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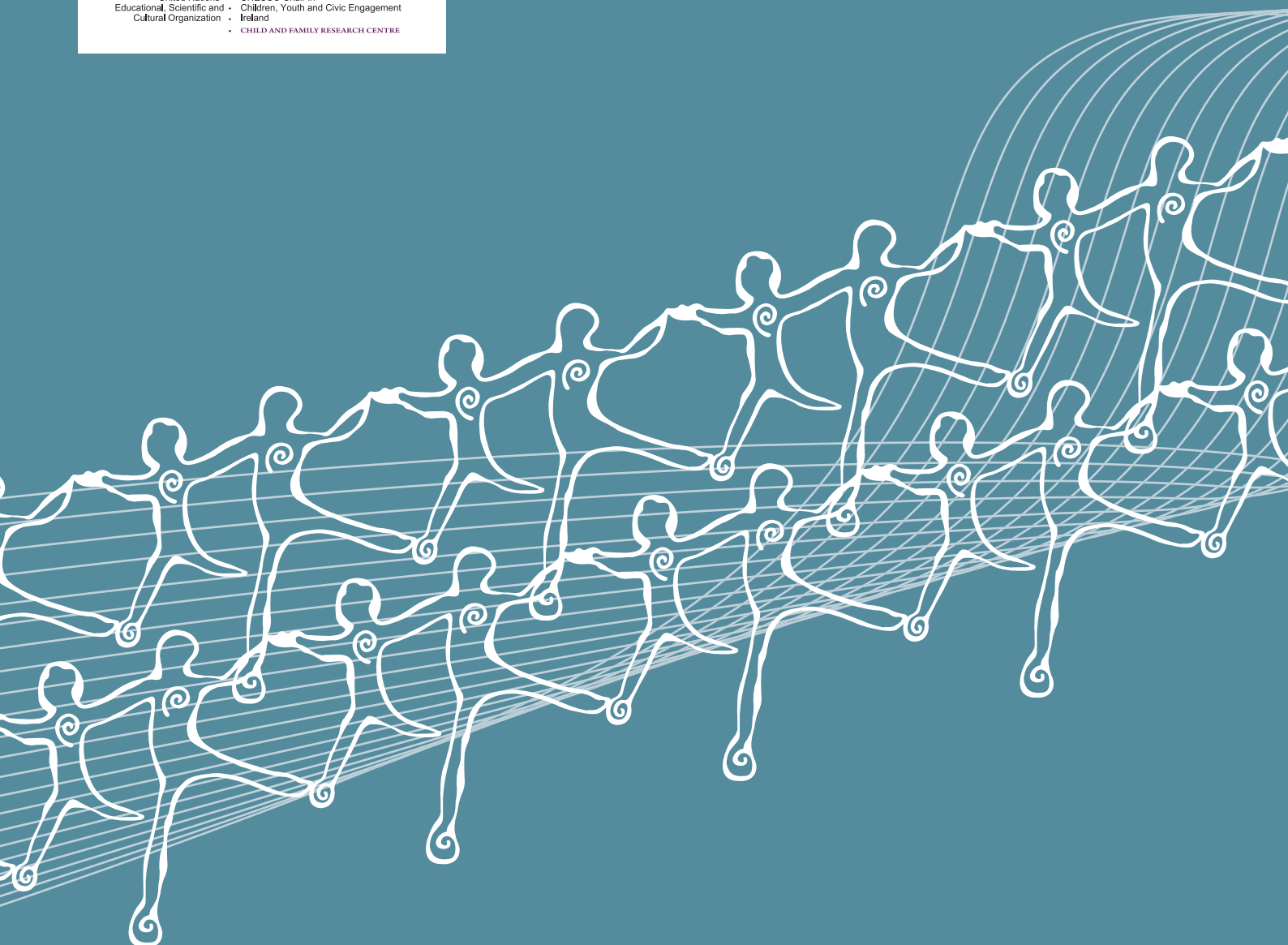


NUI Galway  
OÉ Gaillimh

CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE



Institute for  
Lifecourse and Society



Parenting Support & Parental Participation

## Second Report of the Parenting Support Champions Regional Learning Group

By Dr Rosemary Crosse and Dr Carmel Devaney  
UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway

**MARCH 2018**



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# About the Development and Mainstreaming Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support



The research and evaluation team at the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway provides research, evaluation and technical support to Tusla's Development and Mainstreaming Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS). This is a new programme of action being undertaken by Tusla - Child and Family Agency as part of its National Service Delivery Framework. The programme seeks to transform child and family services in Ireland by embedding prevention and early intervention into the culture and operations of Tusla. The research and evaluation carried out by the UCFRC focuses on the implementation and the outcomes of the PPFS Programme and is underpinned by the overarching research question:

*Is the organisational culture and practice at Tusla and its partners changing such that services are more integrated, preventative, evidence informed and inclusive of children and parents and if so, is this contributing to improved outcomes for children and their families? .*

The research and evaluation study adopts a Work Package approach. This has been adopted to deliver a comprehensive suite of research and evaluation activities involving sub-studies of the main areas within the Tusla's PPFS Programme. The Work Packages are: Meitheal and Child and Family Support Networks; Children's Participation; Parenting Support and Parental Participation; Public Awareness; and Commissioning.

**This publication is part of the Parenting Support and Parental Participation Work Package.**

## About the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre

The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC) is part of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society at the National University of Ireland Galway. It was founded in 2007, through support from The Atlantic Philanthropies, Ireland and the Health Services Executive (HSE), with a base in the School of Political Science and Sociology, the mission of the Centre is to help create the conditions for excellent policies, services and practices that improve the lives of children, youth and families through research, education and service development. The UCFRC has an extensive network of relationships and research collaborations internationally and is widely recognised for its core expertise in the areas of Family Support and Youth Development.

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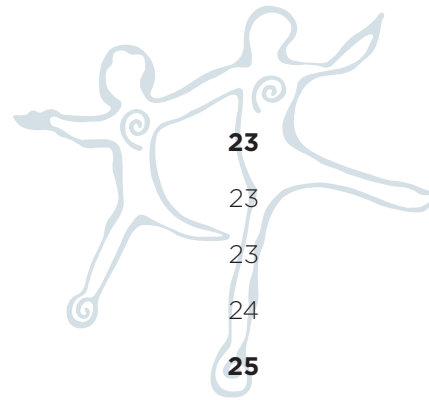
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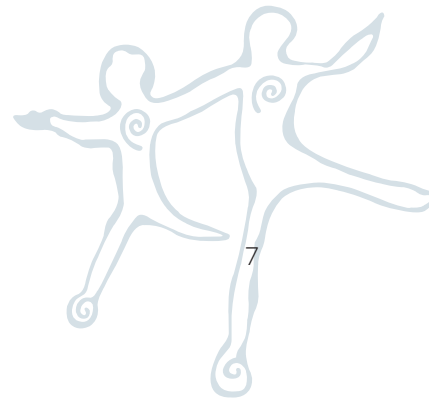
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# 1

## Introduction

This research is part of a study to examine the process and implementation of the Parenting Support Champions Project, which is one element of the Parenting Support and Parental Participation Work Package. This work is part of a wider programme of work to research and evaluate Tusla's Development and Mainstreaming Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) being undertaken by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre in the National University of Ireland Galway.

This is the second report of the Parenting Support Champions (PSC) Regional Learning Groups (RLG). RLGs have been set up by Tusla - Child and Family Agency, to support PSCs in their role. The purpose of the first report was to outline the experiences of the PSCs who attended the PSC Regional Learning Groups, examining what respondents hoped to gain from the RLGs, whether participation in the RLG supported them to develop their role as a PSC, and whether knowledge gained from the RLG would be beneficial and applicable to practice work. This report, entitled *Report of the Parenting Support Champions Regional Learning Group*, is available in full on the Development and Mainstreaming page of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre website.<sup>1</sup>

The objective of this second report is to examine whether the aims of the RLGs are being achieved. The aims of the RLGs are to:

- create opportunities for learning through peer engagement
- build the capacity of the PSCs to support parenting by recognising best practice in parenting support
- enhance parental participation practices
- develop reflective practice by sharing pertinent information and resources (Tusla, 2016).

This report has been compiled using questionnaire data completed by PSCs who attended the second round of the RLGs. It focuses specifically on perceptions of PSCs in relation to whether and how the RLGs have created opportunities for them to learn about parenting support and parental participation, and whether participation in the groups has added to their learning in these areas. Moreover, the focus is on whether and how participation in RLGs has improved the capacity of PSCs to promote parenting knowledge and to recognise and share best practice in parenting support and parental participation. The impact of participation in RLGs on the practice of PSCs, the practice of their colleagues, and the parents with whom they work are also considered.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescochildandfamilyresearchcentre/dmpfilesmaster/Report-of-the-Parenting-Support-Champions-Regional-Learning-Group.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> As part of the questionnaire, participants were given an opportunity to provide a number of answers in particular sections; these are calculated throughout as a percentage of responses given.

# 2



## Description of Participants

This section describes the respondents in terms of their employment profile, their geographical location, and the length of time spent in their specific area of work.

### 2.1 Employment Profile of Respondents

The RLG questionnaire was completed by 39 respondents, including 36 PSCs and three PPFS Managers. The regional breakdown of the respondents is outlined in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Profile of Respondents**

| Region              | PSCs      | PPFS Managers |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Dublin North East   | 6         | 1             |
| Dublin Mid Leinster | 5         | -             |
| South               | 8         | 1             |
| West                | 17        | 1             |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>36</b> | <b>3</b>      |

#### 2.1.1 Length of Time in Role

In order to ascertain the level of experience that the PSCs have in their area of work, they were asked to indicate the length of time they are employed in their role. This varied, with 30.5% of respondents being between one and four years in their role and 50.4% employed for over ten years in their role.

**Table 2: Length of Time in Role**

| Length of Time in Role | Dublin North-East | Dublin Mid-Leinster | South    | West      | % of Respondents <sup>3</sup> |
|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 1-4 years              | 3                 | -                   | 3        | 5         | 30.5%                         |
| 5-9 years              | 2                 | 2                   | 2        | 1         | 19.5%                         |
| 10-19 years            | 1                 | 1                   | 3        | 10        | 42%                           |
| 20+ years              | -                 | 2                   | -        | 1         | 8%                            |
| <b>Total:</b>          | <b>6</b>          | <b>5</b>            | <b>8</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>100%</b>                   |

<sup>3</sup> All percentages are rounded.

# 3

## Learning from the Parent Support Champions Regional Learning Group

This section outlines the respondents' views of the learning they gained from participation in the RLGs. Specific focus is on perceptions of PSCs in relation to whether and how the RLGs have created opportunities for participants to learn about parenting support and parental participation, and whether participation in the groups has added to their learning in these areas.

### 3.1 Participation in RLGs Creating Opportunities to Learn

Table 3 below shows that the majority of PSCs (n = 35) indicated that participating in the RLGs did create opportunities for them to learn.

**Table 3: Participation in RLGs Creating Opportunities to Learn**

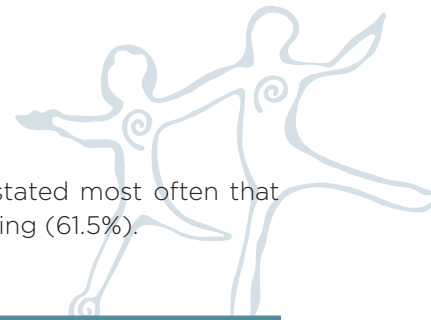
| Area                | Yes       | No       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Dublin North East   | 6         | -        |
| Dublin Mid Leinster | 5         | -        |
| South               | 7         | 1        |
| West                | 17        | -        |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>35</b> | <b>1</b> |

#### Dublin North East

For PSCs in the Dublin North East region, there were a number of ways the RLGs created opportunities for them to learn, with information on what other areas are doing (33.3%) and networking (25%) cited most often as avenues through which learning occurred.

**Table 4: (DNE) RLGs Creating Opportunities to Learn**

| Learning Through  | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|---|---------------------|----------------|
| Information on what other areas are doing                 | 4                   | 33.3%          |
| Networking with other PSCs                                | 3                   | 25%            |
| Receiving up-to-date information to pass on to colleagues | 1                   | 8.3%           |
| Listening and participation in smaller groups             | 2                   | 16.6%          |
| Receiving information on Parenting 24/7 website           | 1                   | 8.3%           |
| Receiving additional training materials                   | 1                   | 8.3%           |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>12</b>           | <b>100%</b>    |



## Dublin Mid Leinster

As with Dublin North East PSCs, those in the Dublin Mid Leinster region also stated most often that learning opportunities arose from information gained on what other areas are doing (61.5%).

**Table 5: (DML) RLGs Creating Opportunities to Learn**

| Learning Through  | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|---|---------------------|----------------|
| Information on what other areas are doing                 | 8                   | 61.5%          |
| Making plans on what they hope to achieve                 | 2                   | 15.4%          |
| Hearing about parental participation seed-funded projects | 1                   | 7.7%           |
| Discussion on using the toolkit                           | 1                   | 7.7%           |
| Hearing how effective changes have been                   | 1                   | 7.7%           |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>13</b>           | <b>100%</b>    |

## South

PSC respondents from the South region also identified receiving information on what other areas are doing as creating a learning opportunity (53.2%). Discussion on new ways to communicate messages and engage parents was also identified by some as a learning opportunity (13.3%).

**Table 6: (South) RLGs Creating Opportunities to Learn**

| Learning Through   | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Information on what other areas are doing                                  | 8                   | 53.2%          |
| Utilising resources – toolkit and 7 key messages helpful in practice       | 1                   | 6.7%           |
| Networking   | 1                   | 6.7%           |
| Discussion on new ways to communicate messages and engage parents          | 2                   | 13.3%          |
| Learned of a need for parents to participate in planning services/supports | 1                   | 6.7%           |
| By discussing methods for promotion of Parenting 24/7 and toolkit          | 1                   | 6.7%           |
| Good discussion  | 1                   | 6.7%           |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>15</b>           | <b>100%</b>    |

## West

As with all other regions, the majority of responses in the West also referred to receiving information on what other areas are doing as being key to learning opportunities in the RLGs (41%). In addition, networking was seen as creating a learning opportunity for some in this region (18%).

**Table 7: (West) RLGs Creating Opportunities to Learn**

| Learning Through  | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|---|---------------------|----------------|
| Information on what other areas are doing   | 16                  | 41%            |
| National Updates  | 2                   | 5%             |
| Networking  | 7                   | 18%            |
| Receiving a breakdown of change and development in practical terms                      | 1                   | 2.5%           |
| Emphasis on the importance of parental participation                                    | 1                   | 2.5%           |
| Emphasis on the importance of parents having their needs met                            | 1                   | 2.5%           |
| Being given an opportunity to replicate ideas   | 1                   | 2.5%           |
| Raised awareness of information available   | 2                   | 5%             |
| Reflecting on local achievements when contrasted to other areas                         | 1                   | 2.5%           |
| Space to acknowledge different levels of parenting support and services & participation | 1                   | 2.5%           |
| The importance of PPFS Managers driving projects  | 1                   | 2.5%           |
| Action planning   | 1                   | 2.5%           |
| Training undertaken for PSC role  | 2                   | 5%             |
| Details on how the role of the CYPSC dovetails on PSC role                              | 2                   | 5%             |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>39</b>           | <b>100%</b>    |

## 3.2 Add to Learning

Table 8 below shows that the majority of PSCs (n = 34) indicated that participating in the RLGs did add to their learning about both parenting support and parental participation.

**Table 8: Participation in RLGs Add to Learning**

| Area                | Yes       | No       |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Dublin North East   | 5         | 1        |
| Dublin Mid Leinster | 5         | -        |
| South               | 7         | 1        |
| West                | 17        | -        |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>34</b> | <b>2</b> |



## Dublin North East

As with creating opportunities to learn, respondents indicated a variety of ways in which participation in RLGs added to their learning. For those in the Dublin North East region there was no one specific way that the RLGs added to learning.

**Table 9: (DNE) RLGs Added to Learning**

| Added to Learning Through  | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Receiving information on what other areas are doing                  | 1                   | 14.28%         |
| Developing local knowledge of the area                               | 1                   | 14.28%         |
| Receiving information on upcoming events and training                | 1                   | 14.28%         |
| Realisation that there is a need to develop local parenting strategy | 1                   | 14.28%         |
| Need to have local drivers on board                                  | 1                   | 14.28%         |
| Receiving more information on programmes available                   | 1                   | 14.28%         |
| New ideas and vision going forward                                   | 1                   | 14.28%         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>7</b>            | <b>100%</b>    |

## Dublin Mid Leinster

For PSCs in Dublin Mid Leinster it was the information gained in terms of what other areas are doing that was identified most as being fundamental in adding to learning, with 62.5% of responses referring to this.

**Table 10: (DML) RLGs Added to Learning**

| Added to Learning Through                               | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|---|---------------------|----------------|
| Information on what other areas are doing               | 5                   | 62.5%          |
| Information on how to involve families more             | 2                   | 25%            |
| Information on how different areas manage their funding | 1                   | 12.5%          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>8</b>            | <b>100%</b>    |

## South

For PSCs in the South region, information on what other areas are doing (33.3%) and learning how organisations are engaging in parental participation (33.3%) were highlighted as adding to the learning of the respondents.

**Table 11: (South) RLGs Added to Learning**

| Added to Learning Through  | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Receiving information on different types of parenting supports available | 1                   | 8.3%           |
| Learning how organisations are engaging in parental participation        | 4                   | 33.3%          |
| Use of toolkit for key messages (helpful)                                | 1                   | 8.3%           |
| Gaining ideas about disseminating information                            | 2                   | 16.6%          |
| Information on what other areas are doing                                | 4                   | 33.3%          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>12</b>           | <b>100%</b>    |

## 3.3 Usefulness of Learning

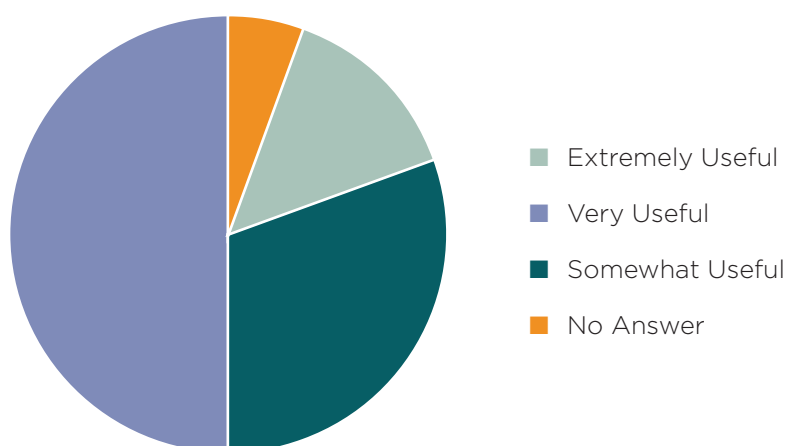
PSCs were asked to indicate whether they found the learning from participating in the RLGs useful. Those who answered indicated that the learning from the RLGs had some level of usefulness (n = 34).

**Table 12: Usefulness of Learning**

| Region              | 18       | Extremely Useful | Very Useful | Somewhat Useful | No Answer |
|---------------------|----------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Dublin North East   | 3        |                  | 1           | 1               | 1         |
| Dublin Mid Leinster | -        | 11               | 3           | 1               | 1         |
| South               | 2        |                  | 3           | 3               | -         |
| West                | -        |                  | 11          | 6               | -         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>5</b> | <b>18</b>        | <b>11</b>   | <b>11</b>       | <b>2</b>  |

Overall, 18 of the 36 respondents found the learning from the RLGs to be very useful, with 11 maintaining that it was somewhat useful.

**Figure 1: Usefulness of Learning**



# 4



## Capacity to Fulfil the Role of PSC

This section outlines the respondents' views on whether participation in the RLGs has improved their capacity to fulfil their role as a PSC. Specific focus is on whether and how the RLGs have contributed to improving the capacity of PSCs to promote parenting knowledge and Parenting 24/7 key messages in respondents' own area of practice. In addition, respondents were asked whether participation in RLGs improved their capacity to recognise and share knowledge of best practice in both parenting support and parental participation.

### 4.1 Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge and Key Messages

Table 13 below shows that the majority of PSCs (n = 29) indicated that participating in the RLGs did improve their capacity to promote both parenting knowledge and Parenting 24/7 key messages.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 13: Participation in RLGs – Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge and Parenting 24/7 Key Messages**

| Area                | Yes       | No       | Maybe    | Unsure   |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Dublin North East   | 5         | 1        | -        | -        |
| Dublin Mid Leinster | 4         | 1        | -        | -        |
| South               | 6         | 2        | -        | -        |
| West                | 14        | 1        | 1        | 1        |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>29</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> |

<sup>4</sup> Parenting 24/7 is an online resource provided by Tusla offering evidence-based key messages on what works best for children and families at different stages of childhood and in different situations.



## 4.1.1 Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge

### Dublin North East

For PSCs in the Dublin North East region there were a number of ways in which participation in the RLGs improved their capacity to promote parenting knowledge, with receiving up-to-date information from RLGs cited most often as beneficial in this regard (25%).

**Table 14: (DNE) RLGs' Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge**

| Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge Through | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Range of programmes available                            | 1                   | 12.5%          |
| Sharing of best practice                                 | 1                   | 12.5%          |
| Providing structure to parenting (information)           | 1                   | 12.5%          |
| Promoting through group leaders at local level           | 1                   | 12.5%          |
| Training (Cyber Safety)                                  | 1                   | 12.5%          |
| Receiving up-to-date information                         | 2                   | 25%            |
| Via the development of plans                             | 1                   | 12.5%          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>8</b>            | <b>100%</b>    |

### Dublin Mid Leinster

Respondents in Dublin Mid Leinster identified a number of ways in which participating in RLGs improved their capacity to promote parenting knowledge. Receiving up-to-date information was acknowledged as contributing to improved capacity in this area, similar to Dublin North East responses.

**Table 15: (DML) RLGs' Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge**

| Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge Through | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Increased confidence (in personal knowledge)             | 1                   | 33.33%         |
| Good training events                                     | 1                   | 33.33%         |
| Receiving up-to-date information                         | 1                   | 33.33%         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>3</b>            | <b>100%</b>    |



## South

For PSCs in the South there are a number of ways in which their capacity to promote parenting knowledge has been improved. One fifth (20%) of respondents indicated that the training they received has assisted in this process.

**Table 16: (South) RLGs' Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge**

| Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge Through | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Increased confidence (in personal knowledge)             | 1                   | 10%            |
| Instilled importance of this work                        | 1                   | 10%            |
| Confidence in early-intervention benefits                | 1                   | 10%            |
| Knowledge on who to give the information to              | 1                   | 10%            |
| Through training   | 2                   | 20%            |
| Using 7 key messages                                     | 1                   | 10%            |
| Learning of different ways to promote                    | 1                   | 10%            |
| Through provision of resources to disseminate            | 1                   | 10%            |
| More structure needed to gauge impact                    | 1                   | 10%            |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>10</b>           | <b>100%</b>    |

## West

For respondents in the West region there were a variety of ways in which RLGs contributed to improving their capacity to promote parenting knowledge. Learning about initiatives in other areas (23.5%) and training received as part of the PSC project (17.6%) were most commonly identified as aiding an improvement in capacity in this region.

**Table 17: (West) RLGs' Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge**

| Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting Knowledge Through      | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|---|---------------------|----------------|
| Learning about initiatives in other areas                     | 4                   | 23.5%          |
| Networking  | 1                   | 5.9%           |
| Training received   | 3                   | 17.6%          |
| Increased awareness of needs at local level                   | 1                   | 5.9%           |
| Being more informed of evidence-based policy                  | 1                   | 5.9%           |
| Importance of social media                                    | 1                   | 5.9%           |
| Increased awareness of how parents access information locally | 1                   | 5.9%           |
| Improved cultural awareness                                   | 2                   | 11.7%          |
| Being more mindful of terminology                             | 1                   | 5.9%           |
| Extending on what parents are doing already                   | 1                   | 5.9%           |
| Structure needed (local plan)                                 | 1                   | 5.9%           |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>17</b>           | <b>100%</b>    |

## 4.1.2 Improved Capacity to Promote Parenting 24/7 Key Messages

### **Dublin North East**

The provision of support materials, and concise information to present to parents, were identified by respondents as assisting in improving capacity to promote key messages in the Dublin North East region. The messages were promoted equally in the following ways:

- sharing with colleagues
- signposting parents to website
- disseminating messages to local organisations
- national programme with potential reach.

### **Dublin Mid Leinster**

Promoting key messages in Dublin Mid Leinster also consisted of a variety of methods. Sharing key messages with colleagues (71.4%) was identified as a prominent means of promotion by respondents in this region; other methods consisted of:

- sharing at events and networking
- sharing with families.

### **South**

For respondents in the South region, participation in RLGs has improved their capacity to promote key messages through learning different ways to disseminate them, increasing confidence around dissemination, and contributing to the development of more in-depth knowledge of the messages. Promoting the messages in groups and in local support agencies was identified by some as techniques. For others, however, more materials are required and the website needs to be updated in order for messages to be promoted effectively:

- learning different ways to disseminate messages
- more in-depth knowledge
- more confidence in disseminating
- promote in groups
- informed all local agencies
- more materials needed
- website updates needed continually.

### **West**

A quarter (25%) of responses in the West region indicated that their capacity to promote key messages was in the main improved by learning what others are doing through participation in the RLGs. Other responses indicated that using the toolkit and incorporating key messages into work improved their capacity in this area.

The most common form of promotion of key messages for this group is through their work with parents, with 33.3% of responses indicating that key messages are being promoted through both individual and group work with parents. A further 25% indicated that key messages are promoted with colleagues.



Other types of promotion included:

- social media
- community groups
- flyers.

### 4.1.3 Improved Capacity to Recognise and Share Knowledge of Best Practice in Parenting Support and Parental Participation

Table 18 below shows that the majority of PSCs (n = 24) indicated that participating in the RLGs did improve their capacity to recognise and share knowledge of best practice in both parenting support and parental participation.

**Table 18: Participation in RLGs – Improved Capacity to Recognise and Share Knowledge of Best Practice in both Parenting Support and Parental Participation**

| Area                | Yes       | No       | Maybe    | Somewhat | No Answer |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Dublin North East   | 4         | 2        | -        | -        | -         |
| Dublin Mid Leinster | 2         | 2        | -        | -        | 1         |
| South               | 5         | 3        | -        | -        | -         |
| West                | 13        | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>24</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b>  |

#### 4.1.3.1 Improved Capacity to Recognise Best Practice in Parenting Support

For PSCs in each of the four regions there were a number of ways in which their capacity to recognise best practice in parenting support has improved. While participation in the RLGs has assisted the PSCs in this respect, there are also other areas identified that have aided this process. This section outlines the regional responses to this question.

##### **Dublin North East**

For those in the Dublin North East region, participation in the RLGs has:

- increased knowledge of the range of available programmes
- put focus on evidence-based and evidence-informed practice
- confirmed the existing knowledge of PSCs

In addition, participation in workshops and feedback from groups has aided an improvement in capacity to recognise best practice in parenting support.

##### **Dublin Mid Leinster**

Shared experiences through the RLGs and the use of PSC support materials were identified by participants in the Dublin Mid Leinster region as assisting in improving their capacity to recognise best practice in this area.

## **South**

Participants in the South identified a number of ways that the RLGs helped to improve their capacity to recognise best practice in parenting support. Responses included:

- knowing the importance of evidence-based practice
- recognising where evidence-based practice is not being used
- shared experiences
- gaining clarity on available information
- confirmation of existing knowledge
- being more aware of best practice

## **West**

Those in the West region also identified various ways that participation in the RLGs supported them to improve their capacity in this area:

- participation in RLGs highlighted the need to meet as a group to improve capacity
- shared experiences
- assisted in recognising the importance of interagency working
- assisted in recognising the importance of parental participation
- sharing information provided and learning to date
- networking
- assisted in recognising the importance of working at a county level
- RLGs enhanced knowledge gained
- supporting each other.

### **4.1.3.2 Improved Capacity to Share Knowledge of Best Practice in Parenting Support**

As with improvements in capacity to recognise best practice in parenting support, respondents from the regions highlighted a number of ways in which participation in the RLGs helped to improve their capacity to share knowledge of best practice in parenting support, and in some cases they outlined how this sharing has been achieved. This section outlines the variety of ways in which the RLGs have assisted with these improvements and how knowledge sharing has been accomplished. The sharing of experiences as part of the RLGs has been identified most often as a means of improving capacity in this area.

## **Dublin North East**

- provision of information to share (current research, tools)
- shared experiences
- workshops



### **Dublin Mid Leinster**

- using the Parenting 24/7 website

### **South**

- increased confidence in knowledge and ability
- networking
- learning different ways of sharing knowledge

### **West**

- shared experiences
- networking
- building on existing knowledge
- learning new ways to share information
- presentations to parents
- sharing with other practitioners
- social media
- the use of promotional materials.

## **4.1.4 Improved Capacity to Recognise Best Practice in Parental Participation**

For PSCs in each of the four regions there were also a number of ways in which their capacity to recognise best practice in parental participation has improved. Participation in the RLGs has assisted the PSCs in some respects. This section highlights the variety of ways in which improved capacity has been achieved. Such improvements in capacity to recognise best practice in this area have been attributed most often to Meitheal.<sup>5</sup>

### **Dublin North East**

- discussions at RLGs
- increased awareness
- seed funding
- training

### **Dublin Mid Leinster**

- increased awareness
- increased confidence
- use of the toolkit
- Meitheal

<sup>5</sup> Meitheal is an Irish early-intervention and prevention practice model that is used when children and young people need support around, for example, behavioural issues or emotional needs but do not meet the threshold for an intervention by Tusla's Child Protection and Welfare (CPW) service.

## **South**

- awareness of lack of practice in this area
- evaluating programmes with parents
- Meitheal

## **West<sup>6</sup>**

- developing an action plan
- shared experiences
- increased understanding of the need for real participation
- Meitheal.

### 4.1.4.1 Improved Capacity to Share Knowledge of Best Practice in Parental Participation

PSC respondents from the four regions highlighted a number of ways in which participation in the RLGs helped to improve their capacity to share knowledge of best practice in parental participation, and in some cases they outlined how this has been achieved. This section details the variety of ways in which improvements have occurred and how knowledge sharing has been accomplished. The sharing of experiences as part of the RLG was identified most often as a means of improving capacity in this area.

#### **Dublin North East**

- increased awareness of knowledge base
- training provided by PSC project
- parent learning groups
- focus groups locally
- regional presentations of seed-funded projects
- relaying information from RLGs (to teams and parents)

#### **Dublin Mid Leinster**

- learning from shared experiences
- local discussions

#### **South**

- different ways of sharing information
- interagency contact/collaboration

<sup>6</sup> Respondents in the West pointed out that more work is needed in the area of parental participation and that this needs time to develop.

## West

- learning from shared experiences
- able to identify opportunities to share
- share knowledge with colleagues
- sharing at regional and local events
- parental participation strategy in place
- in parent training courses.





# 5

## Impact of Participation in Regional Learning Groups

This section outlines the PSC respondents' views on the impact of the knowledge gained from participation in the RLGs. Specific focus in this section is on perceptions of the impact of the knowledge gained on the PSCs' own practice, on the practice of their colleagues and others who work in their area, and perceptions of the impact of the knowledge gained, if any, on parents to date.

### 5.1 Impact of Knowledge Gained on Practice

Table 19 below shows that the majority of PSCs (n = 29) indicated that the knowledge gained from participating in the RLGs did impact on their practice.

**Table 19: Knowledge Gained – Impact on Practice**

| Area                | Yes       | No       | Somewhat | No Answer |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Dublin North East   | 5         | 1        | -        | -         |
| Dublin Mid Leinster | 5         | -        | -        | -         |
| South               | 5         | 2        | 1        | -         |
| West                | 14        | 1        | 1        | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>29</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>1</b>  |

#### Dublin North East

PSC respondents indicated a variety of ways in which knowledge gained from participation in RLGs impacted on their practice. For those in the Dublin North East Region, having more information to share was identified most as having an impact on practice (28.5%). However, issues of capacity were also identified by some as having an impact on practice (14.2%).

**Table 20: (DNE) Participation in RLGs – Impact on Practice**

| Impact on Practice   | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Given more tools/resources to use  | 1                   | 14.2%          |
| Have more information to share   | 2                   | 28.5%          |
| Increased awareness of best practice   | 1                   | 14.2%          |
| Sharing of information with peers  | 1                   | 14.2%          |
| Everyone is stretched  | 1                   | 14.2%          |
| Slow to impact/Tusla should encourage partner agencies to take on work if they don't have capacity | 1                   | 14.2%          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>7</b>            | <b>100%</b>    |



## Dublin Mid Leinster

New ideas gained from sharing of experiences within the RLGs was most commonly identified as having an impact on practice by respondents in Dublin Mid Leinster (37.5%). A quarter (25%) of responses maintained that access to small amounts of funding also had an impact on practice.

**Table 21: (DML) Participation in RLGs – Impact on Practice**

| Impact on Practice   | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Through access to small funding                            | 2                   | 25%            |
| Through new ideas gained from sharing experiences          | 3                   | 37.5%          |
| Access to training and materials                           | 1                   | 12.5%          |
| Increased awareness leading to discussions with colleagues | 2                   | 25%            |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>8</b>            | <b>100%</b>    |

## South

PSC respondents in the South indicated a variety of ways in which participation in RLGs had an impact on their practice. For those in this region there was no one specific way that the RLGs impacted on practice.

**Table 22: (South) Participation in RLGs – Impact on Practice**

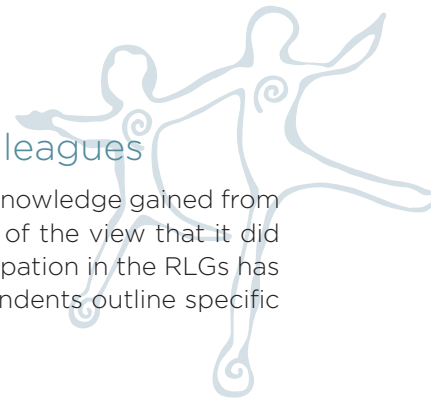
| Impact on Practice                                | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|---|---------------------|----------------|
| Promotion of information gained                   | 1                   | 11.11%         |
| Through new ideas gained from sharing experiences | 1                   | 11.11%         |
| Given resources to use                            | 1                   | 11.11%         |
| More knowledge                                    | 1                   | 11.11%         |
| More contacts                                     | 1                   | 11.11%         |
| More confidence                                   | 1                   | 11.11%         |
| More purposeful work with parents                 | 1                   | 11.11%         |
| Highlighted gaps in parent support (locally)      | 1                   | 11.11%         |
| Re-enthused in role                               | 1                   | 11.11%         |
| <b>Total</b>                                      | <b>9</b>            | <b>100%</b>    |

## West

For a number of respondents in the West, practice has been impacted in a variety of ways, with using and sharing information gained with parents in day-to-day work (18.5%) being the most common response given.

**Table 23: (West) Participation in RLGs – Impact on Practice**

| Impact on Practice   | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Increased knowledge base   | 2                   | 7.4%           |
| More discussion with partners helps consolidate views  | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Using/sharing information with parents   | 5                   | 18.5%          |
| Raising awareness with staff   | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Through new ideas gained from sharing  | 2                   | 7.4%           |
| Increased recognition of the importance of meeting as a group  | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Hopefully establish a framework in mid-west  | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Reminds of the importance of parenting support and parental participation  | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Ensures the implementation of parental participation   | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Collaborative work with other PSCs to develop plans to support parents and parental participation collaborative work with other services | 2                   | 7.4%           |
| Information shared with colleagues   | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Initiatives implemented where possible   | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Seeing role differently (as part of a bigger picture in the organisation)  | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Helped to reenergise   | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Plans to consolidate plan for 2018   | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Increased commitment to PSC project  | 2                   | 7.4%           |
| Reinforced confidence  | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Embedded learning in day-to-day role   | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| Learning from RLG has resulted in increased focus on practice  | 1                   | 3.7%           |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>27</b>           | <b>100%</b>    |



## 5.2 Impact of Knowledge Gained on the Practice of Colleagues

Table 24 below shows that while the majority of PSCs (n = 19) indicated that the knowledge gained from participating in the RLGs did impact on the practice of their colleagues, 11 were of the view that it did not. This section details the various ways in which knowledge gained from participation in the RLGs has had an impact on the practice of the PSCs' colleagues, and in some cases respondents outline specific pieces that have had an impact.

**Table 24: Knowledge Gained - Impact on Practice of Colleagues**

| Area                | Yes       | No        | Not Sure | Somewhat | No Answer |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Dublin North East   | 4         | 2         | -        | -        | -         |
| Dublin Mid Leinster | 5         |           | -        | -        | -         |
| South               | 2         | 5         | -        | 1        | -         |
| West                | 8         | 4         | 2        | 2        | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>19</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>1</b>  |

### Dublin North East

PSC respondents indicated a variety of ways in which knowledge gained from both participating in RLGs and through other means impacted on the practice of their colleagues, which include:

- becoming familiar with how others operate programmes
- becoming familiar with which/where areas are running programmes
- through new information they have been given
- through resources they have been given

### Dublin Mid Leinster

For those in the Dublin Mid Leinster region, information given by PSCs to their colleagues was identified most often as having an impact on the practice of others, with 40% of responses indicating this. Other impacts included:

- increased motivation
- positive about possibilities
- through new information they have been given
- plans to increase awareness at interagency meetings
- setting up more groups for parents

### South

As with respondents in Dublin Mid Leinster information given by PSCs was identified most often as having an impact on the practice of colleagues in the South region (66.6%):

- through new information they have been given
- services delivering pieces of work in the community
- needs more attention

## West

Respondents in the West indicated a variety of ways that knowledge gained by PSCs has had an impact on the practice of colleagues and outline specific pieces that they think have had an impact. However, 40% of responses indicate that no such impact has occurred to date:

- through new information they have been given
- sharing information with other professionals
- to form plan of getting PSCs together
- to form a goal around doing a plan for PSCs 2018
- to ensure that parental participation will be included in plans
- through the experience of others
- planning going forward
- difficult to promote when working with high threshold
- not yet plans in process.

## 5.3 Impact of Knowledge Gained on Parents

Table 25 below shows that the majority of PSCs (n = 25) indicated that the knowledge gained from participating in the RLGs has impacted on parents.

**Table 25: Knowledge Gained - Impact on Parents**

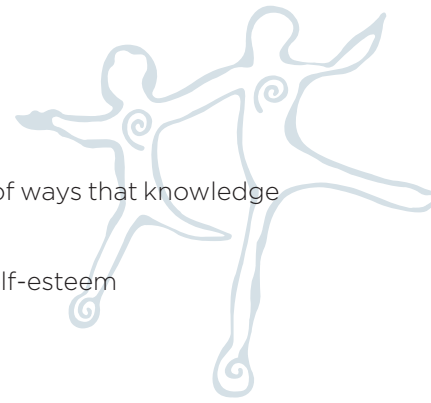
| Area                | Yes       | No       | Unsure   | No Answer |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Dublin North East   | 4         | 2        | -        | -         |
| Dublin Mid Leinster | 4         | -        | 1        | -         |
| South               | 8         | -        | -        | -         |
| West                | 9         | 3        | 4        | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>25</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>1</b>  |

This section outlines the variety of ways in which knowledge gained from participation in the RLGs has had an impact on parents, and in some cases respondents outline specific pieces that have had an impact.

### Dublin North East

Respondents in Dublin North East indicate that the knowledge gained from participation in the RLGs has had an impact on parents in a variety of ways:

- through dissemination of learning
- via staff who are informed
- more opportunities for parenting courses
- more parenting networks
- parenting evaluation opportunities



### **Dublin Mid Leinster**

As with Dublin North East, respondents in Dublin Mid Leinster indicated a number of ways that knowledge gained from participation in RLGs had impacted on parents in their region:

- encouraging parents to engage in activities, which helps them with self-esteem
- the more knowledge gained is for the better of the parents
- informed of Parenting 24/7 website

### **South**

For those in the South, while there is a perception that knowledge gained has had some impact on parents, learning to disseminate messages in different ways is seen to have the furthest reach, with 25% of responses indicating this:

- some have taken the information on board, with positive results
- participated in workshops
- gave reward chart to parents in their groups
- messages delivered to parents
- more input from future groups of parents
- in a small way
- disseminating messages in different ways/bigger impact
- more valuable information distributed

### **West**

While respondents in the West outlined various ways in which knowledge gained from participation in RLGs impacted on parents, 25% of responses indicated that it is too early to assess impact in this area:

- through one-on-one work
- more possibilities to participate in planning
- included messages in brochure for parents
- developed a calendar of parenting supports
- developed a Facebook page
- developed a new campaign for parents
- training used with parents
- parenting messages/Parenting 24/7 used to support parents
- information impacted positively on parents
- focus groups run to hear parents' views
- toolkit useful in one-to-one work
- too early to assess impact.

# 6

## PPFS Manager Respondents

As stated in Section 2.1 of this report, the employment profile of the respondents indicates that 36 PSCs completed the questionnaire and three respondents identified themselves as PPFS Managers. This section contains the findings pertaining to those who are not classified as PSCs and have identified themselves as a PPFS Manager.

### 6.1 Learning from Parent Support Champions Regional Learning Group

All PPFS Manager respondents maintained that participation in RLGs did add to their learning about parenting support and parental participation. When asked how participation in RLGs added to their learning, 27.3% of responses indicated that receiving information on what other areas are doing was useful in this regard.

**Table 26: PPFS Manager Learning**

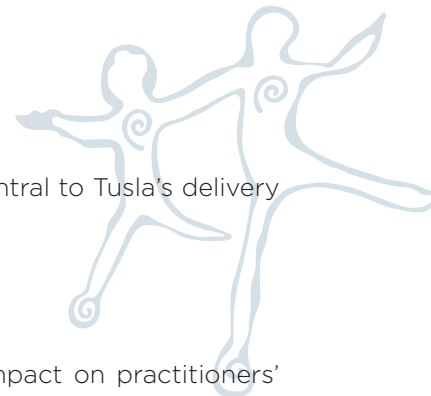
| PPFS Manager Learning  | Number of Responses | % of Responses |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Information on what other areas are doing in terms of new approaches/initiatives                 | 3                   | 27.3%          |
| Updates on national direction  | 2                   | 18.2%          |
| Information on possible promotional opportunities (parenting support and parental participation) | 2                   | 18.2%          |
| Increased knowledge of the role of PSC   | 1                   | 9%             |
| Understanding difficulties for PSCs to meet the objectives of their role                         | 1                   | 9%             |
| Networking   | 1                   | 9%             |
| Brainstorming on trouble issues  | 1                   | 9%             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>11</b>           | <b>100%</b>    |

### 6.2 Regional Learning Groups Improving Capacity to Support Best Practice

All respondents indicated that participation in the RLGs did improve their capacity to support best practice in the areas of parenting support and parental participation and did so in a variety of ways, as outlined below:

- greater awareness of the need for dedicated resources required to drive parental participation
- attendance was vital for PPFS role
- awareness of the need to have regular meetings with PSCs to support their roles
- as training is rolled out to PSCs, ensuring that key teams also receive key learning

- enables bringing PSCs from my area together and brainstorming
- helps with setting goals/action plans that ensure that parenting is central to Tusla's delivery goals.



### 6.3 Views of Impact on Practitioners

All PPFs Managers were of the view that participating in RLGs did have an impact on practitioners' approaches to supporting parents and parental participation practices in their areas and outline how this is the case below:

- Those that do attend hear information on what is happening in other areas and national context, and this is beneficial.
- Awareness of the importance of parental participation is increasing, with plenty of examples of good practice.
- It provides support for PSCs and energises them in communicating the messages.
- It gives ideas for possible approaches for the area through discussion with colleagues elsewhere around the country.
- PSCs sit on CYPSC subgroups/networks where parenting issues are highlighted.
- Within the team, staff are thinking more about mainstreaming parental participation into work practice.
- New ideas are developed at RLGs and implemented into work.
- PSCs and team are promoting 24/7 messages and website among parents, colleagues, and partner agencies.
- Not all PSCs have availability to attend, due to existing work pressures.



# 7

## Conclusion

This research is part of a study to examine the process, implementation, and outcomes of the Tusla's Parenting Support Champions (PSC) project formed as part of the parenting work stream of the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme. This report is one element of the evaluation of the Parenting Support Champions project. It focuses specifically on the Regional Learning Groups (RLGs) which were set up to support the PSCs in their role. This is the second report on the RLGs, the objective of which is to examine whether the aims of the RLGs are being achieved.

### 7.1 Key Messages

This section provides an overview of the key findings based on the results of the analysis.

#### **Learning from the RLGs**

- 35 of the 36 PSC respondents indicated that participation in the RLGs did create opportunities to learn about parenting support and parental participation.
- Facilitating insight into what other areas are doing was the most cited avenue through which learning occurred.
- 34 of the 36 PSC respondents indicated that participation in the RLGs did add to their learning about parenting support and parental participation.
- Gaining information on what other regions are doing in the area of parenting support generally and parental participation specifically were referred to most as adding to learning.
- Five of the respondents found the learning from the RLGs to be extremely useful, 18 found it very useful, and 11 of the PSCs found it somewhat useful.

#### **Improved Capacity to Fulfil the Role of PSC**

- 29 of the PSC respondents maintained that participation in the RLGs did improve their capacity to promote both parenting knowledge and Parenting 24/7 key messages.
- In relation to promoting parenting knowledge, receiving up-to-date information, training, and learning about initiatives in other areas were most often cited as contributing to increased capacity in this area.
- The provision of support materials and concise information to present to parents, as well as learning different ways to disseminate it, were cited as methods through which capacity has improved in the area of promoting Parenting 24/7 key messages. Learning from other areas and gaining more in-depth knowledge of the key messages as a result of participating in RLGs were also cited as causal factors in improved capacity.
- 24 of the respondents indicated that participating in RLGs did improve their capacity to recognise and share knowledge of best practice in parenting support and parental participation.
- PSCs listed a variety of reasons for their improved capacity in both areas, the most prominent



being the shared experiences of PSCs who participated in the RLGs.

- In addition, improved capacity to recognise best practice in parental participation was most often attributed to the Meitheal process.

### **Impact of Participation in Regional Learning Groups**

- 29 PSC respondents indicated that knowledge gained from participating in RLGs did have an impact on their practice.
- Practice has been impacted in a variety of ways across regions. Gaining and sharing new information was cited most as having an impact on the practice of PSCs.
- 19 PSC respondents maintained that knowledge gained from participating in RLGs did have an impact on the practice of their colleagues.
- Information passed on through PSCs was identified most often as having an impact on the practice of colleagues.
- 25 PSC respondents indicated that knowledge gained from participating in RLGs did have an impact on parents.
- This occurred in a variety of ways across regions: there was no one specific type of knowledge identified as having the most impact.
- Some respondents maintain that it is too early to assess impact in these areas.

### **Views of the PPFS Managers**

- All PPFS Manager respondents indicated that participation in the RLGs did add to their learning about parenting support and parental participation, did improve their capacity to support best practice in both areas, and did have an impact on practitioners' approaches to supporting parents and parental participation practices in their respective areas.
- PPFS Managers identified a number of ways that participation in RLGs added to their learning, improved their capacity to support best practice, and impacted on the practices of practitioners in their areas (see Tables 54–56).

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