children's Strategy Research Scholarship Scheme was established with the aim of developing research capacity in relation to children and supporting research directly related to the National Children's Strategy. Under this scheme, successful applicants receive an annual maintenance grant of €12,700 and also have their university fees paid in full by the OMC. Three Doctoral Scholarships were awarded during 2006, covering the following issues:

- Qualitative Methods of Research with Children: An exploration of the Researcher – Child relationship;
- Mainstreaming of Deaf Education in Ireland: An international comparative study of policy and practice;
- Promoting Learning Strategies in Children with ICTS.

In 2004, the National Children's Strategy Research Scholarship Scheme was extended to include Research Placement Awards. This scheme gives students the opportunity to work with the Research Division of the OMC. Two research placements were awarded during 2006, bringing to 8 the total number of placements since 2004.





### National Children's Strategy Research Programme

Under the OMC's Research Programme 2006-2009, a total of 6 research projects were commissioned in 2006:

- Children's Perspectives on Parenting Styles and Discipline;
- Public Library Services for Children and Young People in Ireland;
- Ethics Committees and Ethics Approval for Children's Research in Ireland;
- Services and Supports for Children on Remand in Ireland;
- Child Protection Services in Ireland: An evaluation by service users;
- Post-Separation Parenting: A study of parent – child contact agreements and arrangements.

The following studies from the 2004-2006 Research Programme were published in 2006:

- *Understanding Youth Homelessness in Dublin City: Key findings from the first phase of a longitudinal cohort study* (Mayock and Vekić);
- *Giving Children a Voice: Investigation of children's experiences of participation in consultation and decision-making in Irish hospitals* (Coyne et al);
- *The Child's Right to be heard in the Healthcare Setting: Perspectives of children, parents and health professionals* (Kilkelly and Donnelly).

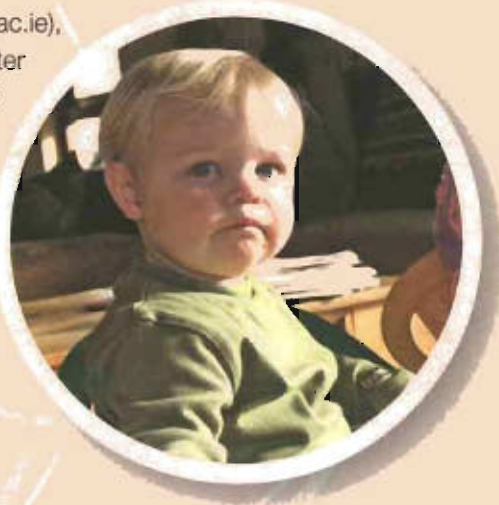
### Electronic research and information resource

Funding was received in 2006 to create an electronic resource to bring together websites, databases and other research and information materials relating to children. The key focus at this time is on information with a policy focus and it is expected that this resource will be accessible through the OMC website in 2007.

### National Children's Advisory Council's examination of volunteering

In March 2006, the Minister for Children requested the National Children's Advisory Council (NCAC) to carry out an examination of volunteering and to advise on the measures necessary to actively encourage, support and promote voluntary activity among children and young people. The main aim of the research was to examine youth volunteering in Ireland by giving full voice to the experiences and ambitions of children and young people in volunteering and to identify key recommendations for both policy and practice. The resultant report, *Research on Youth Volunteering in Ireland*, contains a number of core recommendations to promote volunteering and, in particular, the development of a National Youth Volunteering Framework to drive forward, support and monitor the development of volunteering among children and young people.

The report, which is available on the NCAC's website ([www.ncac.ie](http://www.ncac.ie)), was forwarded to the Task Force on Active Citizenship by the Minister in October 2006 to assist it in concluding recommendations to Government on measures to foster and facilitate greater levels of active citizenship among young people and on the issues that affect them on a local and national level.



## 4 Facilitating the provision of childcare supports for families, particularly those in disadvantaged areas

The Childcare Directorate within the OMC operates a number of programmes to facilitate the provision of childcare supports for families, particularly those experiencing disadvantage.

### Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006

From 2000, the key mechanism for delivering the National Childcare Strategy was the EU co-funded Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006 (EOCP), which operated under the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform until the establishment of the OMC at the end of 2005. The EOCP was established as a major investment programme to develop childcare facilities to ensure the availability of quality childcare services to parents when accessing employment, training or education. The programme had a total allocation of €499 million, including a capital allocation of €204.5 million and a further allocation in current funding of €294.5 million. By the end of 2006, the total funding allocated under the EOCP was €564.6 million and some 34,000 childcare places had been created. A further 25,000 existing places were also funded. Additional childcare places will continue to be created during 2007, which is the final year of programme expenditure.

Under the EOCP, capital grants were available to community-based (not for profit) providers, who could apply for full grant funding. Smaller capital grants were available to private sector providers.

The EOCP provided grant assistance towards the staffing costs of community-based childcare services with a particular focus on disadvantage. In 2006, this amounted to €16 million. The EOCP also supported a series of quality improvement measures, including supports for childcare training programmes and for childminders. These measures were delivered at local level by the network of 33 City and County Childcare Committees, which were established and funded under the EOCP to assist in the development of a local childcare infrastructure. The quality improvement measures, including the delivery of childcare training and accreditation, were also supported by the work of a number of national voluntary childcare organisations, which were funded under the programme.





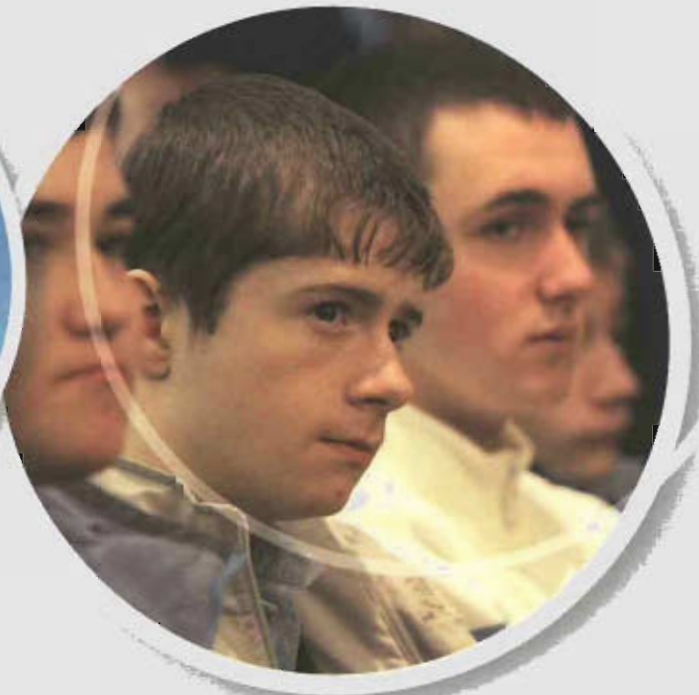
## National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010

As part of the launch of the National Childcare Strategy 2006-2010, a new National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 (NCIP) was introduced in January 2006 as an Exchequer-funded successor programme to the EOCP (see p. 15). The NCIP has been given a total allocation of €575 million, of which €357 million is capital and €218 million is in respect of current funding. Targets have been set for the NCIP to create 50,000 additional childcare places, with 10,000 of these for children aged 3-4 years with a focus on education and 5,000 for school-going children. As was the case under the EOCP, NCIP capital grants are available to both community-based and private childcare providers. During 2006, 1,300 NCIP capital grant applications with a total value of almost €242 million were received and some 300 applications were approved for funding. NCIP staffing grants are expected to be introduced in 2007 as the EOCP draws to a close.

As the NCIP and its predecessor the EOCP result in the increasing development of the childcare infrastructure, it is important to ensure that funding and other programme supports are provided in a way that meet identified local childcare service needs. To achieve this objective, the City and County Childcare Committees — established under the EOCP to provide a network of local support for the sector — were given a new, more proactive role under the NCIP in assisting capital grant applicants with the initial stages of project development.

## Early Childcare Supplement

A new Early Childcare Supplement (ECS) was introduced in April 2006 as a payment to parents of children aged under 6 years in recognition of the additional childcare costs faced by parents of young children. The OMC is responsible for the payment, which amounts to €1,000 per annum and is paid directly to parents, in quarterly instalments of €250. The Department of Social and Family Affairs administers the payments on an agency basis for the OMC and eligibility is determined on the basis of the same general criteria as apply for Child Benefit. In the final quarter of 2006, payments of the ECS were made in respect of some 396,000 children, indicating a full-year cost for the ECS in the region of €400 million.





## 5 Building an effective youth justice service for children and young people

Following a comprehensive review of the youth justice system, the Government agreed a programme in December 2005 to implement youth justice reforms. These reforms included the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC); the establishment of the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS), to be co-located with the OMC, as an executive office of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; and a number of key legislative amendments to the Children Act 2001.

The remit of the IYJS is to implement the criminal justice provisions of the Children Act 2001, which relate to sanctions in the community, restorative justice and diversion projects, as well as the operation of detention schools. In 2006:

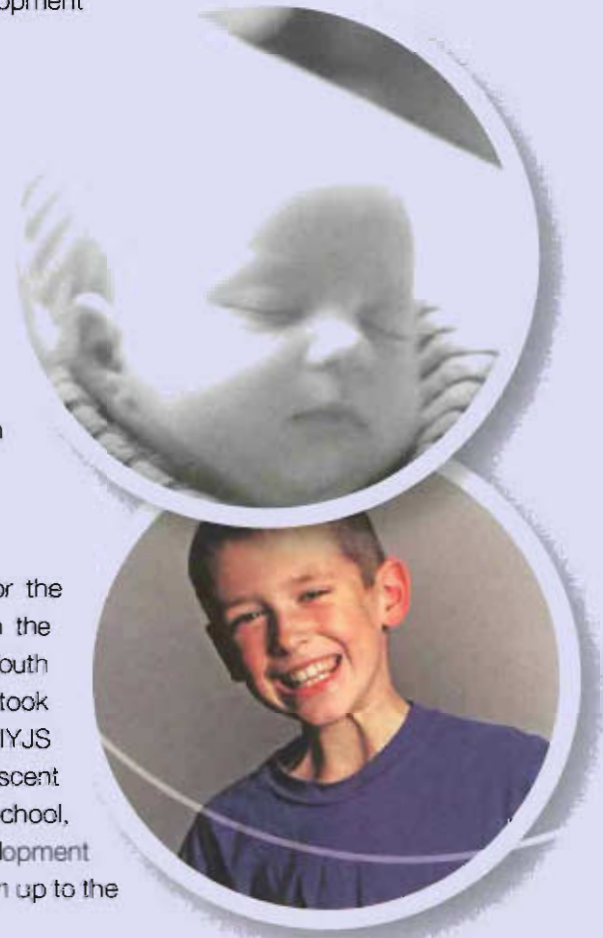
- a national director was appointed to oversee the development and management of the IYJS;
- a national manager was appointed to oversee the operation and development of the children detention schools.

### Amendments to Children Act 2001

Amendments to the Children Act 2001 were introduced through the Criminal Justice Bill 2006 and were passed in that year. Preparations for the commencement of these provisions also took place in 2006. The Children Act 2001 places a particular emphasis on diversion and using detention as a last resort. The main changes include:

#### Detention schools

- Provision was made for the transfer of responsibility for the management of children detention school facilities from the Department of Education and Science to the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS). Planning to facilitate this transfer took place in 2006. The four detention schools for which the IYJS has assumed responsibility are Finglas Child and Adolescent Centre; Oberstown Boys School, Lusk; Oberstown Girls School, Lusk; and Trinity House School, Lusk. The planned development of these schools will eventually cater for referrals of children up to the age of 18 from the Courts.
- The ending of the practice of remanding a child to custody where the only reason for doing so is that the child is in need of care or protection was established during 2006. In future, such children will be accommodated in secure facilities provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE).



### Non-custodial measures — new Community Sanctions

- A range of new Community Sanctions for children, to be operated by the Probation Service, were made statutory, thus providing the Courts with more alternatives to custody for young people who offend.

### Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

- Separate provisions to address anti-social behaviour by young people were also included. Before a Behaviour Order can be sought, behaviour warning and good behaviour contract procedures are pursued. Behaviour orders are a civil matter and only become a criminal matter if they are breached.

### Age of criminal responsibility

- The minimum age of criminal responsibility was raised from 7 years to 12 years in all but the most serious cases. This provision commenced on 16 October 2006 and means that no child can be charged with an offence apart from unlawful killing, a rape offence or aggravated sexual assault; and no proceedings can be taken against a child under 14 years except by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

### Emphasis on diversion

- To complement the changes to the Children Act 2001 as amended, the number of Garda Diversion Projects was increased from 64 to 74 by October 2006. This will help with a target of 100 projects nationwide before the end of 2007.

### Irish Youth Justice Strategy

In the latter part of 2006, consultations began on a National Youth Justice Strategy, which is due to be published in 2007. The strategy is based on decisions to reform the youth justice area. It will include a number of goals and targets that will help the Irish Youth Justice Service to focus policies and resources.





## 6 Developing policy for early years education

### Structural developments

In 2006, a new Early Years Education Policy Unit (EYEPU) was established within the Department of Education and Science. The EYEPU will be co-located with the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC). Both bodies will address the issues of fragmentation of policy development and service delivery in the sector and respond directly to related recommendations in the White Paper on Early Childhood Education, entitled *Ready to Learn*, published in December 1999 by the Department of Education and Science. Attention will also be paid to the OECD Review of Early Childhood Education in Ireland (2004) and the subsequent NESF report (2005).

The background to these developments is as follows. In 1999, the White Paper *Ready to Learn* set out a comprehensive strategy for the development of early childhood education for all children aged up to 6 years. The key emphasis in the strategy was on raising standards and quality of provision by the State, as well as by private providers and voluntary groups, through the development of a national quality framework for providers in the sector. Enhancing access was also emphasised, through the development of targeted supports for children at risk, including those affected by disadvantage, and for children with special needs.

The Department of Education and Science invited the OECD Directorate for Education to conduct a short review of early childhood policies and services in Ireland, focusing on quality, access and coordination in early childhood provision. The OECD report, published in September 2004, made the case for a single accountable leadership in the field, providing an integrated system to cover all children from 1 to 6 years and including out-of-school care. Strong emphasis was placed throughout the report on working towards closer cooperation and partnership between all stakeholders involved in early childhood care and education policies and services in Ireland. The establishment of the OMC and the co-location of policy units responsible for early years education, childcare and child welfare and protection is an effective Government response to addressing and improving integration in this area.

### Emerging policy developments

#### Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education

The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE), established by the Department of Education and Science in 2002 in response to the White Paper on Early Childhood Education, advises on the development of early years education in Ireland. Its principal objectives are:

- to develop a quality framework for early childhood education;
- to develop targeted interventions for disadvantaged and special needs children.





In 2006, the CECDE published *Siolta*, a National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education. The principles underlying *Siolta* can be applied across the spectrum of early childhood care and education provision.

## Current provision

### Provision within the primary school sector

Although early years education covers children from 0-6, debate on provision in the Irish sector generally centres on the 3-6 age group. This includes the primary school infant provision for 4-6 year-olds in about 3,200 primary schools. Nearly half (49.2%) of 4-year-olds and virtually all (99.9%) of 5-year-olds are enrolled in infant classes in primary schools. Outside of this universal provision in the primary sector, pre-school initiatives, funded by the State, have been targeted towards children who experience disadvantage or who have special needs.

### Social inclusion measures include:

- The **Early Start** pre-school project was established in 1994/95 in 40 primary schools in designated areas of urban disadvantage in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway, Drogheda and Dundalk. The project employs 56 teachers and 56 childcare workers in 16 full Early Start units (serving 60 children each, 30 in the morning and 30 in the afternoon) and 24 half units (serving 30 children each, morning only). The total number of spaces provided by the existing 40 Early Start centres is 1,680.
- The **Rutland Street Project**, established in 1969, is a pre-school attached to the Rutland Street primary school in Dublin. Although not part of Early Start, it was used to pilot many of the approaches later incorporated in the Early Start project.
- **Traveller pre-schools:** There are currently 46 pre-schools catering for approximately 500 Traveller children. The policy set out in the 2006 Traveller Education Strategy is to move towards integrated provision for Traveller services, including Traveller pre-schools.
- **Special Education needs:** The Department of Education and Science funds a number of interventions, including 18 pre-school classes to facilitate the demand for early intervention provision for children on the autistic spectrum. The Department also operates a home tuition scheme, providing funding for early educational intervention for pre-school children with autism.



## Appendix 1: National Children's Advisory Council

Name	Organisation
Mr. Peter O'Brien, <i>Chairperson</i>	
Mr. Robert Deegan, <i>Secretary</i>	OMC
Ms. Maria Corbett	Children's Rights Alliance
Mr. Denis Drought	OMC Children and Young People's Forum
Ms. Norah Gibbons	Barnardos
Mr. Paul Gilligan	ISPCC
Ms. Geraldine Graydon	National Parents Council – Primary
Ms. Irene Gunning	National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee
Mr. Charlie Hardy	Department of Health and Children
Ms. Méabh Healy	OMC Children and Young People's Forum
Ms. Audrey Hegarty	Department of Education and Science
Mr. David Hopkins	Ministerial nominee
Mr. Jim Jackman	National Parents Council – Post Primary
Mr. Diarmuid Kearney	National Youth Council of Ireland
Mr. Anthony Keigher	OMC Children and Young People's Forum
Ms. Marie Kennedy	OMC
Mr. Neil Maher <sup>1</sup>	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
Mr. Seamus Mannion	HSE
Mr. George Maybury	Ministerial nominee
Mr. Heber McMahon	Department of Social and Family Affairs
Ms. Mary Meaney	National Disability Authority
Mr. Finbarr Murphy	An Garda Síochána
Ms. Collette Murray	Pavee Point
Dr. Saoirse Nic Gabhainn	National Children's Research Advisory Board
Mr. Michael O'Connor	Focus Ireland
Ms. Sheila O'Donnell	OMC Children and Young People's Forum
Sr. Catherine Prendergast	CORI
Ms. Bernie Priestly <sup>2</sup>	Irish Sports Council
Dr. Dermot Stokes	Ministerial nominee
Ms. Gaye Tanham	The Arts Council
Ms. Jennifer Wallace	National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Neil Maher replaced Mr. Eamon Waters, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. Bernie Priestly replaced Ms. Anne Marie Hughes, Irish Sports Council.

## Appendix 2: National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee

Name	Organisation
Ms. Sylva Langford, <i>Chairperson</i>	OMC
Ms. Emma-Jane Morgan, <i>Secretary</i>	OMC
Ms. Catherine Bond	National Children's Nurseries Association
Ms. Aisling Byrne	FÁS
Ms. Anne Carter	Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly
Ms. Veronica Cawley	Border Midland Western Regional Assembly
Ms. Dorothy Clarke	Sligo County Council
Ms. Anne Conroy	Barnardos
Dr. Tony Crooks	Pobal
Mr. Brian Dignam	HSE, East Coast Area
Ms. Siobhan Fitzpatrick	High Scope Ireland
Ms. Cliona Frost	Forbairt Naíonraí Teo
Ms. Caoimhe Gavin	Chambers Ireland
Ms. Irene Gunning	Irish Pre-Schools Playgroup Association
Ms. Nóirín Hayes	Dublin Institute of Technology
Mr. Jim Hewison	Southern & Eastern County Childcare Committee
Ms. Catherine Hynes	OMC
Ms. Mary Keane	Action South Kildare Ltd
Ms. Maura Keating	Pobal
Ms. Catherine Lawlor	St. Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland
Ms. Heidi Loughheed	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
Mr. Alex MacLean	Border Midland Western County Childcare Committee
Ms. Colette Murray	Community Pillar
Ms. Patricia Murray	Childminding Ireland
Ms. Orla O'Connor	National Women's Council of Ireland
Ms. Moira O'Mara	OMC
Mr. Pearse O'Shiel	Irish Steiner Waldorf Early Education Association
Ms. Vivienne Rattigan	Irish Congress of Trades Unions
Mr. Heino Schonfeld	Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
Ms. Catherine Sheehan	Planet
Ms. Mary Sherry	Irish Farmers Association



## Aguisín 2: Coiste Náisiúnta Comhordaithe um Chúram Leanaí

Ainm	Eagraíocht
Sylda Langford Uasal, <i>Cathaoirleach</i>	OAL
Emma-Jane Morgan Uasal, <i>Rúnaí</i>	OAL
Catherine Bond Uasal	National Children's Nurseries Association
Aisling Byrne Uasal	FÁS
Anne Carter Uasal	Tionól Reigiúnach an Deiscirt & an Oirthir
Veronica Cawley Uasal	Tionól Réigiúnach na Teorann Lártíre Iarthair
Dorothy Clarke Uasal	Comhairle Chontae Shligigh
Anne Conroy Uasal	Barnardos
An Dr. Tony Crooks	Pobal
An tUas. Brian Dignam	FSS, Limistéar an Chósta Thoir
Siobhan Fitzpatrick Uasal	High Scope Ireland
Cliona Frost Uasal	Forbairt Naíonraí Teo
Caoimhe Gavin Uasal	Chambers Ireland
Irene Gunning Uasal	Irish Pre-Schools Playgroup Association
Nóirín Hayes Uasal	Institiúid Theicneolaíochta Bhaile Átha Cliath
An tUas. Jim Hewison	Coiste Cúram Leanaí an Deiscirt & an Oirthir
Catherine Hynes Uasal	OAL
Mary Keane Uasal	Action South Kildare Ltd
Maura Keating Uasal	Pobal
Catherine Lawlor Uasal	St. Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland
Heidi Loughheed Uasal	Cónaidhm Ghnólachtaí agus Fhostóirí na hÉireann
An tUas. Alex MacLean	Coiste Cúram Leanaí na Teorann Lártíre Iarthair
Colette Murray Uasal	Community Pillar
Patricia Murray Uasal	Feighlíocht Leanaí na hÉireann
Orla O'Connor Uasal	National Women's Council of Ireland
Maira O'Mara Uasal	OAL
An tUas. Pearse O'Shiel	Irish Steiner Waldorf Early Education Association
Vivienne Rattigan Uasal	Comhdháil na gCeardchumann
An tUas. Heino Schonfeld	Ionad um Fhorbairt agus Oideachas Luath-Óige
Catherine Sheehan Uasal	Planet
Mary Sherry Uasal	Feirmeoirí Aontaithe na hÉireann

## Aguisín 1: An Chomhairle Chomhairleach Náisiúnta um Leanaí

Ainm	Eagraíocht
An tUas. Peter O'Brien, Cathaoirleach	
An tUas. Robert Deegan, <i>Rúnaí</i>	OMC
Maria Corbett Uasal	Comhaontas Cearta na Leanaí
An tUas. Denis Drought	Fóram Leanaí agus Daoine Óga an OAL
Norah Gibbons Uasal	Barnardos
An tUas. Paul Gilligan	ISPCC
Geraldine Graydon Uasal	Comhairle Náisiúnta na dTuismitheoirí – Bunoideachas
Irene Gunning Uasal	Coiste Náisiúnta Comhordaithe um Chúram Leanaí
An tUas. Charlie Hardy	An Roinn Sláinte agus Leanaí
Méabh Healy Uasal	Fóram Leanaí agus Daoine Óga an OAL
Audrey Hegarty Uasal	An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta
An tUas. David Hopkins	Ainmní na nAí
An tUas. Jim Jackman	Comhairle Náisiúnta na dTuismitheoirí – Iar-Bhunscoile
An tUas. Diarmuid Kearney	Comhairle Náisiúnta Óige na hÉireann
An tUas. Anthony Keigher	Fóram Leanaí agus Daoine Óga an OAL
Marie Kennedy Uasal	OAL
An tUas. Neil Maher <sup>1</sup>	An Roinn Comhshaoil, Oidhreacht agus Rialtais Áitiúil
An tUas. Seamus Mannion	FSS
An tUas. George Maybury	Ainmní na nAí
An tUas. Heber McMahon	Roinn Gnóthaí Sóisialacha agus Teaghlaigh
Mary Meaney Uasal	An tÚdarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
An tUas. Finbarr Murphy	An Garda Síochána
Collette Murray Uasal	Pavee Point
An Dr. Saoirse Nic Gabhainn	An Chomhairle Chomhairleach Náisiúnta um Leanaí
An tUas. Michael O'Connor	Focas Ireland
Sheila O'Donnell Uasal	Fóram Leanaí agus Daoine Óga an OAL
An tSr. Catherine Prendergast	CORI
Bernie Priestly Uasal <sup>2</sup>	Comhairle Spóirt na hÉireann
An Dr. Dermot Stokes	Ainmní na nAí
Gaye Tanham Uasal	An Chomhairle Ealaíon
Jennifer Wallace Uasal	Coiste Comhairlithe Náisiúnta ar Chiníochas agus Idirchultúrachas

<sup>1</sup> Thóg an tUas. Neil Maher áit an tUas. Eamon Waters, An Roinn Comhshaoil, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil.

<sup>2</sup> Thóg Bernie Priestly Uasal áit Anne Marie Hughes Uasal, Comhairle Spóirt na hÉireann.





I 2006, d'fhoilsigh an CECDE *Siolta*, Creatlach Náisiúnta Cállochta an Oideachais Luath-Óige. Is féidir na prionsabail a thacaíonn le *Siolta* a fheidhmiú thar speictream an fhoráil um chúram agus oideachas luath-óige.

## Foráil láithreach

### Foráil laistigh d'earnáil na bunscoile

Cé go gclúdaíonn oideachas luath-óige leanaí ó 0-6, go ginearálta díreann an díospóireacht ar fhoráil san earnáil Éireannach ar an aois ghrúpa 3-6. Áiríonn sé seo foráil naíonáin na bunscoile le haghaidh leanaí 4-6 bliana i thart ar 3,200 bunscoil. Tá nach mór leath (49.2%) de leanaí 4 bliana agus leanaí 5 bliana uile (99.9%) cláraithe sna ranganna naíonáin i mbunscoileanna. Lasmuigh den fhoráil uilíoch seo in earnáil an bhunoideachais, táthar tar éis tionscnaimh réamhscolaíochta, maoinithe ag an Stát, a dhiriú i dtreo leanaí a mbraitheann mibhuntaíste nó ag a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta.

Áiríonn bearta um chuimsiú sóisialta:

- Bunaíodh an tionscadal réamhscolaíochta **Tús Luath** i 1994/95 i 40 bunscoil i limistéir cheaptha le mibhuntaíste uirbeach i mBaile Átha Cliath, Corcaigh, Luimneach, Port Láirge, Gaillimh, An Droichead Átha agus Dún Dealgan. Fostaíonn an tionscadal 56 múinteoir agus 56 oibrí cúraim leanaí i 16 aonad iomlán Tús Luath (ag freastal ar 60 leanbh an ceann, 30 ar maidin agus 30 sa tráthnóna) agus 24 leath aonad (ag freastal ar 30 leanbh an ceann, ar maidin amháin). Is é 1,680 líon iomlán na spásanna soláthartha ag an 40 ionad Tús Luath láithreach.
- Is é atá i gceist le **Tionscadal Sráid Rutland**, bunaithe i 1969, ná naíonra ceangailte le bunscoil Sráid Rutland i mBaile Átha Cliath. Cé nach bhfuil se mar chuid de Tús Luath, úsáideadh é chun triail a bhaint as go leor de na cur chuigí ionchorpraithe níos déanaí sa tionscadal Tús Luath.
- **Naíonraí an Lucht Siúil:** Faoi láthair tá 46 naíonra ag freastal ar thart ar 500 leanbh de chuid an Lucht Siúil. An beartas atá leagtha amach i Straitéis Oideachais an Lucht Siúil 2006 ná chun bogadh i dtreo foráil comhtháite do sheirbhísí an Lucht Siúil, lena n-áirítear naíonraí an Lucht Siúil.
- **Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais:** Soláthraíonn an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta maoiniú le haghaidh go leor idirghabháil lena n-áirítear 18 rang réamhscolaíochta chun éascú a dhéanamh ar an éileamh le haghaidh foráil idirghabhála luath do leanaí i speictream an uathachais. Freisin feidhmíonn an Roinn scéim teagaisc baile, ag soláthar maoiniú le haghaidh idirghabháil oideachais luath do leanaí réamhscolaíochta leis an siondróim uathachais.



## 6 Forbairt bheartais le haghaidh luathoideachas

### Forbairtí struchtúrtha

I 2006, bunaíodh Aonad Beartais um Luathoideachas (EYEPU) laistigh den Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta. Beidh EYEPU comh-ionannaithe le Oifig an Aire Leanaí (OAL). Rachaidh an dá comhlacht i gcomhrac le saincheisteanna ilroinnt na bhforbairtí beartais agus seachadadh seirbhíse san earnáil agus freagróidh siad go díreach do mholtaí ábhartha sa Páipéar Bán ar Oideachas Luath-Óige, dar teideal *Ready to Learn*, foilsithe i Nollaig 1999 ag an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta. Tabharfar aird freisin ar an OECD Review of Early Childhood Education in Ireland (2004) agus an tuarascáil NESF (2005) a tháinig ina dhiaidh.

Seo a leanas cúlra na bhforbairtí seo. I 1999, leag an Páipéar Bán *Ready to Learn* amach straitéis cuimsitheach le haghaidh forbairt an oideachais luath-óige do leanaí uile suas go 6 bliana. Cuireadh príomhbéim na straitéise ar ardú caighdeán agus cáilíocht na bhforálacha ag an Stát, chomh maith le soláthraithe próbháideacha agus grúpaí deonacha, trí an fhorbairt de chreatlach náisiúnta cáilíochta le haghaidh soláthraithe san earnáil. Cuireadh béim freisin ar inrochtaineacht a fheabhsú, trí an fhorbairt de thacaíochtaí sprioctha le haghaidh leanaí i mbaol, lena n-áirítear iad siúd faoi thionchar mibhuntaíste, agus le haghaidh leanaí le riachtanais speisialta.

Thug an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta cuireadh do Stiúrthóir Oideachais an OECD chun athbhreithniú gairid a bhaint amach de bheartais agus seirbhísí luath-óige in Éirinn, ag díriú ar cháilíocht, rochtain agus comhordú i bhforáil luath-óige. Rinne tuarascáil an OECD, foilsithe i Meán Fómhair 2004, an cás le haghaidh ceannaireacht freagrach aonair sa réimse luath-óige, ag soláthar córas comhtháite chun leanaí uile a chlúdach ó 1 go 6 bliana agus lena n-áirítear cúram lasmuigh den scoil. Cuireadh béim láidir tríd síos an tuarascáil ar obair i dtreo comhpháirtíocht agus comhoibriú níos dlúithe idir geallshealbhóirí uile bainteach i mbeartais agus seirbhísí um chúram agus oideachas luath-óige in Éirinn. Is freagra Rialtais éifeachtach i leith dul i gcomhrac le agus feabhsú comhtháthú sa réimse seo é bunú an OAL agus comhlonnú na n-aonad beartais freagrach as ucht oideachas, cúram leanaí luath-óige agus leas agus cosaint leanaí.

### Forbairtí beartais ag teacht chun cinn

#### Ionad um Fhorbairt agus Oideachas Luath-Óige

I 2002 bhunaigh an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta an Ionad um Fhorbairt agus Oideachas Luath-Óige mar fhreagra ar an bPáipéar Bán ar Oideachas Luath-Óige, a sholáthraíonn comhairle ar fhorbairt an oideachais luath-óige in Éirinn. Na príomhchuspóirí atá aige ná:

- chun creatlach cáilíochta a fhorbairt le haghaidh oideachas luath-óige;
- chun idirghabháil sprioctha a fhorbairt le haghaidh leanaí mibhuntaísteacha agus le riachtanais speisialta.





### Bearta neamh-choimeádta — Smachtbhannaí Pobail nua

- Rinneadh réimse de Smachtbhannaí Pobail nua do leanaí, le feidhmiú ag an tSeirbhís Promhaidh, reachtúil, mar sin ag soláthar níos mó roghanna eile do na Cúirteanna seachas cúram do dhaoine óga a chiontaíonn.

### Orduithe um Iompar Frithshóisialta

- Airíodh freisin forálacha ar leith chun dul i gcomhrac le hiompar frithshóisialta ag daoine óga. Sular féidir Ordú Iompair a lorg, téitear sa tóir ar ghnáthaimh chonartha dea-iompair agus rabhadh iompair. Is ábhair shibhialta iad orduithe iompair agus ní chasann siad ina ordú coiriúil go dtí go sáraítear iad.

### Aois um fhreagracht choiriúil

- Ardaíodh aois iosta um fhreagracht choiriúil ó 7 mbliana go 12 mbliana i gcásanna uile seachas na cinn is tromchúisí. Thosaigh an foráil seo ar 16 Deireadh Fómhair 2006 agus ciallaíonn sé nach féidir aon pháiste a chúiseamh le coir seachas marú neamhdhleathach, coir éignithe nó tromionsaí gnéasach; agus ní féidir aon imeachtaí dlí a thógáil in aghaidh leanbh faoi bhun 14 bliain seachas faoi nó le comhthoiliú an Stiúrthóir Ionchúiseamh Poiblí.

### Béim ar atreorú

- Chun comhlánú a dhéanamh ar na hathruithe chuig Acht na Leanaí 2001 arna leasú, méadaíodh líon Tionscadail Atreoraithe na nGardaí ó 64 go 74 faoi Deireadh Fómhair 2006. Guideoidh sé seo le sprioc de 100 tionscadal ar fud na tíre roimh dheireadh 2007.

### Straitéis na hÉireann um Cheartas Óige

Sa chuid deireanach de 2006, thosaigh comhairliúcháin ar Straitéis Náisiúnta um Cheartas Óige, atá le bheith foilsithe i 2007. Tá an straitéis bunaithe ar chinntí chun an réimse um cheartas óige a leasú. Áireoidh sé seo roinnt spriocanna a chuideoidh le Seirbhís na hÉireann um Cheartas Óige chun díriú ar bheartais agus acmhainní.



## 5 Ag tógáil seirbhís éifeachtach um cheartas óige do leanaí agus daoine óga

Tar éis athbhreithniú cuimsitheach den chóras ceartais óige, d'aontaigh an Rialtas clár i Nollaig 2005 chun athchóirithe ceartas óige a thabhairt isteach. San áireamh sna athchóirithe seo bhí an bhunú d'Oifig an Aire do Leanaí (OAL); an bhunú den Sheirbhís Ceartais Óige na hÉireann (IYJS) le bheith athlonnaithe leis an OAL, mar oifig feidhmiúcháin den Roinn Dlí agus Cirt, Comhionannas agus Athchóirithe Dlí; agus roinnt leasuithe reachtaíochta d'Acht na Leanaí 2001.

Is é sainchúram an IYJS ná chun na forálacha ceartais coiriúil d'Acht na Leanaí 2001 a chur i bhfeidhm, a bhaineann le smachtbhannaí sna tionscadail pobail, ceartais aisiríoch agus athstiúrtha, chomh maith le fheidhmiú scoile coinneála. I 2006:

- cheapadh stiúrthóir náisiúnta chun maoirseacht a dhéanamh maidir leis an bhforbairt agus bainistíocht den IYJS;
- cheapadh bainisteoir náisiúnta chun maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar fheidhmiú agus forbairt na scoile coinneála leanaí.

### Leasuithe chuig Acht na Leanaí 2001

Cuireadh isteach leasuithe d'Acht na Leanaí 2001 tríd an Bille um Cheartas Coiriúil 2006 agus agus ritheadh iad sa bhliain sin. Tharla ullmhúcháin do thosach feidhme na forálacha seo freisin i 2006. Cuireann an Acht do Leanaí 2001 béim áirithe ar athstiúrtha agus ag úsáid coinneáil mar rogha dheiridh. Sna príomh-athruithe tá:

#### Scoileanna coinneála

- Rinneadh foráil den aistriú de fhreagracht ón Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta go dtí an Sheirbhís Ceartais Óige na hÉireann (IYJS) maidir le bhainistíocht áiseanna scoil coinneála. Cuireadh planáil chun an t-aistriú seo a éascú ar siúl i 2006. Is iad na ceithre scoileanna, a ghlac an IYJS freagracht astu ná Finglas Child and Adolescent Centre; Oberstown Boys School, Lusca; Oberstown Girls School, Lusca; agus Trinity House School, Lusca. Beidh na forbairtí planáilte do na scoileanna seo faoi dheireadh ag freastal ar tarchuir de leanaí suas go dtí an aois de 18 ó na gCúirteanna.
- Bunaíodh an deireadh den chleachtas ag athchur leanbh i gcoimeád nuair is é an t-aon chúis chun é a dhéanamh ná go bhfuil an leanbh le cúram nó cosaint de dhíth orthu le linn 2006. Sa todhchaí, cuirfidh Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte (FSS) áiseanna sábháilteacht ar fáil dá leithéid leanaí.





## Clár Infheistíochta Náisiúnta um Chúram Leanaí 2006-2010

Mar chuid de sheoladh an Straitéis Náisiúnta um Chúram Leanaí 2006-2010, cuirtear isteach Clár Infheistíochta Náisiúnta nua um Chúram Leanaí 2006-2010 (NCIP) in Eanáir 2006 mar chlár chomharbais don EOCP (*féach lch. 15*) á mhaoiniú ag an Státchiste. Tugadh leithdháileadh iomlán de €575 milliún don NCIP, as a bhfuil €357 milliún de mar chaipitil agus tá €218 milliún maidir le mhaoiniú reatha. Leagtar amach spriocanna don NCIP chun 50,000 áit sa bhreis ó thaobh cúram leanaí de a chruthú, le 10,000 dóibh siúd dírithe ar leanaí 3 go 4 bliain d'aois le fócas ar oideachas agus 5,000 do leanaí in aois scoile. Mar a bhí an chás faoin EOCP, tá deontais caipitiúil NCIP ar fáil do sholáthraithe atá pobal bunaithe agus san earnáil príobháideach. I rith 2006, fuarthas 1,300 iarratais ar dheontais caipitiúil NCIP le luach iomlán de nach mór €242 milliún agus formheastar 300 iarratais do mhaoiniú. Meastar go cuirfear deontais fhoirne NCIP isteach i 2007 nuair a tharraingíonn an EOCP suas.

De réir mar a mhéadaíonn an NCIP agus a réamhtheachtaí an EOCP an fhorbairt ar an mbonneagar cúraim leanaí, tá sé tábhachtach le chinntiú go sholáthar maoiniú agus tacaíochtaí cláir eile ar bhealach a shásaíonn riachtanais seirbhísi cúraim leanaí áitiúla aitheanta. Chun an chuspóir seo a bhaint amach, tugtar ról nua, níos réamhghníomhach faoin NCIP, do na Coistí um Chúram Leanaí – a bhunaíodh faoin EOCP chun gréasáin de thacaíocht áitiúil a sholáthar don earnáil – ag cabhrú iarratais deontais caipitiúil le na céimeanna tosaigh d'fhorbairt tionscadail.

## Forlíonadh um Luathchúram Leanaí

Cuireadh isteach Forlíonadh nua um Luathchúram Leanaí (ECS) in Aibreán 2006 mar íocaíocht do thuismitheoirí leanaí níos óige ná 6 bliain d'aois in aitheantas de na costais cúraim leanaí sa bhreis os comhair tuismitheoirí le leanaí óga. Tá an OAL freagrach as an íocaíocht, atá ag teacht chuig €1,000 in aghaidh na bliana agus íoctar é go díreach chuig tuismitheoirí, in íocaíochtaí ráithiúla de €250. Riarann an Roinn Gnóthaí Sóisialacha agus Teaghlaigh na íocaíochtaí ar bhonn ghníomhaireachta don OAL agus cinntear cáilitheacht ar bhonn na critéir ginearálta céanna a bhaineann le Shochar Linbh. Sa ráithe dheireanach de 2006, rinneadh íocaíochtaí den ECS maidir le 396,000 leanaí, ag léiriú costas bliain iomláin ag an ECS timpeall €400 milliún.



## 4 Ag éascú soláthar na dtacaíochtaí cúram leanaí do theaghlaigh, go háirithe iad siúd i gceantair mhíbhuntáisteacha

Feidhmíonn an Stiúrthóireacht um Chúram Leanaí laistigh den OAL roinnt clár chun an soláthar de thacaíochtaí cúraim leanaí do chlainne a éascú, go háirithe iad siúd faoi mhíbhuntáiste.

### Clár Comhdheiseanna Cúraim Leanaí 2000-2006

Ó 2000, ba é an príomh-mheicníocht do sholáthar an Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí ná an Clár Comhdheiseanna Cúraim Leanaí 2000-2006 (EOCP) comhfhaoinithe ag an AE, a bhí ag obair faoin Roinn Dlí agus Cirt, Comhionannas agus Athchóirithe Dlí go dtí an bhunú den OAL ag deireadh 2005. Bunaíodh an EOCP mar chlár mór infheistíochta chun áiseanna cúraim leanaí a fhorbairt chun a chinntiú go mbeadh seirbhísí cúraim leanaí cáilíochta do thuismitheoirí nuair ag teacht ar fhostaíocht, oiliúint nó oideachas. Bhí leithdháileadh iomlán de €499 milliún ag an gclár seo, lena n-áirítear leithdháileadh caipitil de €204.5 milliún agus leithdháileadh breise i mhaoiniú reatha de €294.5 milliún. Ag deireadh 2006, bhí an mhaoiniú iomlán dáileadh faoin EOCP €564.6 milliún agus bhí 34,000 áiteanna cúraim leanaí tar éis cruthú. Bhí 25,000 níos mó d'áiteanna atá ann maoinithe freisin. Leanfar ag cruthú áiteanna cúraim leanaí breise le linn 2007, atá mar an bhliain dheireanach de chaiteachais clár.

Faoin EOCP, bhí deontais caipitiúil ar fáil do sholáthraithe (gan beann ar bhrabús) atá pobal bunaithe, a bhféadfaidís iarratais a dhéanamh i gcomhar maoiniú deontas iomlán. Bhí deontais caipitiúil níos lú ar fáil do sholáthraithe an earnáil príobháideach.

Chuir an EOCP deontas cúnamh i leith costais fhoirne de sheirbhísí cúraim leanaí atá pobal bunaithe ar fáil le fócas áirithe ar mhíbhuntáiste. I 2006, ba é an méid seo ná €16 milliún. Thug an EOCP tacaíocht do shraith bearta ar fheabhsú na cáilíochta, lena n-áirítear tacaíochtaí i gcomhair clár oiliúna cúraim leanaí agus feighlithe leanaí. Sheachaid gréasán de 33 Coiste áitiúla um Chúram Leanaí de chuid na cathrach agus de chuid an chontae na bearta seo ar leibhéal áitiúil, a bhunaíodh agus a mhaoiniú faoin EOCP chun chabhú i bhforbairt bonneagar cúraim leanaí áitiúil. Fuair na bearta ar fheabhsú na cáilíochta, lena n-áirítear an sheachadadh d'oiliúna cúraim leanaí agus creidiúnú, tacaíocht chomh maith ón obair a rinneadh roinnt de na heagraíochtaí deonacha náisiúnta um chúram leanaí, a mhaoinithear faoin gclár.





## Clár Taighde na Straitéise Náisiúnta Leanaí

Faoi gClár Taighde 2006-2009 ag an OAL, bhí sé thionscadal taighde coimisiúnaithe ar an iomlán i 2006:

- Peirspictíochtaí Leanaí ar Stíleanna Tuismitheoireachta agus Araíonacht; Seirbhísí Leabharlanna Poiblí do Leanaí agus Daoine Óga in Éirinn;
- Coistí Eitic agus Formheas Eitic do Thaighde Leanaí in Éirinn;
- Seirbhísí agus Tacaíochtaí do Leanaí i gCoimeád in Éirinn;
- Seirbhísí Cosanta Linbh in Éirinn: Measúnú ag úsáideoirí seirbhíse;
- Tuistiú Iar-Scaradh: Staidéar ar shocruithe agus chomhaontuithe teagmhála linbh agus tuismitheora.

Foilsíodh na staidéar seo a leanas ón gClár Taighde 2004-2006 i 2006:

- *Ag Tuiscint Daoine Óga Gan Dídean i gCathair Bhaile Átha Cliath: Na príomh torthaí ón chéad chéim de staidéar fadaimseartha chohóirt* (Mayock agus Vekić);
- *Gutha thabhairt do Leanaí: Investigation of children's experiences of participation in consultation and decision-making in Irish hospitals* (Coyne et al);
- *The Child's Right to be heard in the Healthcare Setting: Perspectives of children, parents and health professionals* (Kilkelly and Donnelly).

## Acmhainn leictreonach taighde agus eolais

Fuarthas maoiniú i 2006 chun acmhainn leictreonach a chruthú a chuirfidh suímh ghréasáin, bunachair shonraí agus taighde agus eolas eile a bhaineann le leanaí. Tá an phríomhfhócas ag an am seo ar eolas ag díriú ar pholasaí agus meastar go mbeidh rochtain don acmhainn seo ar fáil tríd an suíomh gréasáin OAL i 2007.

## Scrúdú na Comhairle Chomhairleach Náisiúnta Leanaí ar obair dheonach

I Márta 2006, d'iarr an tAire do Leanaí ar an gComhairle Comhairleach Náisiúnta um Leanaí (NCAC) chun scrúdú ar shaorálaíocht a dhéanamh agus chun comhairle a thabhairt ar na mbeartas riachtanach chun gníomhaíocht deonach i measc leanaí agus daoine óga a spreagadh, a thacú agus a chur chun cinn go gníomhach. Is é an phríomhaidhm ag an taighde ná chun deonach óige a scrúdú in Éirinn tríd ag tabhairt guth do na taithí agus uaillmhianta ag leanaí agus daoine óga i shaorálaíocht agus chun moltaí tábhachtach a aithint do pholasaí agus chleachtas. Cuimsíonn an tuarascáil comhthoradh, *Research on Youth Volunteering in Ireland*, roinnt príomhmholtaí chun saorálaíocht a thabhairt chun cinn agus go háirithe, an fhorbairt de Chreatlach Náisiúnta d'Obair Dheonach Óige chun an fhorbairt d'obair dheonach óige a thabhairt ar aghaidh, a thacú agus monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar.

Chuir an tAire an tuarascáil, ata ar fáil ar shuíomh gréasáin an NCAC ([www.ncac.ie](http://www.ncac.ie)) ar aghaidh don. Tascfhórsa ar Shaoránacht Ghníomhach i Meán Fómhair 2006 chun é a chuidiú ag críochnú moltaí don Rialtas ar bheartais chun leibhéal níos fearr de shaoránacht ghníomhach i measc daoine óga a chothú agus a éascú ar cheisteanna a théann i gcion orthu ar leibhéal áitiúil agus náisiúnta.





Tá an staidéar seo á dhéanamh faoi formheas eiticíúil ón Bhord Taighde Sláinte. Tá athbheithniú eiticíúil dian ag baint le seo, le thuarascáil idirnáisiúnta ar dhearadh agus ábhair an tionscadail san áireamh. Cinnteoidh an phróiseas seo go ndéanfar gach rud féideartha chun na cearta, sábháilteacht agus folláine dóibh siúd a ghlacfaidh páirt sa staidéar a chosaint, chomh maith le na taighdeoirí.

### **Tuarascáil ar *State of the Nation's Children***

Chuir an Rannán Taighde OAL an chéad thuarascáil Éireannach ar *State of the Nation's Children* le chéile, i gcomhar leis an Phríomhoifig Staidrimh, an Rannán Staitisticí den Roinn Sláinte agus Leanaí, an tAonad um Chothú Sláinte, Ollscoil na hÉireann, Contae na Gaillimhe. Soláthróidh an tuarascáil seo cur síos ar fholláine leanaí agus daoine óga in Éirinn maidir le 2006 agus, toisc go mbeidh é an chéad thuarascáil dá leithéid le sholáthar, cruthóidh sé tagarmharc d'fhorbairtí sa todhchaí. Tá an tuarascáil seo bunaithe ar shraith náisiúnta de tháscairí um fholláine leanaí forbartha i 2005 agus cuireann sé san áireamh 48 táscairí um fholláine leanaí, a mheastar a bheith tábhachtach ag cuid mhaith geallshealbhóirí, lena n-áirítear leanaí féin. Tá cáipéisí a bhaineann le chúlra an fhorbairt seo ar fáil ar an suíomh gréasáin OAL ([www.omc.gov.ie](http://www.omc.gov.ie)).

Foilsítear an tuarascáil seo i gcomhlíonadh gealltanais a thugadh sa Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí go cuirfear ar fáil ráiteas tugadh suas chun dáta go rialta de tháscairí tábhachtacha um fholláine leanaí. Léiríonn an ghealltanais seo iarracht níos cuimsithe chun monatóireacht agus tomhas a dhéanamh ar fholláine leanaí. Is gné é tuarascáil *State of the Nation's Children* anois de roinnt tíortha eile, lena n-áirítear Ceanada, Stáit Aontaithe Mheiriceá agus An Nua-Shéalainn.

### **Comhaltachtaí Taighde na Straitéise Náisiúnta Leanaí**

I 2001, bunaíodh Scéim Scoláireachta an Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí leis an sprioc cumas taighde a fhorbairt maidir le leanaí agus tacú le taighde bainteach díreach leis an Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí. Faoin scéim seo, aimsíonn iarratasóirí rathúla deontas cothabhála bliantúil de 12,700 agus focann an OAL a gcuid táillí ollscoile ina iomláine. Bronnadh trí Scoláireachtaí Dochtúireachta le linn 2006, ag clúdach na ceisteanna seo a leanas:

- Modhanna Cáilíochta de Thaighde le Leanaí: Taiscéalaíocht ar an gcaidreamh Taighdeoir - Leanbh;
- Príomhshruthú d'Oideachas do na Bodhair in Éirinn: Staidéar chomparáideach idirnáisiúnta de pholasaí agus chleachtas;
- Ag chur Straitéisí Foghlama i Leanaí chun cinn le ICTS.

I 2004, leathnaíodh Scéim Scoláireachta an Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí chun Dámhachtainí Shocrúcháin Taighde a chuimsiú. Tugann an scéim seo an deis do dhaltai chun dul ag obair leis an Rannán Taighde den OAL. Bronnadh dhá shocrúchán taighde le linn 2006, ag tógáil go dtí 8 an líon iomlán socrúcháin ó 2004.





## Comhairliúcháin

I Meán Fómhair 2006, chuaigh an OAL, i bpáirtíocht le Nuálaithe Sóisialta Óga, i gcomhairle le 80 dhéagóirí ar fud na tíre ar son an Tascfhórsa ar Shaoránacht Ghníomhach. Cuirtear an tuarascáil ar na torthaí de na comhairliúcháin seo isteach don Tascfhórsa ar Shaoránacht Ghníomhach mar chuid den phróiseas comhairliúcháin poiblí.

I Deireadh Fómhair 2006, ghlac 210 déagóirí, idir aois 15-18, páirt i gcomhairliú ar na saincheistanna a bheidh le breithniú le linn an aois toilithe maidir le gníomhaíocht ghnéasach a scrúdú. Riar an Comhairle Náisiúnta Óige na hÉireann, Foróige agus Youth Work Ireland an próiseas comhairlithe, i gcomhoibriú le agus ar son Oifig an Aire Leanaí, ag ceardlann éascaithe i mBaile Átha Cliath Thuaidh, Baile Átha Cliath Theas, Corcaigh, Tulach Mhór agus Sligeach. Chuaigh Pavee Point chomh maith i gcomhairle le trasghearradh de bhuachaillí agus chailíní ó phobal an Luchta Siúil. Cuireadh an thuarascáil ar an dtoradh de na comhairliúcháin seo faoi bhráid an tAire do Leanaí agus Comhchoiste an Oireachtais faoi Chosaint Linbh ar 3 Samhain 2006. Sheol an tAire do Leanaí an thuarascáil go poiblí ar 11 Samhain 2006, agus labhair 8 daoine óga ann agus chuir na meáin chumarsáide faoi agallamh iad go forleathan.

## Taighde ar leanaí

Tá an ról ceannasach ag OAL maidir le Sprioc 2 den Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí, a deireann go "dtuigfidh saol na leanaí níos fearr, bainfidh a shaoil leas as mheasúnú, taighde agus eolas ar dá riachtanais, cearta agus éifeachtacht na seirbhísí". Thug an OAL faoi nó thug sé tacaíocht do na tionscadail seo a leanas i rith 2006 ag déanamh taighde ar shaol na leanaí.

## Staidéar Fadaimseartha Náisiúnta ar Leanaí in Éirinn

Is tionscnamh á mhaoiniú ag Rialtas é an Staidéar Fadaimseartha ar Leanaí in Éirinn, *Ag Fás Suas in Éirinn*. Is í a aidhm ná "staidéar a dhéanamh ar na fachtóirí a chuireann le, nó a bhaineann de, dhea-bhaill na leanaí i dteaghlach comhaimseartha na hÉireann agus, trí seo, cur le socrú pholasaithe éifeachtacha agus freagracha a bhaineann le leanaí agus dearadh na seirbhísí do leanaí agus a dteaghlach". Déanfaidh an staidéar monatóireacht ar fhorbairt 18,000 leanaí – cohóirt breithe de 10,000 agus cohóirt 9 mbliana d'aois de 8,000 leanaí – ag tabhairt eolas tábhachtach ag idirlinnte suntasacha trí shaol a n-óige.

Bhí an staidéar seo á choimisiúnú ag an Roinn Sláinte agus Leanaí trí an OAL, i gcomhar leis an Roinn Gnóthaí Sóisialacha agus Teaghlach agus an Phríomhoifig Staidrimh. Aithníodh cuibhreannas á ionadú ag an Institiúid um Thaighde Eacnamaíochta agus Sóisialta agus Coláiste na Tríonóide Baile Átha Cliath mar an dtáirgeoir roghnaithe is fearr agus shíníodh an chonradh in Aibreán 2006.

Lean réamhobair ar an staidéar tríd 2006 agus thosaigh an staidéar píolótach do na leanaí 9 mbliana d'aois. Meastar go mbeidh an príomh-bhabhta de bhailiú sonraí don cohóirt seo ar siúl i 2007.





Ba é an moladh is fearr ó Dáil na nÓg 2006 ná an bhunú de láithreán gréasáin ag chur eolas ar fáil faoi áiseanna agus gníomhaíochtaí do dhaoine óga ar fud na tíre. D'iarr an tAire do Leanaí ar an OAL chun a leithéid de láithreán gréasáin a bhunú, a mheastar a mbeidh beo ó Mheán Fómhair 2007. I gcomhoibriú leis an OAL, fuair cuibhreannas déanta suas leis an NYCI, Foróige agus Youth Work Ireland an chonradh chun Dáil na nÓg 2006-2008 a réachtáil.

### Fóram Leanaí agus Daoine Óga an OAL

Bunaíodh Fóram Leanaí agus Daoine Óga (CYPF) an OAL i 2004 d'fhonn comhairle a thabhairt don OAL agus don Aire Leanaí ar shaincheistanna ag baint le leanaí agus daoine óga laistigh de chomhthéacs na Straitéise Náisiúnta Leanaí. Tá 25 daoine óga sa CYPF, idir aois 12-18, ó Chomhairle na nÓg agus eagraíochtaí a sheasann do leanaí gur deacair teacht orthu agus daoine óga. Tá ceithre ionadaithe ón CYPF ina mbaill de Chomhairle Chomhairleach Náisiúnta Leanaí (NCAC), tofa ag a chomhghleacaithe (*feach Aguisín 1*).

Freastaí fiche-dó baill ar Scoil Samhraidh trí lá i Sligeach i rith Iúil 2006, eagraithe ag an OAL agus Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, Iarthuaisceart. Ghlac ionadaithe ón CYPF páirt i bpleanáil an Scoil Samhraidh, a bhí dírithe ar shláinte an déagóra. Úsáidtear na torthaí ón Scoil Samhraidh chun ábhair oiliúint a fháil d'fhoireann na seirbhíse sláinte.

### Comhairlí Mac Léinn

Luaitear comhairlí na mac léinn éifeachtach in *I dTreo 2016* mar bheartas tábhachtach chun páirteachas ag daoine óga i gcinntí a dhéanamh a mhéadú. Sheol an tAire do Leanaí an *Paca Acmhainne agus Dialanna Chomhairle* na ndaltaí, forbartha ag OAL ar son an Grúpa Oibre ar Chomhairlí Daltaí, ar 6 Márta 2006. Cuireadh na dhá foilseacháin chuig gach scoil dara leibhéal in Éirinn agus cruthaíodh mar rath mór, a bhíonn in éileamh de shíor. Leanann an OAL ag obair leis an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíocht chun feidhmiú na moltaí ag an Grúpa Oibre ar Chomhairlí Daltaí a chinntiú, a chuir sé isteach a dtuarascáil deiridh don Aire do Leanaí i Meitheamh 2006.

### Acmhainn oiliúna/foghlama um Oideachas Saoránach, Sóisialta, Polaitiúil (OSSP)

Tá an OAL ag maoiniú acmhainn nua sa churaclam OSSP, dar teideal *Giving Children and Young People a Voice*. Tá an tionscadal seo á fhorbairt trí chomhpháirtíocht idir an OAL agus Aonad Forbartha Curaclaim. Cuirfidh sé cearta linbh agus daoine óga guth a bheith acu maidir le cúrsaí a imríonn tionchar ar a saoil faoin Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí agus Coinbhinsiún na Náisiún Aontaithe um Chearta an Linbh. Ionchorpróidh sé eolas freisin faoi Dháil na nÓg agus Chomhairle na nÓg, agus a naisc poitéinsíúla le comhairlí na ndaltaí. Beidh an bunú nó feabhsú chomhairle na ndaltaí i ngach scoil mar an tionscadal gnímh a théann leis an acmhainn. Meastar go mbeidh an acmhainn seo ar fáil do scoileanna i rith 2007.





### 3 Ag tacú agus ag feabhsú deachleachtas i rannpháirtíocht leanaí agus daoine óga, taighde leanaí agus sonraí/eolas ar sheirbhísí leanaí

#### Rannpháirtíocht na leanaí agus daoine óga i ndéanamh cinntí

Deireann Cuspóir 1 den Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí go mbeidh guth ag leanaí i gcúrsaí a bhaineann leo agus tabharfar éisteacht chuif dá dtuairimí i gcomhréir lena n-aois agus a n-aibíocht. Ag a bhunú, is é an OAL is mó a bhí freagrach as ag cinntiú feidhmiú an chuspóra. Tharla na forbairtí seo a leanas i rith 2006 sa réimse de rannpháirtíocht ag leanaí agus daoine óga.

#### Comhairle na nÓg

Is comhairlí do leanaí agus dhaoine óga áitiúla é Comhairle na nÓg, a bhunaítear faoin Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí i 34 limistéar uile an Bhoird Forbartha Cathrach agus Contae den tír. Éagsúlaíonn feidhmiú Comhairle na nÓg ó chontae go chontae agus tá go leor Comhairle i ngá tacaíocht suntasach. Is tosaíocht mór é an fhorbairt de Chomhairle na nÓg go héifeachtach ar fud na tíre ag OAL do 2006-2008 agus tá sé luaite mar bhearta nuálaíoch tábhachtach ag an Rialtas in *dTreó 2016*. Cinnteoidh Comhairle na nÓg éifeachtach i ngach chontae go mbeidh leanaí agus daoine óga ábalta páirt a ghlacadh ar chinnteoireacht áitiúil agus náisiúnta. Toghtar teachtaí do Dháil na nÓg bliantúil (Parlaimint Náisiúnta Óige) trí Comhairle na nÓg.

Le linn 2006, bunaíodh Grúpa Feidhmiúcháin ag an OAL chun plan a chumadh d'fhorbairt éifeachtach Comhairle na nÓg. Tá an ghrúpa déanta suas le ionadaithe ón Roinn Comhshaoil, Oidhreacht agus Rialtais Áitiúil; an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta; an FSS; na Boird Forbartha Cathrach agus Contae; údaráis áitiúla; daoine óga; agus an earnáil óige.

#### Dáil na nÓg 2006

Cuirtear Dáil na nÓg 2006 ar siúl ar 25 Márta, le 200 toscairí, tofa ag Comhairle na nÓg ar fud na tíre, ag freastal ar an seisiún. Is iad na téamaí roghnaithe ag na toscairí roimh an Dáil ná "Áiseanna do dhaoine óga" agus "Imirce agus idirchultúrachas". Thogh Comhairle na nÓg tríocha-ceathair duine óg chun a bheith ar Choiste na dTeachtaí, nó Coiste na nIonadaithe, a leanann moltaí ón Dáil le tacaíocht an OAL agus Comhairle Náisiúnta Óige na hÉireann (NYCI). I rith na bliana, rinne an Choiste na dTeachtaí cuir i láthair do na Coistí Oireachtas ar Shláinte agus Leanaí agus ar Chirt, Comhionannas agus Cearta na mBan, agus do chomhlachtaí eile bainteach le na téamaí ón Dáil.





## Beartas Náisiúnta Áineasa do Dhaoine Óga

I Márta 2006, sheol an tAire do Leanaí an *Thuarascáil ar an gComhairle leis an bpobal maidir leis an mbeartas Náisiúnta Áineasa do Dhaoine Óga a Fhorbairt*. Tugadh faoi próiseas comhairliúcháin phoiblí chun deis a thabhairt do na páirtithe leasmhara go léir, lena n-áirítear, daoine óga, a gcuid tuairimí a chur in iúl maidir le forbairt an bheartais. Thug os cionn 900 duine freagairt don chomhairliúchán poiblí agus bhí daoine óga faoi bhun aois 18 san áireamh mar 75% de na freagróirí iomlán.

Thaispeáin an comhairliú tacaíocht leathan i measc an phobail do threo ghinearálta an pholasaí, mar atá leagtha síos sa cháipéis chomhairlithe, agus chuir sé faisnéis luachmhar ar fáil faoi raon saincheistanna a bhaineann le forbairt an bheartais. Áirigh roinnt de na príomhcheistanna a tháinig chun cinn ón gcomhairliú:

- an tábhacht ag baint le forbairt cur chuige comhpháirtíochta áitiúla maidir le forbairt agus maoiniú deiseanna caitheamh aimsire do dhaoine óga;
- tháinig dul i gcomhairle le daoine óga maidir le forbairt deiseanna caitheamh aimsire chun cinn mar phríomhthéama;
- an gá d'áineasa neamh-struchtúrtha agus struchtúrtha i saol na ndaoine óga;
- ainmníodh an riachtanas le breis áiseanna áineasa do dhaoine óga mar an riachtanas is mó. An áis áineasa is mó a bhí á lorg ná áit do dhaoine óga chun “máinneáil thart lena gcairde” – áit a bheadh sábháilte, compordach, laistigh, neamhchostasach, suaimhneach agus dlisteanach. Moladh ionaid óige buail isteach, dídean agus caifí mar ionaid ina bhféadfadh daoine óga baint fúthu.

Rinne an OAL machnamh ar na príomhcheistanna a éirionn as an gcomhairliú pobail agus ar na torthaí ón taighde a commisiúnaíodh go speisialta a rinne De Róiste agus Duinnín, foilsithe i Nollaig 2005, agus an Beartas Náisiúnta Áineasa á chur i gcríoch. Cheadaigh an Rialtas na moltaí sa bheartas i Nollaig 2006.



Tugtar an cuireadh do thrí thionscadail moltaí a mholadh don OAL faoin gclár:

- *Childhood Development Initiative — A Place for Children in Tallaght West;*
- *Preparing for life* (Pobail an Taoibh Thuaidh de Belcamp, Darndale agus Moatview);
- *Youngballymun.*

San am roimh an aighneacht d'íarratais, críochnaigh na trí tionscadail próiseas pleanála dian agus gan fasach. Áirítear sa phróiseas pleanála tosaigh measúnú de na riachtanais de leanaí agus teaghlaigh sa phobal agus an aitheantas de spriocanna agus gníomhaíochtaí chun na spriocanna sin a bhaint amach. Rinne na tionscadail forbairt ar phlean seirbhíse sonracha, a bhaineann le réimse de sheirbhísí tras-earnála a nascadh le chéile, bunaithe ar múnlaí deachleachtais idirnáisiúnta cruthaithe.

Breithnigh painéal saineolaithe idirnáisiúnta na trí tionscadail (ar son an Rialtais) agus rinne na Daonchairdis Atlantach breithniú go leithleach i gcoinne sraith dian de chritéir. Bhí na tionscadail ceadaithe do mhaoiniú i Nollaig 2006.

### An Ionad Náisiúnta Acmhainní Súgartha

Sheoladh an Ionad Náisiúnta Acmhainní Súgartha i Meitheamh 2006. Tá sé tar éis curtha leis an mhóiminteam d'fheidhmiú gníomhaíochtaí Beartas Súgartha tríd a oiliúint agus tacaíocht d'Oifigigh Forbartha Súgartha in údaráis áitiúla agus a ardú meabhraíocht agus tionscnaimh eolais timpeall súgradh, lena n-áirítear an bhunú de shuíomh gréasáin ([www.playinireland.ie](http://www.playinireland.ie)).

Le linn 2006, rinne an Ionad Náisiúnta Acmhainní Súgartha suirbhé ar an uimhir agus láthair de fhaichí imeartha faoi úinéireacht agus/nó bhainistíocht údaráis áitiúla. Fuair an suirbhé amach go raibh méadú suntasach ar an méid de fhaichí imeartha in Éirinn ó sheoladh an Pholasaí Náisiúnta Súgartha, *Ready, Steady, Play!*, i 2004. Anois tá 394 faichí imeartha ann, á léiriú méadú de 123% ó sheoladh an pholasaí. Ina theannta sin, tá 103 faichí imeartha nua plánáilte do chríochnú sa todhchaí gar. Go náisiúnta, anois is é 1:9, 942 an mheán chóimheas faichí imeartha le dhaonra, i gcomparáid le 1:23, 317 i 2004.





## 2 Ag feabhsú forfheidhmiú seirbhísí agus idirghabháil do leanaí ag leibhéal áitiúil

### An Grúpa Náisiúnta um Fhorfheidhmiú ar Sheirbhísí Leanaí

I Meitheamh 2006, d'fhoilsigh an Rialtas *I dTreo 2016: Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015*. Glacann an Chomhaontú creatlach saolré – cur chuige nuálaíoch i réimse an bheartas sóisialach. Cuireann an chur chuige saolré an indibhidiúil i lár forbairt agus seachadadh beartais, tríd na rioscaí os comhair an indibhidiúil agus na tacaíochtaí ar fáil dó nó di chun aghaidh a thabhairt ar na rioscaí sin ag pointí tábhachtach ina s(h)aol a mheas. Is é aois na hóige ceann de na pointí saolré is tábhachtach aitheanta. Áiríonn réimsí tábhachtach le bheith scrúdaithe maidir le leanaí san Chaibidil Saolré forbairt agus cúraim na luath-óige; torthaí oideachais a fheabhsú; torthaí sláinte a fheabhsú; áineas, spóirt, ealaíon agus cultúir a chur chun cinn; tacaíocht ioncaim; agus leanaí agus a gclann.

Léiríonn an Chaibidil Saolré creatlacha rialachas ábhartha agus meicníochtaí monatóireacht do gach réimse tábhachtach. Tá struchtúir nua leagtha amach do leanaí, lena n-áirítear Grúpa Náisiúnta Feidhmiúcháin agus Coistí Seirbhísí Leanaí ar leibhéal Chontae.

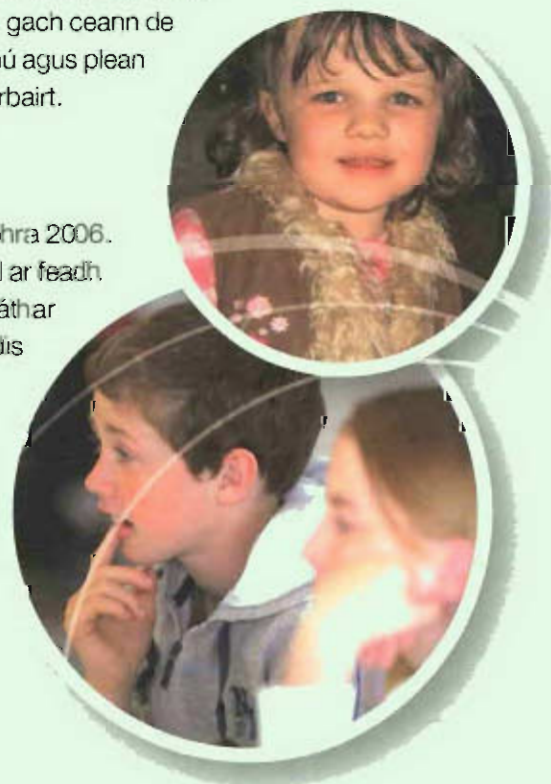
Bhunaigh an OAL an Grúpa Náisiúnta Feidhmiúcháin agus reachtaíodh a chéad cruinniú i Samhain 2006. San áireamh lena mballraíocht tá oifigigh sinsearacha ó na ranna Rialtas ábhartha, an FSS, ionadaithe ar údaráis áitiúla, an earnáil oideachais agus príomhghníomhaireachtaí eile. Beidh naisc aige leis an tSainghrúpa Chomhairligh ar Leanaí arna bhunú ag an FSS.

Roghnaítear ceithre shuíomh don rolladh amach tosaigh de na Coistí Seirbhísí Leanaí: Comhairle Cathrach Bhaile Átha Cliath (limistéar ionchathrach theas), Comhairle Cathrach Bhaile Átha Cliath Theas, Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall agus Comhairle Cathrach Luimnigh. Is é aidhm an thionscail seo ná chun múnlaí de chleachtais is fearr a scrúdú a dhéanann chur chun cinn ar phleanáil straitéiseach comhoibrithe, faoi chinnireacht áitiúla do sheirbhísí leanaí. Oibreoidh an NIG chun treoir agus cabhair praiticiúil a sholáthar do gach ceann de na Coistí mar a thosaíonn siad a gcuid oibre chun dóibh féin a bhunú agus plean comhtháite do sheirbhísí leanaí ina limistéir cathrach/contae a fhorbairt.

### An Clár Luath Idirghabhála agus Coisc

Bhunaigh an Rialtas an Clár Luath Idirghabhála agus Coisc i Feabhra 2006. Tá an OAL ag bainistiú agus ag riaradh é agus beidh sé á reáchtáil ar feadh tréimhse 5 bliana, le mhaoiniú de €36 milliún – €18 milliún á sholáthar ag an Rialtas agus €18 milliún á sholáthar ag na daonchairdis Atlantach.

Is é chuspóir an Chlár Luath Idirghabhála agus Coisc ná chun modhanna nuálaíochta chun torthaí do leanaí a fheabhsú i shlí comhtháite a scrúdú. Tá an múnla den chur chuige taobh thiar den chlár seo bunaithe ar fhianaise an gá sa phobal agus cur chuige ar cad a oibríonn bunaithe ar fhianaise. Tá an béim ar dtús ar líon beag tioniscadail i gceantair faoi an-mhíbhuntáiste.

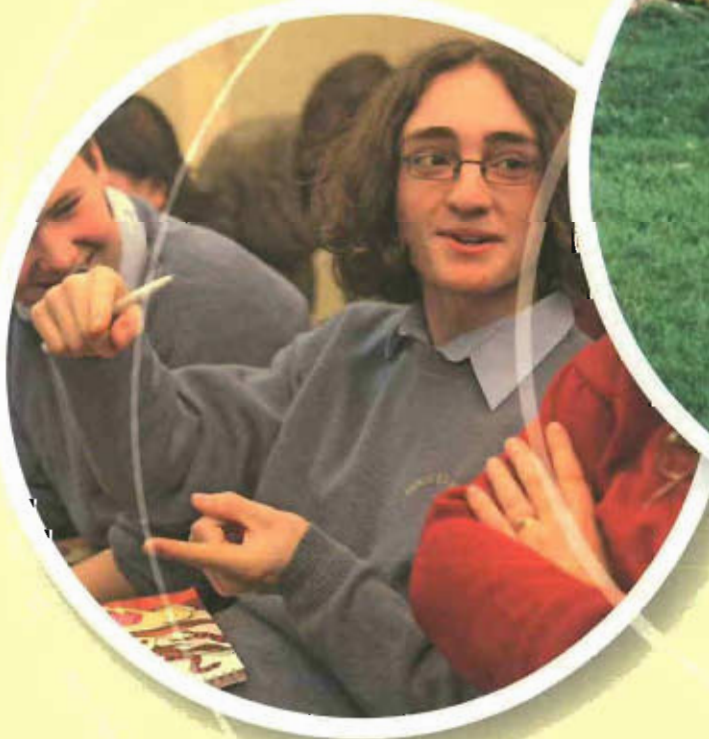




I rith 2006, lean an Choiste NA lena gcuid oibre ag athbhreithniú Dara Tuarascáil na hÉireann, ag tabhairt cuairt ar Éireann agus ag buaileadh leis an Ombudsman do Leanaí agus an earnáil NGO. I mBealtaine 2006, bhuail siad le na toscaireachtaí sa Ghinéiv d'éisteacht ó bhéal, ag a bhí ionadaíocht do leanaí agus dhaoine óga chomh maith. I Lúnasa 2006, i bhfreagra iarratas ón gCoiste NA, d'ullmhaigh an OAL tuarascáil forlíontach in ullmhú don scrúdú Stáit.

Chuir an Choiste NA éisteacht ar siúl chun an Dara Tuarascáil ar 20 Meán Fómhair 2006 a scrúdú. Bhí grúpa trasghníomhaireachta d'oifigigh, le OAL ina gceannais, ar shon Éireann ann, leis an dtoscaireacht á threorú ag an Aire do Leanaí, Brian Lenihan, TD.

Críochnaigh an Choiste NA agus d'eisigh sé a bhreathnóireachtaí deiridh ar 29 Meán Fómhair 2006. Rinne an choiste trácht ar an nádúir cuimsitheach na dhá tuarascáil a chur an Stáit ar fáil, chomh maith leis an gcaidreamh maith agus oscailte leis an dtoscaireacht ardleibhéal ag freastal sa Ghinéiv. Ina bhreathnóireachtaí deiridh, chuir an choiste fáilte roimh, go háirithe, ceapachán an tOmbudsman Leanaí, an bhunú d'Oifig an Aire Leanaí agus an uchtú den Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí. Rinne an Choiste roinnt moltaí ina bhféadfaí feabhsuithe a dhéanamh freisin, lena n-áirítear an treisiú de chearta leanaí sa Bhunreacht.





## Athbhreithniú Náisiúnta ar Ghéilliúlacht le *Children First*, Treoirlínte Náisiúnta um Chosaint Leanaí

I bhfreagra an fhoilsiú den Thuarascáil Ferns, d'fhógair an tAire do Leanaí athbhreithniú náisiúnta ar ghéilliúlacht chomhlachtaí Stáit agus eagraíochtaí neamh-rialtas le treoirlínte *Children First*, le bheith déanta ag an OAL i gcomhpháirt le na ranna Rialtais bainteach go léir.

Tharla sé gur aistrigh an athbhreithniú seo, a bhí le déanamh ag an Oifig Náisiúnta Leanaí ar dtús, a bheith mar chuid den chlár oibre ag an OAL atá bunaithe le déanaí.

### An Próiseas Athbhreithnithe

- Fuaireadar tuairimí na geallshealbhóirí go léir trí ag lorg aighneachtaí trí fhógaí i nuachtáin Dé Domhnaigh agus nuachtáin laethúil i rith Márta 2006. Fuaireadar 143 aighneachtaí in iomlán.
- Cuirtear cruinnithe le na geallshealbhóirí is tábhachtach ar siúl, lena n-áirítear an FSS, Roinn Sláinte agus Leanaí, Roinn Oideachas agus Eolaíocht, an tOmbudsman do Leanaí, An Garda Síochána agus lucht léinn.
- Rinneadar teagmháil le na hArd-Stiúrthóirí go léir maidir le dul chun cinn go dtí seo ar an bhfeidhmiú de *Children First* agus ceisteanna cosanta linbh ina ranna.



Meastar go mbeidh an athbhreithniú críochnaithe i rith 2007.

### Reachtaíocht uchtála

I 2006, lean an OAL lena gcuid oibre chun daingniú an Choinbhinsiún na Háige a chur ar aghaidh ar Chosaint Leanaí agus Comhpháirtíocht maidir le hUachtáil Idirbheitheach, 1993. Tá dul chun cinn substaintiúil déanta ag obair le Oifig an Ard-Aighne ar an ndruchtú de Bhille chun sholáthar, inter alia, do chruthú an Údarás Uchtála (ag dul le háineas an Bord Uchtála) mar an Údarás Láir ag teastáil faoi théarmaí an Choinbhinsiún chun maoirseacht a dhéanamh maidir le cur i bhfeidhm an Choinbhinsiún ar uchtáil idir thíortha. Meastar go bhfoilseofar an Bille i 2007.

### Reifreann ar leanaí

I Samhain 2006, d'fhógair an Taoiseach gur cheart Reifreann Bunreachta ar linbh a chur ar siúl. Thosaigh an tAire do Leanaí próiseas comhairlithe chun teacht ar chomhaontú ar fhocláíocht oiriúnach do leasú don Bhunreacht a léireoidh an ghá chun ráthaíochtaí láidir a bhunú do chearta agus saoirsí leanaí.

### Coinbhinsiún na Náisiún Aontaithe um Chearta an Linbh

Faoi Airteagal 44 den Choinbhinsiún NA ar Chearta an Linbh (UNCRC), tá sé riachtanach d'Éire tuarascáil ar dhul chun cinn a ghéilleadh ag eatraimh rialta chuig an Choiste NA a bheidh ag déanamh monatóireacht ar fheidhmiú an UNCRC. Chuir an OAL Dara Tuarascáil na hÉireann isteach In Iúil 2005.

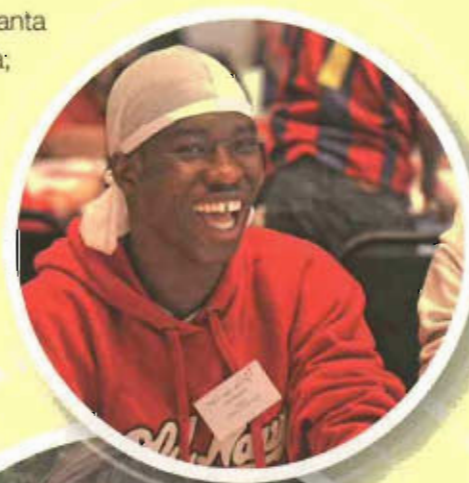


I Samhain 2006, shíneadh an tOrdú um Thosach Feidhme ag leasú Cuid 11 d'Acht Leanaí 2001, a bhaineann leis an mBord Seirbhís Chónaithe Speisialta (SRSB). D'athraigh sé seo na feidhmeanna agus comhdhéanamh den Bhord i gcomhthéacs d'athchóiriú ceartas óige níos leithne.

Shíneadh na Rialacháin um Chúram Leanaí (Seirbhísí Réamhscolaíochta) (Uimh. 2) 2006 ina dhlí i Nollaig 2006. Ghlacfaidh iad siúd ionaid na Rialacháin um Chúram Leanaí (Seirbhísí Réamhscolaíochta) 1996 (Uimh. I.R. 398 de 1996) agus na Rialacháin um Chúram Leanaí (Seirbhísí Réamhscolaíochta) (Leasú) 1997 (Uimh. I.R. 268 de 1997). Tiocfaidh na rialacháin seo is déanaí i bhfeidhm ar 3 Meán Fómhair 2007 agus cuideoidh a bhfeidhmiú a chumasú feabhas níos mó a chur ar chaighdeán agus cháilíocht i naionraí.

### Forbairt agus seachadadh seirbhíse

- Is é príomhfhaidhm Aonad an Bheartais um Chosaint agus Leas Leanaí ná chun chaidreamh oibre éifeachtach agus freagrach leis an FSS a fhorbairt agus chun é a choimeád freagrach as ucht seachadadh seirbhísí. Bhaineadar é seo amach trí rannpháirtíocht rialta leis an FSS i gcaitheamh na bliana, bunaithe ar a Phlean Seirbhíse. Ar an dóigh seo, déileáilíodh leis na ceisteanna seo a leanas i rith 2006: ag baint amach níos mó maoiniú don FSS chun seachadadh an Chláir Tacaíochta um Thuistiú ag Déagóirí a fheabhsú;
- méadú substaintiúil a fháil sa Liúntas um Chúram Altramaís, go €312 do leanaí faoi 12 agus €339 do leanaí atá 12 nó níos mó;
- ag comhaontú leis an FSS faoin soláthar de mhaoiniú thiomanta d'fhorbairt na cláir Springboard agus Tacaíocht do Dhaoine Óga;
- ag gabháil go gníomhach leis an FSS ag forbairt a Phlean Seirbhíse;
- ag barrfheabhsú an fhorbairt de staitistí ar chúram leanaí trí an t-aistriú de fhreagracht go dtí an FSS de bhaill na sonraí seo;
- ag comhaontú leis an FSS táscairí feidhmíochta a bhaill trasna an réimse de sheirbhísí in ord chun eolas a thabhairt d'fhorbairtí beartais sa tsli is fearr;
- ag dul i gcomhairle agus ag comhaontú maidir le threoirilínte nua d'Aonaid Cúraim Speisialta agus don Scaradh Singil do Leanaí i gCúram.



### Tuarascáil Fearna

I rith 2006, bhí Aonad an Bheartais um Chosaint agus Leas Leanaí ag gabháil go gníomhach le réimse de pháirtí, lena n-áirítear an Eaglais Caitlicí, An Garda Síochána, an Roinn Dlí agus Cirt, Comhionannas agus Athchóirithe Dlí, agus an FSS ag saothrú an feidhmiú de na moltaí ag an Tuarascáil Ferns, a foilsíodh i 2005. D'áirigh an obair seo athbhreithniú de Chleachtais um Chosaint Leanaí an Eaglais Caitlicí agus bhunú Grúpa Athbhreithnithe Idir-Ghníomhaireachta Náisiúnta.





# 1 Ag forbairt creatlach reachtaíochta agus beartais le haghaidh seirbhísí sláinte leanaí

## Ag Monatóireacht an Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí

Bhí ag monatóireacht an Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí 2000-2010, *Our Children – Their Lives*, an freagracht roimhe seo ag an Oifig Náisiúnta Leanaí (NCO). Thosaigh an NCO a bheith mar chuid den Oifig an Aire Leanaí (OAL) ag a tráth tionscanta (2005) agus anois déanann sé monatóireacht ar fheidhmiú an straitéis agus feabhsuithe i saol leanaí, ag tógáil forbheathnú leathan ar an dul chun cinn déanta agus ag déanamh tuarascáil tras-earnála náisiúnta ar fhorbairtí do leanaí in Éirinn. Foilsítear ceithre tuarascáil bhliantúil cuimsitheach ar dhul chun cinn, ó sheoladh an straitéis i 2000.

Ba é an bhliain 2005 an lár-pointe de shaolré an Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí de 10 mbliain agus d'iarr an tAire do Leanaí go ndéanann an Comhairle Chomhairleach Náisiúnta na Leanaí athbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar an dul chun cinn déanta ar a bhfeidhmiú. Críochnaíodh an athbhreithniú seo i 2006 agus tá sé ar fáil ar suíomh gréasáin OAL ([www.omc.gov.ie](http://www.omc.gov.ie)).

## Aonad an Bheartais um Chosaint agus Leas Leanaí

Bhunaíodh Aonad an Bheartais um Chosaint agus Leas Leanaí mar chuid de Oifig an Aire do Leanaí nua, ag tabhairt foireann le chéile ó na hAonaid um Bheartas Cúraim Leanaí agus Reachtaíocht Chúram Leanaí sa Roinn Sláinte agus Leanaí. Is é ról an Aonaid ná an beartas agus creatlach reachtaíochta do sheirbhísí cúraim leanaí a fhorbairt agus chun oibriú go héifeachtach le Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte (FSS) chun feidhmiú an bheartais a chinntiú i bhforbairt agus seachadadh seirbhísí.

### Beartas

Le blianta beaga anuas, bhí beartas sa réimse seo dírithe go príomha ar chuir i bhfeidhm córais cosanta leanaí do leanaí le cúram de dhíth orthu. Anois tá an fócas ag aistriú i dtreo tionscnaimh tacaíochta teaghlaigh agus pobail a fhorbairt chun saincheistanna a aithint ag céim níos luaithe. Nuair is féidir, caithfear aghaidh a thabhairt ar shaincheistanna ag déanamh imní laistigh de chomhthéacs an teaghlaigh, ach caithfear struchtúr chúraim ardchaighdeán a chur i bhfeidhm do leanaí le cúram de dhíth orthu freisin. Thosaigh obair ar cháipéis bheartais ar sheirbhísí leanaí sa dara leath de 2006 agus meastar go mbeidh sé críochnaithe i 2007.

### Reachtaíocht

Cheadaigh an Chomh-Aireacht an Bille um Chúram Leanaí (Leasú) 2006 in Iúil 2006. Forálann an Bille gur féidir le tuismitheoirí altrama nó gaoilta le leanbh curtha faoina gcúram ag an FSS do thréimhse leanúnach de chúig bliana nó níos mó iarratas a dhéanamh d'ordú cúirte chun níos mó féinriail a thabhairt dóibh maidir le cúram an linbh. Cuireadh an reachtaíocht seo i bhfeidhm in Aibreán 2007.









# Réamhrá

Bhunaigh an Rialtas Oifig an Aire do Leanaí (OAL) ar 7 Nollaig 2005 agus ar 8 Nollaig 2005, ceapadh mise mar a céad Ard-Stiúrthóir.

Tá an OAL mar an "chéad" rud i dtéarmaí bainistíocht na seirbhíse poiblí, sa chaoi go bhfuil trí ranna beartais ag déileáil le shaincheistearna a théann i bhfeidhm ar leanaí i dtí ranna Rialtais éagsúil (Oideachas agus Eolaíocht; Sláinte agus Leanaí; agus Dlí agus Cirt, Comhionannais agus Athchóirthe Dlí) athlonnaithe leis an tAire do Leanaí chun críche torthaí níos fearr do leanaí a bhaint amach. Oibríonn na státseirbhísigh ó na trí ranna go straitéiseach le chéile thar rialachas poiblí go hiomláine ag cumadh beartais timpeall oideachas luath, seirbhísí ceartais óige, leas leanaí agus seirbhísí reatha cosanta, an chruthú d'áit do chúram leanaí d'ardchaighdeán, ag déanamh turgnaimh beartais fianaise-bhunaithe agus ag tiomáint feidhmiú an Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí 2000-2010. Ansin soláthródh na beartais aontaithe tríd an mháthair-roinn ábhartha agus a ghníomhaireachtaí.

Mar státseirbhísigh, tá sé de ghnáth againn a bheith ag obair laistigh de roinn Rialtais amháin agus d'Aire amháin. Tugann an sainordú a bhfuair an OAL ón Rialtas an t-údarás dóibh siúd atá athlonnaithe laistigh den OAL chun cur chuige trasghearrtha a thógáil do cheistearna, polasaithe, seirbhísí agus struchtúir chun torthaí níos fearr do leanaí a bhaint amach. Bhí an sainordú seo aitheanta sa comhaontú comhpháirtíochta náisiúnta nua, *I dTreo 2016*, a thugann an tasc don OAL chun gach cuid de bhainistíocht seirbhíse poiblí a chumasú chun obair go straitéiseach le chéile, ag leibhéal náisiúnta agus leibhéal áitiúil, chun seachadadh níos éifeachtach de sheirbhísí leanaí a bhaint amach. Tá an forbairt d'inniúlachtaí agus scileanna nua ag teastáil ag an obair seo. Tá leibhéal de fhuinnimh agus thiomáint níos mó ná atá nachtanach chun dul ag obair laistigh den chreatlach traidisiúnta de roinn amháin ag teastáil chomh maith.

Chuir cinneadh an Rialtais ag bunú an OAL an tAire do Leanaí faoi oibleagáid chun freastal ar chruinnithe Comh-aireachta freisin. De dhroim, anois tá, don chéad uair riamh, ionchur Airí soiléir, singil, ar cheistearna leanaí ag leibhéal Comh-Aireachta in Éirinn.

Chonaic deireadh 2006, an chéad bhliain den OAL:

- saothair idir-ghníomhaireachta éifeachtach idir na ranna d'Oideachais, Sláinte, Cirt agus an FSS mar a leagtar na fothaí le chéile d'fheidhmiú an tAcht Leanaí 2001;
- an chónascadh de shaineolais ar oideachas agus leas ó na ranna d'Oideachas agus Sláinte agus a ghníomhaireachta ag leagadh na fothaí d'fhorbairt Cúram sna Sláinte Luatha agus Oideachas in Éirinn;
- an chriochnú de dhá píosaí de shaothair atá an phoitéinseal acu ar titheoint ar shaoil na leanaí in Éirinn a fheabhsú – ag tógáil go chonradh an *National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland* agus an foilseacháin den chéad thuarascáil *State of the Nation's Children*, a bhfuair mholadh go hidirnáisiúnta.

Tríd is tríd, thug an OAL feidhmíocht láidir i rith a céad bhliain, mar an chéad turgnamh Éireannach i Rialtas chomh-nasctha.

**Sylda Langford**  
Ard-Stiúrthóir



I Samhain 2006, d'fhógair an Taoiseach go raibh sé ar intinn ag an Rialtas Reifreann Bunreachta ar linbh a chur ar siúl. Thosaigh mé próiseas comhairlithe chun teacht ar chomhaontú ar fhoclaiocht do leasú a léireoidh ár dtiomantas chun leanbhaois a luach agus a chosaint.

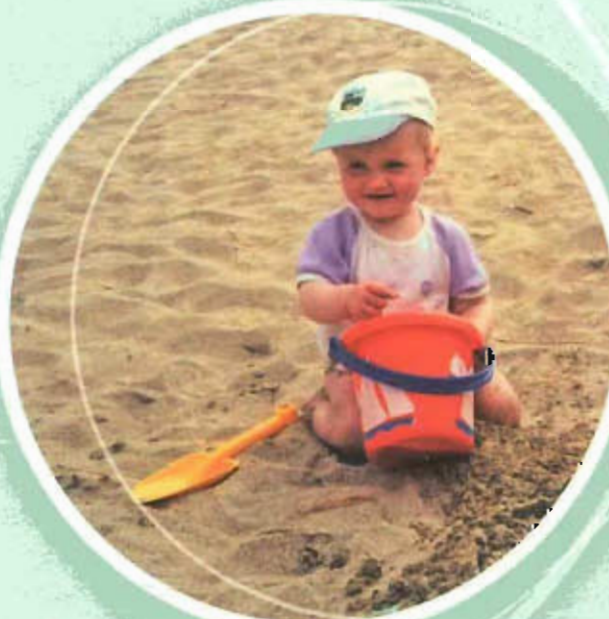
Sa réimse de cheartas óige, táim sásta go bhfuil dul chun cinn suntasach déanta ar an bhfeidhmiú den Acht Leanaí 2001 tríd saothair idirghníomhaireachta agus trasghníomhaireachta éifeachtach, chur chun tosaigh ag an OAL. I Samhain 2006, shineadh an tOrdú um Thosach Feidhme ag leasú Cuid 11 d'Acht Leanaí 2001, a bhaineann leis an mBord Seirbhís Chónaithe Speisialta agus an t-athrú dá bhfeidhmeanna agus comhdhéanamh sa réimse d'athchóiriú ceartas óige.

Bhaineadar amach roinnt forbairtí reachtacha tábhachtacha eile sa chéad bhliain de m'Oifige. In Iúil 2006, cheadaigh an Chomh-Aireacht an Bille um Chúram Leanaí 2006, a ligeann tuismitheoiri altrama nó gaolta a bhíodh leanbh curtha ina chúraim ag Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte do thréimhse leanúnach de cúig bhliain nó níos mó iarratas a dhéanamh d'ordú cúirte chun níos mó féinriail a thabhairt dóibh i gcúraim an leanbh sin. Síníodh na Rialacháin um Chúram Leanaí (Seirbhísí Réamhscolaíochta) 2006 ina dhli i Nollaig 2006 agus tiocfaidh siad i bhfeidhm ar 3 Meán Fómhair 2007. D'ardaigh na rialacháin seo na caighdeáin agus cáilíocht i naíonraí agus ionaid cúraim leanaí.

Le linn 2006, neartaigh mo Oifig nua agus forbraíodh an clár oibre beartais trasghearrtha, fianaise-bhunaithe do leanaí agus rinne sé dul chun cinn suntasach ag seachadadh an Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí. Níl aon amhras agam ach go leanfaidh an dea-obair i 2007 agus sa todhchaí.

**Brian Lenihan, TD**

*Aire do Leanaí*





# Brollach

Os rud é gur mise an tAire do Leanaí, is cúis áthais dom rud a chur leis an gcéad Tuarascáil Bhliantúil na hoifige an Aire do Leanaí (OAL). I Nollaig 2005, rinne an Rialtas an cinneadh nuálaíoch agus stairiúil chun an OAL a bhunú faoi mo threoir mar chuid den Roinn Sláinte agus Leanaí. D'fhógair an Taoiseach go mbeadh freagrachtaí breise agam agus bheadh orm freastal ar chruinnithe Comh-Aireachta.

Is fianaise é bunú an OAL de thiomantas an Rialtais do leasanna na leanaí. Is tuirgnamh nua agus spreagúil i chomh maith ag chur le chéile státseirbhisigh ó roinnt ranna Rialtais chun cur chuige rialtais comhtháite a chur ar fáil d'fhorbairt beartais agus seachadadh seirbhísí do leanaí.

Le linn 2006, d'oibrigh mé leis an Stiúrthóir agus le foireann an OAL agus bhí baint ghníomhach agam le go leor dá gcuid forbairtí tábhachtach dirithe ag feabhsú saol leanaí agus daoine óga agus ag cinntiú go gcloistear a nguthanna. Lig mo thinreamh ag Comh-Aireachta a chinntiú go nglactar ceisteanna a théann i bhfeidhm ar leanaí san áireamh thar na hearnálacha go léir den Rialtais.

I Meán Fómhair 2006, bhí toiscaireacht na hÉireann faoi stiúir an Aire do Leanaí ag éisteacht ag an Náisiún Aontaithe ar Choinbhinsiún um Chearta an Linbh ar Dara. Thuarascáil na hÉireann ag an NA ar Choinbhinsiún um Chearta an Linbh, a bhí tar éis ullmhú ag m'Oifig. Ina bhreathnóireachtaí deiridh, rinne an Choiste NA trácht ar an nádúir cuimsitheach an thuarascáil na hÉireann agus chuir sé fáilte roimh ceapachán an tOmbudsman Leanaí, an bhunú d'Oifig an Aire do Leanaí agus an uchtú den Straitéis Náisiúnta Leanaí. Mhol an Choiste NA réimsí ina bhféadfaí feabhsuithe a dhéanamh. Ag an éisteacht sin, d'inis mé don Choiste go ndéanfaidh mé scrúdú Airteagal-ó-Airteagal de bhunreacht na hÉireann agus conas a théann sé i bhfeidhm ar leanaí.



# Oifig an Aire Leanaí



Bhunaigh an Rialtas Oifig an Aire Leanaí (OAL) d'fhonn soiléireacht níos fearr a thabhairt do dhéanamh beartais agus seachadadh seirbhíse do leanaí. Is turgnamh nua agus corraitheach é seo i dtabhairt le chéile státseirbhísigh ó roinnt ranna Rialtais chun obair ar son tairbhe leanaí agus daoine óga.

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Oifig an Aire do Leanaí

# TUARASCÁIL BHLIANTÚIL 2006

Bealach nua na hoibre — chun feabhas  
a chur ar saoil leanaí agus daoine óga



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Arna fhoilsiú ag Oifig an tSoláthair, Baile Átha Cliath

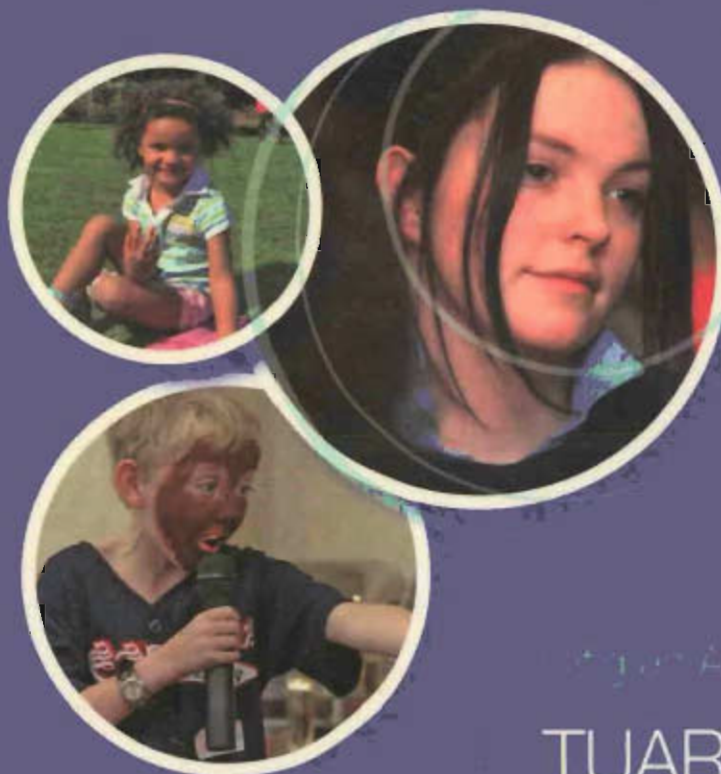
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Gach ceart ar cosaint. Ní cheadaítear aon chuid den fhoilseachán seo a atáirgeadh, a stóráil i gcóras aisghabhála, nó a tharchur, ar aon mhodh nó si, biodh sin leictreonach, meicniúil, bunaithe ar fhótachóipeáil, taifeadadh nó eile, gan cead a fháil i scríbhinn roimh ré ó shealbhoir an choipchirt.

Maidir le cearta astrúcháin nó atáirgthe, ba chóir iarratais a dhéanamh chuig an Ceann Cumarsáide, Oifig an Aire Leanaí, Teach Hawkins, Sráid Hawkins, Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire.



Office of the Minister  
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Oifig an Aire do Leanaí



Óifig an Aire do Leanaí

TUARASCÁIL  
BHLIANTÚIL

2006