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**Understanding Strategic Engagement:  
An Exploratory Study of Perspectives on  
Philanthropic Investment in Programmes for  
Children and Youth in Ireland**

A thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD. to the National  
University of Ireland, Galway

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## **Declaration by Candidate**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort, and that it has not been submitted elsewhere for an award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Signature.....

Date.....



## **Abstract**

In Ireland, the term ‘philanthropy’ has connotations of charitable beneficence and is often associated with nineteenth century forms of giving to alleviate poverty in areas that subsequently become the responsibility of the State. However, following a period of significant investment by philanthropic foundations in social programmes that began in the early 2000s, a new discourse has emerged to reflect the practice of philanthropy that is considered relevant to the functioning of modern social democracies. Characterised as ‘strategic’ in orientation, this entrepreneurial style of philanthropy is accompanied by a set of goals for creating impact and adopts a public policy focus. This thesis is an exploratory study of strategic philanthropy as a distinct approach to social investment as experienced by Ireland’s children and youth sector.

In a culture marked by both lack of previous engagement with foundations and scant public debate on philanthropic intervention in social issues, the study addresses a need to build an understanding of this new form of philanthropy. It is based on interviews with a cohort of high-level, expert informants including foundation representatives, State actors and nonprofit beneficiaries. The research was influenced by theoretical frameworks based on the attribution of unique roles to foundations in society and informed by the literature on how to conceptualise and implement a strategic approach to philanthropy. The study highlighted a number of challenges for foundations seeking to influence public policy including divergence of opinion as to the degree of involvement perceived as legitimate intervention by other actors within a sector. Key findings suggest that philanthropic intent to influence public systems and services needs to be founded on the elaboration of clearly defined, mutual goals with statutory partners and that foundations’ contribution to best exercised through their social innovation and convening functions. The research also proposes a framework for understanding strategic engagement that identifies areas of intervention where foundations had the greatest capacity to be effective.

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# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.1 Overview**

Historically, in Ireland, the discourse associated with philanthropy for children and families has been steeped in religious traditions of self-help and voluntarism. From the early nineteenth century, the provision of aid to the poor and needy, administered through religious-based charitable organisations, provided for the construction of a discourse on Irish philanthropy dominated by spirituality, individualism and morality (Skehill, 2000). The term ‘philanthropy’ has connotations of charitable beneficence and is often associated with nineteenth century forms of giving to alleviate poverty in areas that have since become the responsibility of the State. However, beginning in the early 2000s, alongside the entrance of philanthropic foundations onto the nonprofit landscape, a new discourse has emerged in Ireland to reflect the practice of philanthropy that is considered relevant to and congruent with the operation of modern social democracies.

This form of philanthropic intervention, delivered through the mechanism of the private foundation, Anheier describes as having ‘the insight that philanthropy provides for investment in the production of public goods, preferably aiming at innovations or increased effectiveness’ (2005, p. 324). Characterised as ‘strategic’ in orientation, this entrepreneurial view understands philanthropic giving as a form of investment. In practice, it adopts a public policy orientation and seeks engagement with the State. Across much of Europe, there has been a resurgence of interest in philanthropy in this new, modern guise (Schuyt, 2010). In Ireland, the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising (2012, p.10) highlighted the potential for new and innovative public private partnerships including the creation of a National Social Innovation Fund to support social innovations with the potential for impact on critical social issues.

The associated change in discourse to reflect philanthropy as a modern form of intervention is relatively sudden; it raises a number of questions that are

worthy of exploration in the Irish context. In this study, the operation of strategic philanthropy and the distinctive approach adopted in relation to funding for children and youth will be explored from the perspectives of a cohort of key stakeholders participating in a period of heightened investment in the sector.

In Ireland, the burgeoning interest in philanthropy as a viable and vital element of funding for social programmes has much to do with the experience of significant investment from The Atlantic Philanthropies Ireland (Atlantic), a global foundation with a programme focus and offices in Ireland, and the One Foundation, a national foundation created in 2004. Beginning in the early 2000s, a concentrated period of philanthropic funding took place with over €100M invested in programmes for children, youth and families in the Republic of Ireland<sup>1</sup>. Both organisations prioritised funding for social programmes designated to address deficits in the country's public services and systems. In planning and carrying out their activities, these foundations exhibited a view of how best to meet the needs and promote the wellbeing of children and families that fits the characterisation of 'proactive' relationships where foundations base their decisions on 'an autonomous process of assessing needs, which derives from the values that guide their activities' (Almog-Bar & Zychlinski, 2012, p. 798).

Concentrated organisational giving, channelled through the private, philanthropic foundation with funding capacity of the scale exhibited by the One Foundation and Atlantic is unprecedented in the limited experience of institutional philanthropy in Ireland. The private foundation represents a particular form of philanthropy that, while widespread in the United States, was previously unfamiliar to Ireland. Operating with a permanent endowment, professional staff, and targeted grantmaking programmes designed in-house, private foundations have considerable latitude in

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<sup>1</sup> The Atlantic Philanthropies (Ireland) Disadvantaged Children and Youth Programme included Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as separate areas. This thesis is concerned with the grants made in the Republic of Ireland only.

determining priorities and are considered ‘uniquely privileged’ organisations (Anheier, 2005; Prewitt, 2006a; 2006b).

Any understanding of philanthropic intervention must be considered in the context of social, cultural and political factors that inform the development of policy and services for children and families in Ireland. Historically, services for children and families were largely provided by the religious and voluntary sector. For much of its history, the care and protection of children was largely through institutionalised provision. Even after the founding of the Free State in 1922, the primary source of health, educational and social services were church-based voluntary organisations. This was in direct contrast to the United Kingdom, where the welfare state saw the influence of more progressive theories of childcare and community work (Acheson, Harvey & Williamson, 2005). Only in the 1970s with the introduction of community-based family services, did the Irish State take on a more active role in social service delivery.

Historically, in Irish social policy, the State adopted a minimalist approach (Kiely, 1999; Richardson, 2005). Until the 1990s, limited State support existed for children and families and interventionist support structures for the family remained relatively weak. The policy framework for child welfare underwent a significant period of activity in the 1990s with the introduction, in that decade, of a range of legislative and policy changes that fundamentally altered the environment in which forms of social provision for children occur. These included a move toward policies of prevention and support for families in providing for the care and welfare of children and an ethos that children and young people could be considered in the context of their positioning in society with attention to their rights both inside and outside the family. The infusion of significant funding into the children and youth sector that began in the early 2000s therefore, occurred at a point in time where the policy environment had undergone rapid change.

Ireland has a mixed economy of public, voluntary and private welfare provision. Notwithstanding the State as the principal role in social protection, by international standards, Ireland's welfare state model relies on a high degree of involvement from nonprofit bodies (NESC, 2005). The subsidiary role has dominated, with the State viewing nonprofits primarily as service delivery organisations (Keenan, 2008a). Services for children and families are provided by both statutory and voluntary organisations with a considerable amount of sub-contracting of specialised services and projects to community and voluntary organisations.

Prior to the 2000s, foundations were not considered an important component of the infrastructure that delivered services to children and families in Ireland. While the investments made by Atlantic and One Foundation have focused attention on the potential for philanthropy to impact social programmes, there is a lack of clarity as to what this form of intervention looks like in practice. For instance, the existence of private institutions harnessing a public purpose involves foundations assuming responsibilities that would otherwise have been viewed as the prerogative of the State. In this regard, the issue of how philanthropy could and should engage with the State in a specific domain such as children and youth policy and service provision is worth examining. At the same time, the presence of alternative sources of funding to nonprofit organisations, previously dependent on statutory income streams, alters the dynamics between recipient nonprofits and the State and raises a number of issues that have yet to be explored.

The remainder of the chapter is divided into five sections. Firstly, the rationale for and background to the study are described and the issue being studied is identified and defined. The research aim and objectives are then described. This is followed by a synthesis of the key theoretical underpinnings for the study. The final section outlines the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Rationale and background**

### **1.2.1 Background to the study**

As outlined above, the early 2000s saw the beginning of a concentrated period of philanthropic funding for children, youth and families in the Republic of Ireland undertaken by Atlantic and One Foundation. Both are limited life foundations that, by 2016, will have ceased operating. Their style of philanthropy represents an entrepreneurial view focused ‘on strategy, key competencies and striving for effective contributions to social change’ (Anheier, 2005, p. 524). It has been accompanied by increased specialisation in the Irish nonprofit field benefiting organisations that as Donnelly-Cox and Cannon (2010) have noted ‘could demonstrate focused attention to their core mission and the ability to deliver a specialist response to a social need’ (2010, p. 343). The nonprofit organisations receiving investment represented the leading providers of services to children and young people in Ireland, a number of rights-based advocacy groups and intermediary organisations providing technical support and applied research to the children and youth sector.

The style of giving adopted by Atlantic and the One Foundation deviated from the ethos typically associated with philanthropic giving in Ireland. Both organisations used the language of investment over grants; investments that came with clearly delineated social impact goals and with expectations for improving public policy. They sought to improve the service delivery system for children and youth in Ireland by promoting prevention and early intervention services with evidence of effectiveness and relied on ‘proven programmes’. The notion of ‘scaling up’ or spreading the adoption of new practices across a system, occupied a central place in the objectives set for these investments, primarily through demonstrating service models that could be replicated, mainstreamed or adapted by other private or statutory funders. In the case of Atlantic, this took the form of co-investment with the State in three economically disadvantaged areas of Dublin, the first co-funded partnership of this nature in Ireland.

In addition, both organisations directed a considerable amount of their funding to advocacy activities. In so doing, these programmes reflected a desire to influence the decision-makers and the broader policy frameworks that governed service delivery for children and youth. Advocacy goals prioritised increasing the core capacity of nonprofit organisations dedicated to strengthening the rights of children and young people including support for models of active participation as well resources to organisations to monitor the implementation of national policy.

This experience with philanthropy is unusual in several respects. Firstly, the investment capacity of €100M into a specific social policy domain had the potential to make a significant impact on the field. In investing in the organisational capacity and skilling up of the sector, it reflected a marked departure in an environment in which funding for research on children's needs or evaluation had previously been non-existent (Keenan, 2007). Secondly, the contribution philanthropy makes to society is normally viewed in purely economic terms. In its intent to influence policy, philanthropy exhibited an implicit assumption to go beyond its typical role as a resource provider. Thirdly, the ethos of investment and the brand of strategic philanthropy marked a departure from traditional mode of engagement with which charity is associated introducing new terminology and concepts into the children and youth field.

### **1.2.2 Understanding strategic philanthropy**

The form of intervention described above fits with the type of philanthropy characterised as 'new', 'modern', 'effective' and 'innovative'. These terms, used interchangeably in the literature, form a genre that comes under the rubric of 'strategic philanthropy' (Cobb, 2002; Katz, 2005; Anheier, 2005; Boris & Kopczynski Winkler, 2013). Internationally, foundations are increasingly adopting public policy goals and seeking greater engagement with policymakers (Knott & McCarthy, 2007; Leat, 2008; Coffman, 2008; Montanaro, 2012). Traditionally, in state-foundation engagement, the corporatist model, in which foundations contribute funds to activities that are



decided upon and approved by government prevails (Anheier & Daly, 2006; Leat, 2008). Characteristic of new philanthropy, however, is a desire to exert more control and to directly influence the policy process as part of a trend away from reactive models of engagement with the state (Almog-Bar & Zychlinski, 2012).

At a pragmatic level, strategic giving adopts the language and tools of business practice and has become associated with entrepreneurial funding models. Also called the ‘new frontier’ of philanthropy it reflects the ethos of a generation of social entrepreneurs for whom philanthropy is a form of social investment (Porter & Kramer, 1999; Salamon, 2014). Informed by the principles of venture funding, the emphasis is on highly selective approaches to investments, with priority accorded to measurable goals and demonstrable results. Above all, this form of philanthropy is focused on impact.

Other interpretations of strategic philanthropy have moved away from the technical aspects associated with entrepreneurial terminology and practice (Buteau, Buchanan & Brock, 2009). In this iteration, the assignment of strategic as applied to philanthropic investment can be interpreted as conscious of its role in relation to the broad external environment in operation. Critical of models such as venture philanthropy that do not take into account the complex networks and relationships with the public sector that dominate nonprofit reality, proponents argue that foundations can only be effective when they craft their actions in relation to government (Prewitt, 2006a; Sandfort, 2008). In other words, strategic engagement requires a concerted and conscious positioning within the broad-based environment in which government dominates.

### **1.3 Aims and objectives**

Ireland does not have an embedded culture of foundation investment. In the first study of the foundation field in Ireland undertaken prior to the infusion of funding from Atlantic and One Foundation, Donoghue (2004, p. 7) noted that ‘The harnessing of significant private wealth for the public good’ a

feature of foundations in other countries, ‘does not seem to have happened on any great scale in Ireland’. Subsequent studies (Donoghue, 2007; Donnelly-Cox, Cannon & Harrison, 2015) confirm the limited size and idiosyncratic nature of the field.

The historic underdevelopment of Irish foundations and the paucity of data in the public arena has contributed to a lack of understanding as to what foundations can and cannot accomplish. Aside from the studies above, literature on charitable foundations in Ireland tends to be focused on creating a culture or legislative framework for encouraging philanthropy (McKinsey & Co., 2009); the development broadly of the voluntary and community development sector (Donnelly Cox, Donoghue & Hayes, 2001; Acheson, et al., 2005; Daly, 2008); and the motivations or stories of individuals of wealth (O’Clery, 2007). Donoghue’s (2004) study highlighted the small scale of the foundation field in comparison to the large nonprofit sector and the lack of a distinct identity for foundations within it. Unlike the United States where the legitimacy of the foundation form is not in question (Heydemann & Toepler, 2006), it has yet to be determined in Ireland.

This research takes as a starting point the need to deepen our understanding of how the new form of philanthropy as social investment works; its relationship to the broad infrastructure in which forms of intervention for children and young people are developed; and the interrelationships between that various agencies (statutory and voluntary) in this process. The experience raises fundamental questions about the relationship between philanthropy and the State and about the role of foundations as societal actors. Strategic philanthropy incorporated working with policymakers prompting the question how did policymakers and statutory representatives react? How was this partnership role perceived? Viewing philanthropy as anything other than a provider of resources challenges assumptions about what can be perceived as legitimate intervention. In turn, this raises questions about how philanthropy operates within the voluntary sector as part of a broader system

of actors characterised as ‘civil society’, an issue that has received little attention in Ireland.

Despite the injection of funding by Atlantic and One Foundation in the children and youth field, institutional philanthropy is a minor source of income for most Irish nonprofit organisations. A recent report estimated the contribution from foundations as comprising 8% of fundraised income (Power, Kelleher & O’Connor, 2014). However, the children and youth field is noteworthy in two respects. Firstly, during the peak of philanthropic investment in the 2000s, it received a disproportionate share of foundation funding relative to other groups (Irish Nonprofit Information Exchange, 2012). Secondly, nonprofits serving children and young people had a high dependency on philanthropy (Proscio, 2010a).

The overall aim of this study is *to explore the emergence of strategic philanthropy as a distinctive approach to investment in the children and youth field in Ireland and to consider stakeholder perspectives on how this engagement has been experienced by and impacted upon the sector.*

The study has four related objectives:

1. *To examine the rationale adopted by philanthropy in identifying particular areas within the children and youth sector as the focus of their investment.*
2. *To explore the experiences of stakeholders in implementing the strategic approach adopted by philanthropic foundations.*
3. *To determine the influence of such investments on the policy discourse for children and youth.*
4. *To consider the implications of the approach to funding for children and young people examined in the study and make recommendations for the future of philanthropic-state engagement.*

My own reason for selecting the topic stemmed from working in both the United States and in Ireland in the philanthropic field and latterly, as a manager of strategic development at a research centre for children and youth. In many ways, the experience of working in the fundraising field in two cultures has prompted the questions underpinning the study. These include an interest in the dynamics underlying forms of philanthropic engagement as well as the applicability of the concept in differing socio-political contexts.

#### **1.4 Theoretical underpinnings**

While the initial idea behind the research emanated from the empirical context and the desire to know more about the ethos and *modus operandi* of philanthropy in Ireland, a number of theoretical concepts emerged as highly influential. These concepts are outlined below and also indicate where the potential gaps are in the literature that this study can address.

Firstly, an understanding of the roles and relevance of foundations in Irish society is a core part of this study. Debates on how to define and understand modern philanthropy question the extent to which foundations are considered necessary for modern social democracies (Anheier & Leat, 2002; Frumkin, 2006; Prewitt, 2006a; Schuyt, 2010). A number of scholars question if the prerogative to exercise a private vision for the public good is beneficial for society (Frumkin, 2006; Dogan, 2006). In answering such questions, the concept of legitimacy is often invoked (Heydemann & Toepler, 2006; Frumkin, 2006). For the most part, the source of foundation legitimacy is based on acceptance of the value of foundations as the most suitable to fulfil certain functions that cannot be provided by the market, the State or the nonprofit sector more generally (Dogan, 2006; Leat, 2008). In assessing their value to society, the notion that foundations compensate for democratic deficiencies is held up as a key justification even among critics of philanthropy (Prewitt, 2006a, Payton & Moody, 2008).

A number of key studies utilise the lens of roles attributed to foundations in society to explore the rationale for philanthropic intervention. They are used to examine the relevance foundations have, their niche area and their potential to enhance civil society. For others, role attribution provides the basis for asking questions about the unrealistic nature of foundations' visions and goals (Prewitt, 2006a; 2006b). A framework developed for application across an international context (Anheier & Daly, 2007) provides the basis to reflect on the contribution foundations can and should occupy in society. Roles attributed include complementarity, substitution, innovation, social and policy change, promotion and pluralism. They have been used to a limited extent in Ireland (Donoghue, 2004; 2007). Questions arise as to whether these are adequate with calls for further exploration for foundations to more deeply consider their roles particularly in relation to the State (Anheier & Daly, 2007).

Secondly, central to the concerns explored in this study are debates about the effectiveness and impact of philanthropic foundations. Questions about the social impact of foundations have given rise to a number of studies asking questions about their effectiveness, accountability and potential for change. Underlying the considerable literature on social investment strategies and goals are questions about which produce significant social impact? In turn, a number of theories exist to assess how funders are doing at achieving stated goals. For the most part such theories are based on points of intervention or leverage that determine where foundations can most effectively intervene and how they can have an impact

Thirdly, this study is informed by a body of literature that explores the nature of the relationship between government and foundations. Theorists agree that explanations for the existence of foundations are intertwined with assumptions about and attitudes to the role of the State (Anheier, 2005). The extent to which foundations are shaped by national political values and traditions is significant (Anheier & Daly, 2007; Leat, 2008; MacDonald & Tayart de Borms, 2008). In making comparisons with the US model of

foundation giving, scholars of philanthropy acknowledge the stronger role of the state in Europe (Dogan, 2006). Philanthropy is a relatively new, albeit growing area in Europe and studies have tended to focus on the place occupied by philanthropy in modern social democracies or the welfare state (Tayart de Borms, 2005; Anheier & Daly, 2006; Schuyt, 2010). For the most part, these debates acknowledge that, to be effective, foundations must engage with the State. The growth of interest in philanthropy in Europe is also attributed to the increased pressure on States to meet demands for services. It has been accompanied by a culture calling for a greater involvement by civil society in contributing to the problem solving capacity of society (Heydemann & Toepler, 2006; MacDonald & Tayart de Borms 2008; Leat, 2008). Commentators emphasise that calls for increased engagement with policymakers should ensure that partnerships and potential alliances are based on a sound understanding of what foundations can and cannot do (Anheier & Daly, 2007; Schuyt, 2010).

Debate in Ireland over the potential for private resources to occupy a role in policy and service provision has not occurred. Culturally, philanthropy faces a challenge in Ireland. According to a 2009 study, while other European countries such as the Netherlands have developed an understanding of the parallel need for public sector and philanthropic action on social issues: ‘In the Irish debate about the social sector there seems to be no clear understanding about the role of philanthropy in a social democracy’ (McKinsey & Co., 2009, p.16).

## **1.5 Parameters and study location**

### **1.5.1 Participants**

The study is based on interviews with a cohort of high-level expert informants with in-depth information and direct engagement with philanthropy. Using a purposive sampling approach, a number of participants were identified to represent the philanthropic sector, beneficiary groups in receipt of funding and policymakers. The primary criteria for inclusion were that individuals would have (1) direct experience of philanthropic investment (2) decision-

making capacity and (3) interaction across categories of stakeholders. All participants occupied positions of seniority within their organisation or sector. The response rate was high with only two organisations not responding to invitations to participate. Because of the easy identification of individuals in a small country and a small field, the thesis will be kept confidential for a period of time. A total of 27 interviews were conducted with individuals across the categories of key stakeholders that divided into three distinct groups:

*Philanthropy:* Interviews in the category of philanthropy included ten participants comprised of six staff at five foundations; two representatives of the philanthropic sector, and two advisors to philanthropy with expertise in children and youth. It included five directors or senior executives of programmes for children and youth and five CEOs.

*Nonprofit:* The beneficiary group included 11 participants from 10 organisations comprised of seven Director/CEOs and four senior programme staff. Four of the ten can be classified as youth organisations with six representing the interests of children and/or children and families. Of the ten nonprofit organisations in this category, all but one were also in receipt of statutory funding streams. In selecting organisations the grants lists of the foundations were analysed to determine those in receipt of the largest investments and to ensure a balance between child and youth organisations.

*Policymakers:* The third category is statutory representatives or state actors with responsibility for children and youth. This category targeted participants at the highest level within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. It included a Secretary General (past and present), senior civil servants and two senators. With the primary criteria for this category being experience of direct involvement with the philanthropic sector, the pool of interviewees was small. However, all of the six individuals identified agreed to participate.

### **1.5.2 Time period**

The time period being examined is the decade ca. 2002 to 2012 with occasional earlier references made when appropriate. Data collection and preliminary fieldwork commenced in 2011 with the majority of the interviews conducted during the period from August 2012 to May 2013. The majority of examples relate to the five year period between 2006 and 2012 when funding was at its height. While some relevant events occurred particularly in the policy domain during the write up phase of the research, these are included as references where appropriate.

## **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

Chapter One has introduced the topic of strategic philanthropy, identified the area of literature and key debates with which the study is concerned and outlined the rationale for and aims of the study. The structure of the thesis is outlined below.

**Chapter Two** sets out the core literature relevant in addressing the research objectives of the study and in providing informing theoretical frameworks. The purpose, function and forms of foundation giving are explored and the principles and practices of strategic philanthropy extracted. The concept of philanthropy as a form of social investment is discussed alongside the emphasis on impact. The chapter considers the place of philanthropic foundations in the context of and with reference to literature on civic society and provides an overview of emergent trends within the nonprofit sector in Ireland.

In **Chapter Three** the methodology for the study is described. It includes the aims and objectives for the study; theoretical considerations and factors underpinning the methodological basis for the research design. The chapter describes the implementation of the study including data collection, ethical considerations and challenges encountered.



**Chapter Four** establishes the context for the study. The first part outlines the primary goals and investment strategy of programmes targeting children, youth and families at the One Foundation and Atlantic as documented in secondary sources and public material. Key objectives associated with the two programmatic areas of prevention and early intervention and advocacy are described. This is followed by an overview of the prevailing policy and service environment in Ireland since the late 1990s. It outlines key legislative and policy developments as well as the infrastructure in place to serve the needs of children, families and youth within which philanthropy operated.

The results for the study are presented in chapters five, six and seven. **Chapter Five** explores participants' views on policy engagement as a fundamental objective of investing in children and families and considers the strategies undertaken by funders with public policy goals. The data is presented with reference to perceptions of the relevance of foundations in society and the characterisation of functions deemed suitable for philanthropic intervention. The particular aspect of partnership with the State in a site-based, co-investment is examined here.

While the perspectives of beneficiary groups are incorporated into chapter five, their views feature more strongly in **Chapter Six**. This chapter examines the experience of stakeholders in implementing philanthropy's investment-oriented approach. The focus is on the tools, measures and systems required to deliver the social impact goals associated with strategic philanthropy. **Chapter Seven** presents the perspectives of participants on the influence of philanthropy on key discourses taking place in policy and practice as well as its legacy within the children and youth sector. The views of stakeholders on the prevailing external environment are discussed in order to explore what elements were understood to be conducive to the social and policy change objectives and programme strategies associated with the goals of philanthropic investment in Ireland's children and youth.

Finally, **Chapter Eight** combines the discussion and conclusions of the study. Based on the data analysis it presents a framework for examining strategic philanthropy with a particular focus on its underlying systems change orientation. The key findings and implications of the research are then presented in light of this new framework.

The following chapter sets out the key literature relevant to addressing the central research questions posed by the study.

## **Chapter Two: Philanthropy's Strategic Orientation**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The chapter undertakes an extensive review of the relevant literature for the thesis, drawing primarily on studies from the nonprofit sector, an interdisciplinary field that incorporates a broad range of perspectives from the social, political and behavioural sciences. **Section 2.2** examines the concept of philanthropy including the purposes, values and features with which it is associated. While philanthropic grantmaking takes many forms including, for example, individual donations, legacies and corporate philanthropy, the focus in this study and the attendant review of literature is on institutional giving through the private foundation. Key debates relating to the purpose of philanthropy and the roles occupied by foundations in society are reviewed with emphasis on those that adopt public policy goals. In **Section 2.3**, the aspirations and attributes of 'strategic philanthropy' a distinctive approach to giving that involves elements of 'new' 'venture' and 'effective' philanthropy are explored. These two sections form the core dimension of relevant literature for the study. At the same time, they provide a useful basis on which to approach the first research objective underlying the thesis, namely, to understand the rationale behind the strategic orientation adopted by philanthropic foundations in selecting the particular course of action for the field of children and youth in Ireland.

In **Section 2.4**, the specialist forms of funding with which strategic philanthropy is associated, characterised as social investment approaches, are examined. Such literature is relevant in positioning the practice of strategic philanthropy in the context of debates and norms about the best way to achieve impact. It contributes to our understanding of philanthropy as a form of investment as well as highlighting key concepts such as scale and leverage that accompany grantmaking with this particular ethos. This section follows on the theoretical framing of strategic philanthropy outlined in section 2.3 to focus on its practical implementation. In this regard, it is instrumental in addressing the second research objective for the study, which seeks to

understand how the implementation of strategic approaches to philanthropy has been experienced in the children and youth field.

The final section of the chapter, **2.5** focuses on relationships operating within civil society and between nonprofit actors and the State in Ireland. Philanthropy occupies a dual role in the nonprofit sector in which it acts both as an insider and outsider. On the one hand, it functions as a provider of independent resources to other parts of the sector. At the same time, philanthropic organisations share many of the characteristics of nonprofits in occupying a space in civil society that serve to counter the forces of the market and the State. Therefore, understanding the environment for cross sector interaction as well as the history underlying the relationships between actors is important. This literature is used to inform the third research objective for this study that seeks to determine the influence of philanthropy on policy and practice discourses in the field of children and youth.

## **2.2 Philanthropy: Theory and culture**

### **2.2.1 Overview**

This section is dedicated to an exploration of the major theoretical debates on the existence of philanthropic foundations in contemporary society with reference to those that adopt an ethos and an orientation considered relevant to modern social democracies. It begins (2.2.2) with an overview of the context for foundation investment in Ireland; an environment characterised by limited experience with charitable foundations and a lack of previous engagement with philanthropic intervention into social issues. In 2.2.3, the concept of philanthropy is discussed and its distinguishing features highlighted; the history and evolution of the private philanthropic foundation is then outlined. Extensive literature exists on the functions that foundations perform in society and this is reviewed in section 2.2.4. These studies elucidate understanding of the roles and relevance of philanthropic foundations and highlight the ‘added-value’ they can bring to social problems.

In section 2.2.5, the broader socio-political context for foundation funding is discussed with reference to the differing cultural norms and noting comparisons between European and United States models. In particular, from a European perspective, debates on philanthropy characterise its forms and function primarily in the context of interaction with the State. The focus in 2.2.6, therefore, concerns the role occupied by foundations in relation to policy goals and includes a discussion of the key strategies for funding prioritised by foundations that prioritise public policy engagement.

### **2.2.2 Philanthropy in Ireland: A new concept**

The term ‘philanthropy’, defined as goodwill to fellow members of the human race and active effort to promote human welfare (Merriam-Webster Online 2015) is little known in Ireland. Indeed, until the 2000s with the emergence of two well-resourced philanthropic foundations and the appearance of the umbrella organisations such as the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising, as a concept, philanthropy had limited meaning for nonprofit organisations and little, if any, relevance for policymakers. To the extent that it resonated, the term signalled charitable beneficence rather than a new ethos of entrepreneurial style investments designed to support vital social programmes including statutory partnerships that emerged in the late 2000s. Within the children and youth sector, prior to the engagement with the One Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies, foundation funding would have been virtually invisible in the income streams of organisations delivering services, conducting research or advocating on behalf of children and families (Keenan, 2007).

Above all, the contribution that foundations make to society is associated with their economic role as a provider of resources. A major international study of the nonprofit sector (Salamon, Sokolowski & Associates, 2004) covering 34 countries identified the revenue base for nonprofit organisations as coming from three sources: government, fees for services, and private giving. Consistently, across all countries, private giving accounted for the smallest share. In Ireland, it made up 7% of the revenue base for nonprofits compared

with 77% from government and 16% from fees (Salamon et al., 2004). More recent figures estimate that Irish nonprofit organisations on average receive 60% of their funding from the State (Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising, 2012; Power, Kelleher & O'Connor, 2014). While it is expected that the State is by far the biggest source of funding for nonprofit organisations, there is an expectation of generation from alternative streams. Government policy as outlined in the White Paper *Supporting Voluntary Activity* (2000) states that it only provides 100 per cent of funding for services that meet agreed priority needs where an element of self-financing cannot be expected (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000).

Aside from government or fee income, the revenue base for Irish nonprofits includes grants but also sources such as legacies, corporate donations, church collections and fundraising events. As a sub-set of this spectrum of philanthropic donations, Ireland's foundation sector is underdeveloped with the number of active grantmaking institutions estimated at 30. The figure, providing for 0.7% charitable foundations for every 100,000 inhabitants, falls far behind the European average of 20% (McKinsey & Co., 2009). A 2009 review of grants reported to Irish nonprofits revealed that, as an average percentage of the turnover of beneficiary organisations the figure was high accounting for 10.6% and 22% respectively from Irish and international foundations (Irish Nonprofit Knowledge Exchange, 2012). Nonetheless, as a whole, institutional philanthropy is a minor source of revenue for Irish nonprofits. Of over 7,000 organisations reviewed for the study cited above, fewer than 200 reported receiving grants from philanthropic institutions. Almost all of these also received income from government sources. The children and youth sector received a disproportionately high amount of funding compared to other groups according to the study, conducted at the height of the investments by Atlantic and One Foundation. Indeed, Atlantic Philanthropies defined dependency as where beneficiaries derive one-third or more of their annual budget from the organisation. While the organisation's children and youth programme operated in several countries including the

US, Ireland's beneficiaries in this area reported the highest level of dependency at 60% (Proscio, 2010a, p. 4).

Despite the injection of funding from two major foundations over the course of a decade, the culture of philanthropy is underdeveloped in Ireland. Moreover, the private foundation represents a particular form of philanthropy that, while widespread in the United States had previously little established identity in Ireland, a country with extremely low levels of foundation activity (Donnelly-Cox, Cannon & Harrison, 2015). As Donoghue notes in the first study of the field, 'The harnessing of significant private wealth for the public good' a feature of foundations in other countries, 'does not seem to have happened on any great scale in Ireland' (2004, p. 7). The study highlighted (pp. 7-8):

- The small size of the foundation field in comparison with the large size of the nonprofit sector in Ireland
- Of the foundations in existence, many of them were operating foundations, and did not conform to the definition of philanthropic grantmaking foundation in the US model. Operating foundations have an explicit function to raise funds (state and public) to enable service delivery with little to distinguish them from other voluntary service providers.
- The lack of knowledge and the aura of mystique surrounding foundations has not been helped by the lack of data in the public arena.
- Foundations within the relatively large nonprofit sector had not carved out their own distinct identity within it.

Historically in Ireland, patterns of philanthropic and voluntary activity fit into the 'co-operative and informal' mode (Donoghue, 2004, p. 14). Philanthropic foundations of the US model, she found, date from the 1960s an example being the Bewley Foundation, a family foundation established by a merchant family of tea and coffee shops in Dublin. While other family foundations emerged in the 1970s, typically founded by well-known business people, as Donoghue notes, the association in the public domain is with the family or

individual rather than with the operation of philanthropy as a societal actor. Culturally, philanthropy faces a challenge in Ireland where little debate has taken place on the role of philanthropic action to address social issues (McKinsey & Co., 2009).

There are indications that the climate for philanthropic giving is changing to encourage awareness of the capacity for intervention and to respond to trends toward more investment-based approaches to funding. The aforementioned Forum on Philanthropy in 2012 announced national fundraising campaign to raise the total amount of philanthropic giving from an estimated €500M in 2012 to €800M by 2016. The campaign includes the creation of a Social Innovation Fund as a philanthropic-government partnership to ‘support the establishment and growth of social innovations with the potential for transformative impact on critical social issues’ (p. 20).

Nonetheless, the differentiation between charity, interpreted to mean modest levels of giving by the general population to deserving causes and what is often called ‘US style philanthropy’ indicates a level of discomfort with the latter. McManus (2013, p. 1) commenting on the initiative launched by the Forum on Philanthropy discussed above, described what was being advocated as ‘anathema to the European social model’ with a high level of social provision for all with a US model of philanthropy where ‘the role of the state as arbitrator of people’s needs is usurped; with the individuals themselves deciding how their money is redistributed’.

### **2.2.3 Definitions and forms of philanthropy**

Central to definitions of the term ‘philanthropy’ is the notion of the application of private resources to public purposes. Payton’s (1988) often cited definition as ‘voluntary action for the public good’ encapsulates the public purpose and voluntary elements. The notion of goodwill is at the heart of Van Til’s (1990, p. 34) interpretation of philanthropy as voluntary giving with the intent of meeting a charitable need. Salamon (1992, p. 10), in a functional definition, characterises the contribution philanthropy makes to



society in economic terms, as ‘one form of income of private nonprofit organisations’.

While the essence of philanthropy is clearly communicated through such definitional understandings, the conceptual ambiguity associated with the term is widely recognised. Sulek’s (2010, p. 193) assessment of the contemporary usages and definitions of modern philanthropy found that, rather than offering a comprehensive understanding of what philanthropy is and why it matters, ‘philanthropy’ is revealed to be a ‘signal word’. In a similar fashion, Daly (2012) contends that the variety of ways in which philanthropy is explored and the ensuing differing interpretations as to its meaning and value make it a contested concept. Rather than viewing this as a negative, Daly argues that it provides a useful point of debate on theoretical and practice issues for what is essentially a multi-faceted phenomenon.

This study is concerned with manifestations of managed and organisational giving that operates with a planned structure and programme orientation transmitted through the mechanism of the philanthropic foundation. Although widespread in the United States, the type of private foundations of this kind deployed by The Atlantic Philanthropies and the One Foundation was previously unseen in Ireland. Anheier (2005, p. 51) identifies the core characteristics of foundations as organisations that are non-membership-based, private, self-governing, non-profit distributing, and serving a public purpose. As Prewitt (2006a, p. 355) describes it ‘a permanent endowment attached to a broad permissive mission is a defining characteristic of present-day foundations’. This combination provides considerable latitude in determining priorities and differentiates foundations from non-profit sector institutions that depend on membership fees, services contracts and income generation activities for their revenue base.

While often associated with the rise of large foundations in the United States in the early twentieth century, foundations have a long history with European roots (Anheier, 2005; Prewitt, 2006a; Schuyt, 2010). Schuyt (2010) traces

the origins of modern philanthropy to traditions of foundation giving in Western Europe. Historically, philanthropy formed an important part of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the Middle Ages as a form of poor relief directed at the sick and the aged. Over time, the expression of philanthropic poor relief (charity) became sidelined by the welfare state. During this transition, Schuyt (2010) asserts, philanthropy did not disappear; rather, it remained modestly active in areas such as health, education and culture.

In examining the rationale for philanthropic intervention, cultural contexts play a significant role. Scholars point out that in contrast to Europe, the United States has been 'unusually receptive to letting the private sector do what everywhere else is a state responsibility' (Prewitt, 2006a, p. 361). Prewitt attributes this tendency to two features of American popular culture, namely Social Darwinism and the 'weak-state' tradition. The rise of industrial capitalism in the late nineteenth century produced a concentration of wealth that philanthropists such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller believed should be given away in order to remain virtuous; part of their obligation to repay society for its beneficence. Under the weak state tradition, law and taxation invite the wealthy to create private institutions that can act as an alternative to the state. This resulted in the emergence of the modern US style foundation.

The development of 'scientific philanthropy' associated with Rockefeller declared an intent and a purpose for philanthropy to go beyond charity to examine the root cause of a problem. According to Prewitt, three principles, the search for root causes, a professional staff responsible for realising strategically selected programme goals and a flexible form of giving in perpetuity formed the building blocks of modern philanthropy (Prewitt, 2006a, p. 363). The influence of the Rockefeller philanthropies, in particular the emphasis on applying the findings of scientific research to intractable social problems, has been widely credited in transitioning an ethos from charity to philanthropy (Sulek, 2010). In this regard, Gross (2003, p. 31) provides a useful differentiation between 'charity' that implies compassionate

person-to-person giving and ‘philanthropy’ associated with rational and institutionalised giving seeking grand objectives in society.

Whatever its form, philanthropy is controversial. Inherent in the discussion and debates about philanthropy are assumptions or critiques that span moral, value based or political analyses. Daly (2012) characterises the theoretical frameworks that highlight the contribution philanthropy makes to society as *pluralist* views that see it as a source of innovation and experimentation as well as *structuralist* perspectives which consider philanthropy to be a form of hegemony and control. The application of private funds to public ends, the basis on which philanthropy is founded, is by its nature contested. For instance, Frumkin (2006, p. 56) states that ‘Fuelled by private wealth but directed at producing public benefits, philanthropy has a built-in tension’. While acting in the public sphere, he acknowledges, philanthropy operates outside of the more recognisable form of deliberation about public needs, bypassing the consultative processes associated with democratic practice. Prewitt (2006b, p. 44) challenges the adaption of private wealth to public good rationale on the basis that ‘there is circularity in this formulation’ as what emerges as the public good ‘is itself the result of private deliberation’, with no mechanism through which preferences about foundation agendas can be expressed.

To the extent that they are in control of setting their own priorities and programmes, philanthropic foundations enjoy a degree of independence unparalleled in society. Unlike government or market actors, foundations can operate with freedom and flexibility in allocating resources without need for business or public deliberations, enabling them great latitude in selecting causes and courses of action (Tayart de Borms, 2005; Frumkin, 2006; Leat, 2008). Much of the literature on foundations is concerned with the opportunities and challenges posed by such latitude. Critics of philanthropy cite arbitrariness and paternalism among the reasons for curbing foundation activity and argue for greater transparency amongst organisations that are unaccountable and undemocratic (Odendahl, 1990; Bothwell, 2001).

Accountability emerges as a prominent theme among commentators on philanthropy. According to Anheier and Leat (2002, p. 31) for instance, institutional practice is often under scrutinised and largely outside of criticism as foundations are ‘protected by a subtle consensus that discourages a critique of foundations that are regarded as inherently “good” and serving the public interest’. Prewitt (2006b, pp. 44-45) critiques foundations for a lack of ‘substantive accountability’ of the type involving a review of their programme priorities or the effectiveness with which they accomplish their ‘self-defined missions’ and the ‘extensive retroactive evaluations’ used to deflect external assessments of priorities and accomplishments.

As Frumkin (2006) observes, philanthropic effectiveness is most often taken to mean effectiveness of the work of recipient organisations rather than that of the donor. Failure, he believes, is an area neglected in philanthropy. This is surprising given that the nature of philanthropy means that unlike the case for market and government action, there is no hostile environment or particular repercussions for unsuccessful philanthropic intervention. Frumkin (pp. 66-67) differentiates between ‘constructive’ failures that are ‘defined less by the actual programme outcome and more by the knowledge generated’ and ‘unconstructive’ failures that produce no new informing knowledge for practice. Constructive failures, he contends, create value by helping us to understand what went wrong and adding to the understanding across the field and he urges foundations to be open in their evaluation about programmes that did not work as a matter of public value and information

Other scholars perceive this operation outside of the political system as an opportunity for the support of causes and excluded groups that mainstream politics would be reluctant to embrace; in other words, to counteract democratic deficiencies (Anheier & Leat, 2006; Anheier, 2005; Dogan, 2006). A variation of the argument is the view that unlike public institutions that must treat citizens equally, private foundations can engage in positive discrimination avoiding conflict that might involve the State in divisive debates about public resources serving particularistic ends (Heydemann &

Toepler, 2006, p. 24). Far from looking to stifle philanthropic initiatives, proponents argue, the benefit for society lies in the creativity afforded by such funders (Anheier & Leat, 2002). Although they are less than egalitarian institutions, their inclusion in the range of funding sources makes for more diversity in options available to nonprofits, acting as a counterbalance to the State and market. As understood by Payton and Moody (2008, p. 156), in modern democracies, 'Philanthropic actions are a key part of the ongoing public deliberations about what the public good is and how best to pursue it'. According to Prewitt (2006b), this approach focuses less on what foundations do than what they represent; with the private foundation occupying a key role in a liberal society.

Themes of legitimacy and accountability occupy a prominent space in contemporary debates on philanthropy. Heydemann and Toepler (2006, p. 5) assert that in the United States, the 'core legitimacy' accorded to foundations is based on acceptance on their value in society where 'Americans confidence in and their positive view of foundations, philanthropy and charitable giving remain high overall'. In this context, any concerns about the legitimacy of foundations are often expressed in terms of calls for accountability and for greater transparency about what they do and how. In Europe, what the authors call 'legitimacy challenges' go beyond regulation to reflect 'deep historical tensions around conceptualisations of national identity, social justice, economic inclusion and the nature of the polity.' (2006, p. 12). However, in both Europe and the US, 'Accountability, closely linked with the rise of market-based norms of nonprofit management, is often defined in terms of the measurable impact of foundation dollars' (p. 17). This 'pursuit of legitimacy via efficiency' is a somewhat worrying development, the authors caution, as foundations themselves under pressure to demonstrate short-term impact, may be less inclined to support projects with longer time horizons or where the risk of failure is high.

Leverage is the means through which donors maximise their contribution, a mechanism through which foundations can achieve impact (Frumkin, 2006).

Its importance as a concept in philanthropy is attributed to the small scale of private funds compared to state revenue streams alongside the complexity of the social problems being addressed. Identifying points of leverage is the mechanism through which change will be achieved. Among the tactics for achieving leverage popular among funders, Frumkin (pp. 183-187) identified the following techniques:

- Choosing to support strong organisations involving capacity building
- Support for collaboration and creation of strong networks
- Funding policy research, the ‘ideas philanthropy’ with potential to shape public priorities

This potential for change, Frumkin believes, includes the meso level of networks and organisations and the macro level of politics and ideas. Creating strong organisations enables nonprofits to exert greater influence and visibility and is a critical factor in broader efforts to change a field. Unlike in the business world, collaboration is relatively unusual in nonprofit practice. Philanthropy has an opportunity for impact in this regard through fostering sharing of best practice, pooling of resources and mobilisation for advocacy. The ‘ideas philanthropy’ orientation focuses on the production of new ideas and paradigms that can reorient entire fields. If these new perspectives penetrate the field broadly they can be paradigm altering or translatable into new practices.

No discussion on philanthropic funding would be complete without acknowledging the limitation of scope in real, financial terms. Universally, discussions of philanthropy acknowledge the small scale of funding relative to government expenditure. Nonetheless, its influence is considered to extend beyond the financial sphere with philanthropy acknowledged as providing more than money. While its share of the funding base will be nowhere near the scale of government contribution, the characteristics of philanthropy, the literature suggests, make the sector uniquely placed to act. Debates on the roles and functions of foundations in society serve the purpose of explaining their niche in civil society or ‘added value’. They also highlight the features

that distinguish foundations from other forms of funding organisations. According to Dogan (2006, p. 273), foundation legitimacy is based on the belief that ‘they are considered more efficient and more appropriate institutions to fulfil certain social functions sensitive to the needs of the society than the state bureaucracy or the liberal market’. These features are explored in the following section on the roles and functions attributed to foundations in society.

#### **2.2.4 Understanding foundations’ roles in society**

Frameworks or classifications on the contributions made by foundations in society encompass some degree of understanding of their relationship with the State. According to Anheier (2005, p. 319), explanations for the existence of foundations are ‘closely intertwined with assumptions about and attitudes toward the role of the state’. In Ireland, Donoghue’s (2004) study categorised models of foundation-state relationships as:

*Social Democratic*: complementing or supplementing state activity in meeting need

*Corporatist*: enhancing public benefit working independently of, but in close co-operation with, the state

*Liberal*: acting as a visible force, independent of government and the market and providing alternatives to the mainstream.

According to Donoghue (2004, p. 26), foundations in Ireland are ‘very aware of their place in contributing to the greater public benefit and position themselves between the corporatist and liberal models’. Regarding the complementary role, participants in her study (all foundation representatives), believed they should not be duplicating support or services; there was also a strong sense that foundations needed their own autonomy and a space to be critical of the state.

Specifically, and as a useful reference point for Irish philanthropy, a framework for understanding foundation roles in society developed by researchers studying practices across global contexts identified the following

typology: complementarity; substitution; redistribution; innovation; social and policy change; promotion of culture and pluralism (Anheier & Daly, 2006; 2007). The table below summarises the features of each role and indicates the level of identification by Irish organisations in the Anheier and Daly 2007 study.

**Table 2.2.4 Roles for foundations in society**

Role	Defining Characteristics	Level of Identification in Ireland
<i>Complementarity</i>	Filling gaps in government provision. Financial resources for provision of services for specialist needs or where state failed to act	High
<i>Substitution</i>	Taking on functions previously done by state	Low/None
<i>Preservation of traditions and cultures</i>	Cultural and recreational activities	Low/None
<i>Redistribution</i>	Redistribution of resources from higher to lower income levels	Low/None
<i>Social and Policy Change</i>	Structural change for more just society, empowerment of socially excluded	Somewhat
<i>Promotion of pluralism</i>	Promoting experimentation & diversity	Low/None
<i>Innovation</i>	In social perceptions, values, ways of doing things	High

**Source:** Adapted from Anheier and Daly (2007)

The table above summarises the key characteristics of the seven roles with those relevant to Ireland at the time of the study highlighted and explored below. In addition, while the pluralism role did not resonate highly, it is discussed as it shares many of the characteristics of innovation and policy change. An additional role, not identified as part of the typology above, that of convenor, is also considered as it is relevant in the context for this study.



### *Complementarity*

According to Anheier and Daly (2007, pp. 28-29) Ireland reported a high level of identification with the complementary role, a finding consistent across European foundations. Broadly interpreted as ‘filling the gaps’ regarding what the government does not do, the role varies widely in interpretation to mean complementing government by providing financial resources for the provision of certain services to directly providing services (such as running schools). The former often takes the form of bargaining or providing a proportion of the funding that can leverage the remainder from statutory sources. It can involve foundations operating in areas that have been neglected by the government. In partnering with governments, one of the challenges is finding a balance between filling the gaps and not creating a dependency or association as the core funder for a particular area. Anheier and Daly (2006, p. 209) suggest that the extent to which the complementary role guides foundations in their actions is questionable and not one foundations aspire to, yet many policymakers see this substitution role as perfectly feasible.

### *Social and Policy Change*

Social and policy change is an objective often associated with addressing structural change and promoting a more just society. Prewitt (2006b) is highly critical of the social change rhetoric evident in the agendas of large independent foundations. While bringing about desirable social change is the most common rationale advanced on behalf of foundations, Prewitt argues that this is unrealistic and unprovable as foundation operate in an environment where the resources brought to bear on any social or policy change come from a variety of sources. Large-scale social change, he concedes (2006b, p, 38). ‘can be affected at the margins by foundations’, however, to tie the rationale for the private foundation to capacity to bring about social change is misguided. Interestingly, in this area, which envisages a transformative role for philanthropy, foundations in Anheier and Daly’s study identified the potential offered by the role while acknowledging the reality as to whether they are suitably placed to make an impact. Donoghue (2007, p. 218) found

that in using the typology in Ireland, while the complementary role was identified as the most important, when foundations were asked about *ideal* rather than actual roles, those of innovation and social and policy change were prioritised.

In this regard, while foundations do have huge degrees of autonomy, the extent to which they can be effective in social and policy change is caught up in their understanding of and fortunes within the environment in which they operate (Anheier & Daly, 2006, p. 204). Foundation effectiveness requires a conscious response to the policy environment in operation; in responding to which ‘it is critical to evaluate the interplay of roles among the state, the market and civil society’ (MacDonaald & Tayart de Borms, 2008, p. 9.). While foundations do operate with a huge degree of independence, ultimately they must relate to the other actors involved in an issue including policymakers, government agencies, NGOs, and funders. Scanning or taking accurate account of the external environment is a critical aspect of programming as the effectiveness of any one funder depends on how these other elements are performing (Mittenthal, 2005, p. 79).

### *Pluralism*

Pluralism is associated primarily with experimentation and diversity. According to Frumkin (2006, p. 17), pluralism ‘allows a multiplicity of programmes to exist in the public domain, rather than a limited number of ‘preferred’ solutions’. Prewitt (1999) attributes the primary justification for the existence of foundations to their role in social experimentation. The State, as a provider, he argues, is obligated to provide a uniformity of services and opportunities to all qualifying citizens. The market is also constrained by the need to make an idea as viable to as many customers as possible. Neither sector is particularly receptive to the unusual or idiosyncratic. Rather, ‘foundation funds, within the nonprofit sector more generally, can promote ideological diversity and service differentiation’; it is this contribution to *pluralism* that legitimises their role in society (Prewitt 1999, p 28). Endorsing

the pluralist function, Dogan (2006) points out that whereas the state must legislate for the majority, foundations can act to protect vulnerable groups.

### *Innovation*

Innovation is the ‘signature characteristic’ of foundations (Anheier, 2005, p. 321). The majority of foundations in the Anheier and Daly’s 2007 study identified with the role of promoting innovation in social perceptions, values, relationships and ways of doing things. According to Frumkin, ‘social innovation’ involves interventions designed to promote new thinking, new ways of conceptualising and responding to enduring social problems and ultimately new ways of providing services; all functions foundations are well-placed to undertake (2006 p. 15). The consensus around innovation is largely tied in with debates about foundations unique ability to take risks or to take advantage of the freedom they have to experiment or to act quickly. This latitude, Frumkin (p. 16) argues, means philanthropy can play a vital role as a ‘social inquisitor’, asking questions about what is possible, what works best, and what design change in programmes might lead to improved performance’ and ultimately leading, rather than following public policy.

Innovation is often associated with new activities. This tendency for foundations to engage in supporting start-up initiatives and to move on once a project ceases to be novel has come under criticism. Anheier and Leat view innovation as ‘a process, not a once-and-for-all task’ (2002, p. 167). In their view, innovative funding strategies include elements such as uncertainty about the project outcome; a knowledge-intensive definition of a situation and the provision of information on new ways to address needs. Such creativity, they contend, is the primary contribution that foundations can make to the problem-solving capacity of society. Anheier and Daly (2006, p. 206) suggest that ideas about innovation can be linked to *practices* as well as activities, for instance, crossing established boundaries in organisations, fields and sectors.

### *Convening Role*

One key role occupied by foundations in society and not part of the typology above is that of facilitator or convenor. Studies of European philanthropy, in particular, highlight the importance of this function. The primary value Tayart de Borms (2005) attributes to foundations and one that validates their social legitimacy is occupying the role of convenor. 'By providing a mutual platform for discussion, informed debate and consensus-building around highly charged issues' (2005, p. 10) he argues, foundations serve a vital function in fostering multi-stakeholder dialogue and understanding which in turn builds consensus and facilitates informed decision-making. This role of providing a neutral platform for informed debate involves identifying the leverage points of change and facilitating strategic partnerships among agencies such as NGOs, media, government agencies and research institutes in the search for 'creating public benefit by innovative problem-solving' (Tayart de Borms, 2005, p. 88).

As understood by Leat (2005, p. 71), the brokering and convening role can be used to bring government to the table as well as establishing some degree of ownership of the problem. The role of foundations as critical intermediaries and coordinators is recognised in a European Commission report (1997) that attributes four functions to voluntary organisations and foundations. These comprise service delivery, advocacy, self-help, mutual aid (providing information support and cooperation) and fourthly, coordination. It specifically recognises a convening role for foundations whereby 'Such organisations fulfil the important function of providing an interface between the sector and public authorities' (p. 2). In heralding the contribution foundations make to democracy, the report highlighted:

*Above all, they now play an essential part as intermediaries in the exchange of information and opinion between governments and citizens, providing citizens with the means with which they may critically examine government actions or proposals, and public authorities in their turn with expert advice, guidance on popular views, and essential feedback on the effects of their policies (p. 6).*

### **2.2.5 Cultural contexts**

As noted in the sections above, the study of philanthropy in Europe is relatively new. Much of the research on the place of foundations in society applies primarily to the United States. Until the mid-2000s, and in particular the work of Anheier and Daly, little research existed on foundations in Europe, creating what they identified as a ‘knowledge-gap’ made all the more unsatisfactory in a climate where policymakers are calling for greater philanthropic intervention in fields such as the arts and social sciences (2006, p. 192). The dearth of empirical data is especially pertinent in the area of roles and contributions to society made by foundations. A subsequent study by the authors (2007) found this lack of conscious engagement reflected in their research with stakeholders on what roles have resonance for them.

However, in Europe the topic is increasingly gaining attention from scholars and reflects a burgeoning debate on the relevance of modern forms of philanthropy and its relationship with the state (Tayart de Berms, 2005; Leat, 2008; Schuyt, 2010). This has coincided with a growth in philanthropic foundations. Approximately one-third of foundations in the largest EU countries, including France and Germany, have been established since 1990, a factor attributed to escalating levels of private wealth. By 2000, there were approximately 62,000 public-benefit foundations across the EU, an average of one foundation for every 7,000 people (Salole, 2008, p. 292). However in studying European and US foundations, an important distinction needs to be made between operating and grant making foundations. While 90% of the foundations in the US are grant-making organisations, in Europe, the majority are operating foundations or mixed foundations that combine elements of the two. Operating foundations manage their own programmes and projects, for example hospitals, schools, universities. Achier and Daly (2006) believe that the foundation field is considerably more homogeneous in the US where the grant making function is predominant. The diversity of the European foundation landscape combined with the lack of understanding regarding roles makes for greater complexity in assessing their functions.

Debates on philanthropy underscore the need to view the sector in the context of prevailing notions about the role of the State. In making comparisons with the US model of foundation giving, scholars of philanthropy acknowledge the stronger role of the state in Europe. Dogan (2006), reflecting on why foundations occupy a more important role in society in the US than Europe, attributes it to the space that the state allocates to civil society. For instance, he points out (p. 276) that ‘the mission of foundations cannot be the same in a country where mass education, scientific research and the promotion of the arts are financed almost entirely by the state and one where a significant part of these domains are financed privately’. Within Europe, foundations operate in very different political and societal contexts making them ‘actors with a framework created by different models of civil society’ (MacDonald & Tayart de Borms, 2008, p. 10).

In Europe, the declining capacity of states to address the demand for social services is providing scope for renewed debate over the potential of private resources (Heydemann & Toepler; 2006; Leat, 2000; Tayart de Borms, 2005). In the United States, the philanthropic sector has an acknowledged role in the delivery of social services or public goods. Many funders of childcare in the United States expend a considerable amount of funds on direct services and their funding is relied upon in an environment where state and federal sources are not forthcoming or expected. Ireland, on the other hand has a welfare state model which would suggest that the role of philanthropy is perceived as largely peripheral. The role of government in the provision of social services either directly or through the mechanism of voluntary organisations is considered paramount. Moreover, the Irish public is sceptical about philanthropy and has an expectation that the State will and should undertake social provision. According to a 2009 study, while other European countries such as the Netherlands have developed an understanding of the parallel need for public sector and philanthropic action on social issues, ‘In the Irish debate about the social sector there seems to be no clear understanding about the role of philanthropy in a social democracy’ (McKinsey & Co., 2009, p.16).

The differentiation between charity, interpreted to mean modest levels of giving by the general population to deserving causes and what is often called ‘US style philanthropy’ indicates a level of discomfort with the latter. McManus (2013, p. 1) commenting on an the initiative launched by the Forum on Philanthropy discussed above to increase giving in Ireland, described what was being advocated as ‘anathema to the European social model’ with a high level of social provision for all with a US model of philanthropy where ‘the role of the state as arbitrator of people’s needs is usurped; with the individuals themselves deciding how their money is redistributed’.

Characterisations or demarcations on the difference between charity and philanthropy, while prominent in the United States (Odendahl, 1990; NCRP, 2003) are relatively insignificant in the European context (Daly, 2012, p. 545). In the United States, where a large amount of philanthropic funding is in direct services, the legitimacy of social justice or social change grantmaking is questioned. Suárez (2012, p. 264) describes social justice philanthropy as an orienting discourse in the foundation field and one which, only in 2005, gained recognition as philanthropic contributions to organisations ‘that work for structural change in order to increase the opportunity for those who are the least well off politically, economically and socially.’ This inherent commitment to a social justice framework is evident in the definition of philanthropy applied by Philanthropy Ireland, the organisation overseeing the fostering of philanthropy :

*Philanthropy is a particular kind of charitable giving. It is focused on the root causes of problems and making a sustainable improvement, as distinct from contributing to immediate relief.*

Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising (2012)

Schuyt (2010) contends that the type of state in operation is critical in understanding philanthropy’s role. Arguing that in European welfare states the growth of philanthropy offers potential for good provided that it can be incorporated in the welfare state paradigm, he suggests that:

*Perhaps the solution for the future lies in some form of interplay between these three mechanisms in which the government guarantees a strong foundation, and the market and the philanthropic sector create space for dynamics and pluriformity. (Schuyt, 2010, p. 786)*

Leat (2008) discerned that while there is a tendency for European foundations to define their roles in relation to the state; nonetheless they fall short of embracing an explicit engagement with policy change. This she attributes to a number of factors including a clear dividing line between private ‘charity’ providing services to the needy and a preserve of foundations; and public policy, understood to be the sole preserve of government; and a belief that public policy work is too complex and long-term for foundation activity (2008, p. 262). According to Leat, foundations are increasingly looking to more policy-oriented approaches. Foundations are facing a huge challenge to ‘add-value’ while avoiding the substitution role—a role which is increasingly been seen as best focused on bringing diverse groups together; acting as knowledge-brokers and risk takers and contributing to the problem solving of society in this way.

#### **2.2.6 Foundations and public policy**

Among foundations, influencing social policy has come to be considered an important barometer of effectiveness (Ostrower, 2006, p. 511). Increasingly, in the U.S. and Europe, engagement with public policy is viewed as core to the agenda of philanthropy. According to Leat, (2008, p. 264), in both cases, ‘we seem to be emerging from a phase in which foundations acted as though they could somehow ignore government, while at the same time implicitly relying on government to provide ongoing maintenance to projects fathered by foundations.’ However, even in the U.S., foundation-based public policy grantmaking is relatively new with limited evidence as to its impact or potential.

In essence, a systems change approach, foundations operating with public or social policy goals aspire to achieve their objectives by seeking changes in public systems and public policy. The term ‘advocacy’ is commonly used in association with public policy goals of foundations. A report on strategies



undertaken by European foundations active in supporting advocacy interprets it as ‘activities aimed to influence policy implementation and change’ (Montanaro, 2012, p. 2). An indirect strategy, policy advocacy is manifested in the funding of groups that have as a goal to alter government spending priorities (Prewitt, 2006), what Reid (2000) characterises as ‘political’ advocacy (2000). Funding advocacy is also seen as instrumental in increasing the impact and broadening the scope for change beyond foundation’s immediate grant recipients.

Typically, foundations active in the policy arena target their support to advocacy, research and demonstration projects, activities designed to strengthen the ability of beneficiary ‘policy actors’ within the political system (Coffman, 2008). The associated preference for ‘data-driven’ philanthropy prioritises research and data collection that provides policymakers with indicators and information needed to advance policy change. Promoting research and communications capacity, Mandeville (2007) argues, is critical, with the ability to develop relevant, timely information and communicate it to policymakers an essential factor in a crowded policy system. However, recognising the constraints and complexities of policy development, Mandeville (2007) challenges public policy grantmakers to focus more on promoting the long-term ability of policy actors influence a policy system by investing in their organisational capacity and stability. Rather than focus on long-term needs, even among funders with policy goals, support for programme development accounted for half of their funding, a finding which suggests that public policy funders ‘often seek short-term solutions to public policy problems.’ (2007, p. 297).

Foundations’ understanding of their public policy roles includes a contribution to innovation in policy, with funders assuming the role of ‘policy entrepreneurs’. In this context, ‘site-based’ or ‘place-based’ interventions in selected communities occupy a key part of their funding strategy. Taking the form of demonstration projects, such initiatives are funded on the assumption that, in time, larger and more sustainable funding sources will come on board to support successful interventions and broaden their impact

(Coffman, 2008, Knott & McCarthy, 2007). Knott and McCarthy (2007, p. 321) using the analogy of venture capitalists who fund innovation and the creation of new goods for the market, argue that 'likewise, foundations can invest policy venture capital in the creation of new and innovative public goods'. They explored the concept of foundations as 'policy venture capitalists' in the case of foundations funding for child care in the U.S. Demonstration projects proved to be important in a number of ways including providing highly visible examples of foundations' innovative approaches to child care and how policy changes might support them and in building the groundwork for community coalitions that would advocate for social and policy change over time.

Across the board, however, the authors demonstrated that in seeking to achieve their policy agenda for children and families, only a few foundations have acted as policy venture capitalists, namely, leading and innovating in child care. Most foundations have partnered with government, filling in gaps and inconsistencies, evaluating the implementation of government initiatives, supporting think tanks and advocacy coalitions, and fostering sharing of information across policy networks. The practical realities of connecting activities with policy impact, according to Knott and McCarthy, contrasted with the 'grand vision' foundations often have in relation to social and policy change.

In the UK, evidence from Davies (2004) suggests that in the case of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) foundations can be effective in advancing issues up the political agenda and influencing legislation. Examining whether JRCT funding increased the capacity of grantees to influence public policy, Davies argues that supporting the research capacity of think tanks and pressure groups empowered them to become noticed by political elites. However, he cautioned that timing can be an important consideration, in particular with political parties in opposition where 'actors putting forward new ideas may have a greater impact than at any other time' (Davies 2004, p. 283). Philanthropy therefore can be (sometimes

unintentionally) effective depending on the political climate of the time. In the UK, the JRCT approach to influencing government policy on specific issues, Leat notes, is to adopt the amicable role of ‘objective informer’ and ‘persuader’ (2005, p. 31).

Foundations that take a more direct policy advocacy role have been a trend in recent years. Jung, Kaufman & Harrow (2014) explored the efforts of a coalition of philanthropic funders in the UK to engage in ‘direct’ advocacy, where, rather than attempting to indirectly influence policy on a particular issues through the work of their recipient organisations, they aimed to directly influence government policy. The issue related to the treatment of women in the criminal justice system, and specifically to convince government to implement the findings of policy recommendations for reform. Their limited success raises the question of whether funders can move their image and perceived legitimacy from that of ‘resource provider’ to a broader conceptualisation of their role and utility within the policy process and the extent to which difficulties in a high competitive policy environment can be overcome solely by being relatively resource rich.

Almog-Bar and Zychlinski (2012) examined the relationship between philanthropic foundations and government in social policymaking as part of a collaboration between the Israeli government and foundations in the field of children at risk. Their study found conflicting perceptions regarding the roles of government and private foundations in the policymaking process. The desire of participating foundations for autonomy and innovation, expressed in attempts to promote their agenda and policies at the beginning of the policymaking process proved threatening to government for whom the idea of private foundations ‘taking an activist position and promoting their autonomous agendas in policymaking processes is still considered unacceptable’ (2012, p. 811). To a large extent, this had its history in the relationships between the government and nonprofit sector in Israel in which government cooperated so long as foundations agreed to finance programmes in accordance with the priorities of the state. Government partners perceived

the collaboration as more a technical means of achieving goals and less of a relationship that benefits both parties, as a result of which it became ceremonial and symbolic.

As a strategy, adopting the goal of influencing public policy is recognised as carrying considerable risk. For one thing, the possibility of failure is high due to the uncertainty of the political process. At another level, attributing the activities of foundations to policy impact is difficult if not impossible. In evaluating public policy grantmaking, Knott and McCarthy suggest that progress should be measured 'not by actual policy change but by the setting up of mechanisms that will increase the chances for change in the future' (2007 p. 340).

For foundations that adopt a conscious role in relation to policy, their associated objectives may involve what Prewitt (2006a) characterised as implicit or explicit goals. In practice, the ways in which foundations can impact on the policy process largely takes the form of research and programme evaluation activities that, through the production of data, are anticipated to 'make the case' to policymakers. Alongside these activities, in addition, foundations have unique resources in the form of staff that can contribute to policy innovations through fostering collaborate efforts or highlighting preferred solutions within their field. Such strategies, at the macro level of ideas and politics, have the potential to contribute to the development of new paradigms and perspectives within a particular policy domain. In this regard, a recent study of foundation-state relationships in the U.S, found that foundations can play important symbolic and leadership roles in public policy debates by conferring legitimacy on specific ideas and solutions (Mosley & Galaskiewicz, 2015) In the case of children and family in Ireland, with the prevention and early intervention focus adopted by key funders, foundations sought to stimulate interest in targeted initiatives and to assist related policy options to succeed.

The importance attributed to a policy role for foundations is indicative of a realisation, that for foundations to be relevant and influential actors in society, they must engage with the State. The aforementioned (Mosley & Galaskiewicz, 2015) study notes the strong tendency for foundations to make their choices based on awareness of the political environment, which sets the context for their effectiveness. In general, public policy grantmaking calls for increased engagement with policymakers. However, the extent to which policymakers are receptive to the political implications underlying foundation objectives is debatable. The assumption that statutory providers have both the capacity and the desire to subsume policy innovations devised by non-state actors underlies the rationale behind many foundation initiatives. Yet it must be acknowledged that acceptance of a role for philanthropy in policy influence is new; it requires a significant departure from the traditional perception of foundations as solely providers of resources to acknowledgement of the validity of their intervention into the public systems and processes.

### **2.2.7 Summary**

There are many different ways in which philanthropy is defined and ensuing differing interpretations as to its meaning and value. This section has focused on the core characteristics as well as the history and evolution of the private philanthropic foundation and, within that, the emergence of a style of philanthropy considered relevant to modern society. Critiques of philanthropy illuminate tensions between scholars for whom its operation outside the functioning of the political system and democratic debate makes it a questionable concept and others who view this autonomy as an opportunity to enhance society's functioning. In examining these different perspectives, legitimacy emerges as a key concept. Challenges to legitimacy in Ireland include the newness of the philanthropic foundation and a cultural context unfamiliar with the expectations of this form of giving. Legitimacy accorded to foundations is based on their suitability to perform certain functions in society that cannot be addressed by the market or the State. Theoretical perspectives that highlight the contribution philanthropy makes

to society provide the analytical framework for debates on the roles occupied by foundations in society. Frameworks such as Anheier and Daly's typology are used internationally, and, while differentiations may be difficult to apply in the relatively limited context of Irish philanthropy, they nevertheless offer insights into the process for intervention.

## **2.3 Strategic philanthropy**

### **2.3.1 Key characteristics**

Section 2.2 above outlined above the major theoretical debates relating to the form and function of foundation in society with reference to the practices that adopt an ethos and a strategic orientation considered relevant to modern social democracies. This section explores the unique attributes and orientation associated with the form of philanthropy identified as 'strategic' in the literature and highlights the ambiguities inherent in the characterisation of strategic philanthropy as a distinct concept.

In its modern form, philanthropy, often described as 'new', 'strategic' or 'effective' is considered to be distinct from older styles of giving that have paternalistic or charitable associations. Cobb (2002, p. 125) understands the term 'new philanthropy' to encompass a range of developments that have characterised the field, including globally a growth in individual giving, expansion of community foundations and the emergence of venture philanthropy as 'an increase in the available funds, expansion in modes of giving, and a greater democratisation of philanthropy'. Deakin (2001, p. 208) identified 'a distinctive new philanthropy derived from turbo-capitalism' for the twenty-first century and queried what its focus and objectives should be. In whatever guise, modern philanthropy is considered to be both relevant to and essential for the operation of a dynamic society.

The attribution of 'strategic' to the concept of philanthropy has, in recent years manifested itself at theoretical and practical levels. Yet, the language of strategic philanthropy is imprecise (Cobb, 2002; Boris & Kopczynski

Winkler, 2013). It includes efforts to prioritise ‘effective’, ‘entrepreneurial’ and ‘innovative’ approaches and adapts the language of “investment” over grantmaking (Anheier, 2005, p. 323). The introduction in the 1990s of a new generation of philanthropists from the stock market has brought a different dynamic to the practice of philanthropy ‘for many of these new philanthropists, philanthropy is an investment’ (Anheier, 2005, p. 324). Porter and Kramer’s (1999) seminal work challenged philanthropy to embrace a new agenda in order to create value and social impact and argued for two core elements to make up strategic investment. These included the goal of superior performance in a chosen area, and within that, a commitment to measuring results and acting on what has been learned. Secondly, foundations should choose unique positioning as the basis for identifying where and how they are best positioned for having impact. The process, the authors argue, ‘requires systematic thought and research into important social challenges that are not being addressed well by others’ (p. 130).

An assessment by Katz (2005) of the concepts of ‘effective’ ‘strategic’ and ‘venture’ philanthropy found that it was not possible to distinguish between these three ‘new’ approaches. Rather, they share attributes that include focusing on highly selective areas of grantmaking with the adoption of specific goals and short-term, measurable results. Effective philanthropy, according to Katz (2005, p. 127), is characterised by seeking to both measure and increase impact. Strategic giving can be associated with venture philanthropy with which it shares certain core elements, primarily a reliance on metrics and business logic. Salamon’s (2014, p. 5) characterisation of a ‘new frontier’ of philanthropy and social investing includes the features below:

- adoption of a more global approach through engaging problems on an international scale
- applying models developed in cross-national settings
- an entrepreneurial element that includes an investment orientation focused on measurable results; and
- generating a mix of economic as well as social returns.

For Anheier (2005, p. 324), strategic philanthropy refers to ‘both the working philosophy and the programme strategies of a foundation. It originates from an entrepreneurial view of foundation activities that focuses on strategy, key competencies, and striving for effective contributions to social change’. Finally, given the emphasis on impact investing approaches, Salamon’s (2014, p. 16) re-assessed the relevance of the term ‘philanthropy’ and concluded that its basic and broadest meaning, that of applying private resources for social purposes, makes it a credible and useful concept in contemporary debate.

While the investment and entrepreneurial elements discussed above are core components of strategic philanthropy, other interpretations emphasise the importance of the external environment. Buteau, Buchanan and Brock’s articulation of a definition of strategy relevant to foundations identified it as framework for decision-making that is 1) focused on the external context in which the foundation works, and 2) includes a hypothesized causal connection between use of foundation resources and goal achievement (2009, p. 3). Two typologies for guiding strategic choices of foundations considered below are especially useful in this regard. Above all, they interpret strategic philanthropy as conscious of the role it occupies in relation to public services. Both situate decision-making and priority-setting in the context of an ecosystem in which government policy is central. Importantly, they caution against over reliance on venture or entrepreneurial philanthropy and the adoption of business practices.

Prewitt (2006a) separates strategic philanthropy from the entrepreneurial terminology with which it is often associated and offers instead a taxonomy that gives operational meaning to the theory of change foundations employ. In this formulation, strategic choices are concerned not with the social conditions foundations face, peace, justice, health and so forth, but rather the ‘approach and course of action brought to such conditions’ (p. 367). Understanding foundation behaviour and impact can be best served, he



argues, under a schema that categorises strategic choices into the following categories: new knowledge, applied knowledge, policy analysis, policy advocacy, social movements and service delivery (2006a, pp. 367-370). The key features of each are summarized below:

**Table 2.3.1 Prewitt’s taxonomy on change strategies**

<i>New Knowledge</i>	Foundations make major investments in universities and research institutions in order to advance basic human understanding through the generation and transmission of new knowledge.
<i>Applied knowledge</i>	Foundations investing in applying knowledge rather than creating it - making sure it is applied in socially beneficial ways.
<i>Policy analysis</i>	Foundation funding in the social sciences is often motivated by a desire for improved public policy. It concentrates on funding new models and concepts for the social market economy.
<i>Policy advocacy</i>	Involves foundations putting pressure on policymakers by funding groups fighting for the ‘right’ public policies manifested in advocacy to alter government spending priorities.
<i>Social movements and social empowerment</i>	Funding to grassroots organisations characterised by “bottom up” rather than a top down change strategy.
<i>Social service delivery</i>	Funding focused on delivery of social services, for example, housing, healthcare, and legal aid. It is differentiated from charity in the testing a model or promoting an intervention.

**Source:** Adapted from Prewitt 2006a

This typology highlights the importance of policy objectives for strategic philanthropy. In Prewitt’s view, (2006a, p. 369) ‘Foundations focused on public policy operate from a belief that government interventions are going to solve the problem.’ This strategy also incorporates a view that that public sector is ‘resources rich’ but supposedly ideas poor. Another aspect of the typology, the applied knowledge element, prioritises the development of data and evidence informed by research in order to make the case for improved services and practices and to influence decision-makers.

Sandfort (2008) developed a framework for private investment in human services that enables philanthropic foundations to engage in strategic giving. Critical of models such as venture philanthropy that ‘overlook the reality that the vast majority of nonprofits are embedded in complex networks that involve multifaceted relationships with the public sector’, Sandfort (p. 550) argues that foundations can only be effective when they ‘craft their actions in relation to government’. In other words, ‘strategic’ as applied to philanthropic investment, is a concerted and conscious positioning within the broad-based environment in which government dominates. This approach, while pragmatic, also capitalises on the unique roles foundations can play and incorporates an understanding that the resources of foundations include social and political capital; flexibility with which to generate funds and intervention that can change as the nature of the problem changes.

Sandfort looks at the evolutionary stages of social problems to develop a framework for how philanthropic funds could be more strategically deployed. According to this model, at the first, emergent stage of a problem, it is strategic to fund a nonprofit programme response. During the second, wider recognition of the problem stage, philanthropic attention is best concentrated on fostering programme innovation or evaluation responses. This often involves complementing government initial funding or supporting the formation of networks for knowledge development an approach which ‘provides some ‘glue’ of peer learning rarely present in conventional public funding processes and offers the possibility of more coherent field development’ (Sandfort, 2008, p. 547). In the third stage of sharing knowledge about effective responses, other tools become relevant including supporting research or strategic communication, including media, as evidence and communication mechanisms not often present in public funding.

Strategic philanthropy has recently come under criticism as being too rigid and for failing to take into account the complexity of social progress and the external environment (Patrizi & Thompson, 2011; Kania, Kramer & Russel, 2014). This includes failure to adapt to issues on the ground. Kania et al.

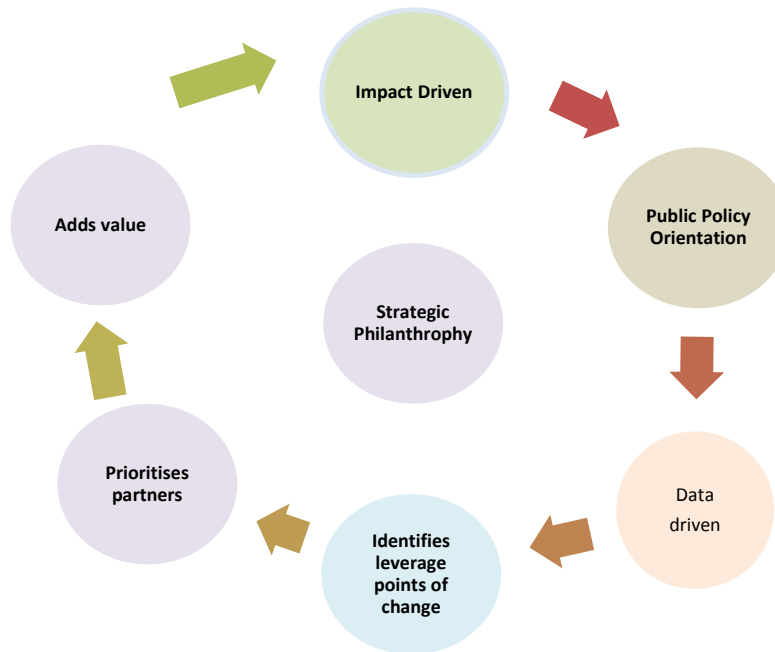
(2014) argue that ‘emergent’ strategy is the more appropriate approach for foundations to adopt. This holds that a clear strategic intent is important but one that acknowledges that specific outcomes cannot be predicted. The research acknowledges however, that that pressure to work with defined time horizons and predictable outcomes that can be evaluated and attributed to foundation intervention is a reality for many staff in organisations.

### **2.3.2 Conceptualising strategic philanthropy**

In reviewing the literature on strategic philanthropy, the evolution of a form of ‘strategic’ giving characterises philanthropy primarily as an investment and seeks to differentiate its approach from associations with grant-aid type, charitable giving. In this context, two distinct bodies of literature inform our understanding of the intent and orientation. Both share an underlying concern with philanthropic effectiveness and with the strategic deployment of funds. Firstly, literature focused on the creation of value and social impact is influenced by the principles and practices of venture philanthropy that make up a ‘new frontier’ of social investment. Critics such as Anheier and Leat (2006, p. 2) question the attribution of labels such as ‘strategic’ to philanthropy for an ‘instrumentalist, managerial’ approach that emphasis processes rather than roles for philanthropy. A second body of literature interprets strategic philanthropy as conscious of its role in relation to the external environment. In this genre, typologies, especially those that relate to the interaction between philanthropy and public service are invoked to inform the strategic choices of foundations focused on policy change. Rather than focusing on entrepreneurial practice, proponents posit that foundations can be most effective when their strategic choices are crafted in relation to governments.

As outlined in this section, and illustrated below (Figure 2.3.2) the characteristics of strategic philanthropy are inter-related and interconnected.

**Figure 2.3.2 Key elements of strategic philanthropy**



Taken together, these separate strands suggest that strategic philanthropy is a somewhat amorphous concept. Daly (2012), recognising the contested nature of the concept of philanthropy, notes that the characterisation of types of philanthropy is informed by the value attributed to particular actions, behaviour and purposes. In this context, the terms ‘strategic philanthropy’ and ‘venture philanthropy’ are examples of *précising* definitions that embody a particular approach to engaging in philanthropy that seek to give it a very specific meaning. However, Daly acknowledges that it is difficult to draw firm boundaries between them. A similar interpretation by Harrow (2010) sees philanthropy as a ‘clustered’ concept where parallel understandings of its nature and purpose exist as defined by multiple stakeholders.

As discussed above, the literature suggests that strategic philanthropy occupies different definitional elements or emphases from the perspectives of different stakeholders. Nonetheless, the identification of shared features and a particular orientation enable us to establish a common framework for understanding the goals and objectives upon which this style of giving is

based. For this study, where stakeholders represent diverse groups, this relates to a shared concern with the improved functioning of public systems and services. This focus provides the lens with which to examine how the different perspectives can be used in developing a critical assessment of strategic philanthropy's key features and operation within a specific context.

The next section focuses specifically on strategic philanthropy in the implementation of programmes and examines the practices and norms that characterise its form of operation as identified in the nonprofit literature.

## **2.4 Funding social investment**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

Understanding philanthropy as a form of social investment is new in Ireland. As outlined in 2.2 above, the ethos of philanthropy is founded on charitable beneficence rather than an association with the bottom-line approaches of investment strategy. Strategic philanthropy's adoption of the language of 'investments' over 'grants' denotes a style of engagement that is aligned with the principles of business. It is accompanied by a set of goals and objectives that are impact-driven and results-oriented. This section examines how 'social investment' or 'social impact' approaches are defined in the literature and the emergence of specific practices and styles with which they are associated. As Rauscher, Schober and Millner (2012, p. 4) point out, a focus on measurement and evaluation of the impact generated by nonprofits is not new. What is notable is that venture philanthropy and some foundations have 'started applying more or less known concepts of outcome and impact analysis and evaluation under their own terms.' The trend toward measurement and assessment of impact therefore, is discussed within the broad body of literature documenting the nonprofit sector's concerns with effectiveness, accountability, and performance.

Discussion of impact in the nonprofit sector literature can be categorised under a variety of frameworks referred to as social impact measurement and assessment in which capturing and evaluating the result of an intervention is

critical. As summarised by Rauscher et al., ‘Generally formulated, social impact comprises the representation of some form of change in the target group, which is based on an intervention and can also be attributed to that intervention’ (2012, p. 4). Social impact assessment, according to McKinsey & Co. (2010) is rooted in government measures designed to understand the impact of public service programmes in the United States. New concepts that have become part of the social science methodology as a result include Randomised Control Trials (RCTs), theory of change and logic modelling approaches. RCTs are an experiential approach to evaluation built around research distinguishing between control and treatment groups. RCTs, first used in the United States in 1973, increased in popularity in the early 1990s to occupy a place as the ‘gold standard’ for quantifying effects of social programmes in the following decade.

Within the last ten years, foundations are being influenced by a social-entrepreneurship school of thought in which investors are guided by the need to achieve maximum social impact for their activities. The Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis, popular among US foundations, includes the cost aspect in the assessment of an intervention. These approaches that quantify impact in monetary terms have a long tradition in economic evaluation (Rauscher et al, 2012).

The first section below (2.4.2) traces the development within the nonprofit sector and in the ethos of public management of an ‘outputs to outcomes’ discourse that, beginning in the 1990s, resulted in a shift in culture among service providers and funders to reflect a growing emphasis on demonstrating effectiveness and impact. Secondly, (2.4.3), the concept of venture philanthropy is discussed. The application of business skills, entrepreneurial and market approaches with which it is associated has acted as a key influence on nonprofit culture in the past decade. A critical tenet of this style of philanthropy is investing in organisational development as a precursor to enabling strong organisations poised for impact. The importance of capacity building is discussed as a priority for strategic philanthropy. All of these

elements are considered in the context of broader strategies for improving nonprofit effectiveness identified within the literature.

Alongside the need to demonstrate impact, indicators for measuring impact are required. Scholars and practitioners have identified a set of particular metrics that are associated with social investment funding and these are discussed in sections 2.4.4 and 2.4.5. The use of logic models and theory of change approaches as elements of social programmes is discussed and the presence of models citing cost effectiveness and value to society is noted as a trend toward economic rationalisation. Finally, a central tenet of social investment is that of scale. The concept of scale as it applies to nonprofits is reviewed in 2.4.6. This section concludes by outlining some of the challenges identified in the literature faced by organisations in implementing and assessing the vast range of instruments and metrics for demonstrating impact.

#### **2.4.2 Performance and measurement approaches**

Among service providers and funders alike, beginning in the late 1990s, a shift has taken place to reflect a move from ‘outputs to outcomes’ thinking that has become widely accepted as part of a culture of demonstrating effectiveness (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011). The preoccupation with performance-based approaches to monitoring programme activities has been attributed to a trend that began in the United States when the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 required federal agencies to develop strategic plans and report annually on programme performance (Winkler, Theodos & Grosz, 2009; Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011; Boris & Kopczynski Winker, 2013). This requirement was passed down to nonprofits that received government funding heralding what has been called the ‘performance measurement era’ characterised by the adoption of management and evaluation practices at nonprofits.

With the adoption of performance-based approaches to measure programme outcomes, nonprofits began to change their emphasis from reporting indicators, such as how much money was received and how many people

were served, to measuring whether their programmes make a difference in the lives of people (Lampkin & Hatry, 2003; Winkler, Theodos & Grosz, 2009). The shift has become firmly embedded in how policymakers, funders and service providers think about programmes to the extent that that proven, evidence-based practice is the mantra of funders looking for results and demonstrated effectiveness (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011). Within philanthropy in the late 1990s, champions for promoting strategic grantmaking that prioritised performance management and evaluation began to emerge including infrastructural channels such as the Centre for Effective Philanthropy and Grantmakers for Effective Organisations. The presence of these structures, alongside the appearance of venture philanthropy (discussed below) fuelled the trend toward promoting effectiveness (Boris & Kopczynski Winkler, 2013).

### **2.4.3 Capacity building for impact**

Investing in the capacity of organisations to do their work effectively is a core part of the venture capital approach to philanthropy. Proponents such as Letts, Ryan and Grossman (1997) argue that successful programmes depend on the commitment to building high-performance nonprofit organisations capable of creating sustained, effective impact. Fundamentally, venture philanthropy argues that the logic of business strategy can be applied to philanthropy (Porter & Kramer, 1999). With roots in the rhetoric of the New Democrats in the United States and the practices of Silicon Valley, venture philanthropy ‘promised to turn donors into hard-nosed social investors by bringing the discipline of the investment world to a field that for over a century relied on good faith and trust’ (Frumkin, 2003, p. 4). Its infiltration into the philanthropic realm can be seen in a changing environment characterised by the language of investing over grantmaking; programme officers with smaller portfolios and more hands-on relationships with recipients and the use of benchmarks, performance measures and exit strategies (Cobb, 2002). Cobb (p. 130) found that venture philanthropists are more diverse in style and operation than is commonly acknowledged and that they are more prominent in certain areas, youth and education, for instance,



where the approach is deemed amenable to tackling the social problems involved.

Traditionally, nonprofit culture has reflected an environment in which both funders and recipients prioritised programme-related grants at the expense of core infrastructure. As McKinsey & Co. (2001) point out, investing in organisational capacity reflects an interest in management practices and principles geared toward producing high-performing organisations as well as strong programmes. As such, it signals a reversal of decades of under-investment in the capacity of nonprofits and a tendency within the sector to neglect building organisational capacity over developing and delivering programmes. For funders, short-term projects offer flexibility to change direction and priorities at will; however, the approach is coming under criticism not least for the difficulties it causes organisations in generating income to cover operational and administrative costs (Anheier & Leat, 2002). Among the problems facing the voluntary and community sector in Ireland, Daly (2008, p. 163) identified the lack of human or financial resources necessary to support organisations involvement in influencing national and local policy. At the same time, inadequate structures of internal governance make it impossible for organisations to meet the conditions attached to funding, including resource management and efficiency.

The focus on adopting business principles as part of a movement toward strategic giving has infiltrated philanthropy to become known as ‘philanthrocapitalism’ (Bishop & Green, 2008). It emanates from a culture that perceives a lack of standards and benchmarking in nonprofits (Bishop, 2008). Bishop and Green’s (2008) philanthropic model identified three key elements: applying business principles to giving; high-engagement by the funder; and the importance of leveraging. Proponents, often entrepreneurs turned philanthropists, believe that society’s most pressing challenges are best addressed by applying business skills and market-based theory. Included are strategies such as targeting resources to where they can make the most

difference, measuring impact more effectively and encouraging networking and collaboration among nonprofits (Bishop & Green, 2008).

Frumkin (2003), among others, acknowledges that the 'idea of turning philanthropy into social investing' and the practices and core tools involved have permeated the worlds of community and institutional philanthropy. Aside from terminological divides, Frumkin believes, the underlying practices of venture philanthropy do not appear to be fundamentally different from what has become practice across a broad range of philanthropic institution in the United States. Indeed, discussion on the merits of applying the management concepts of quality and performance to the nonprofit sector such as the Cairns et al (2005) study of nonprofits in the United Kingdom make no reference to the venture philanthropy doctrine. Nor should capacity building be seen as the prerogative of venture philanthropy. As Bailin (2003) points out, making long-term investment in strong organisations for the development of their capacity has become common practice across a range of philanthropic institutions.

Capacity development is undertaken to enable organisations to successfully achieve policy goals. In the United States, a study undertaken by Mandeville (2007) demonstrated that funders committed to exerting influence in a policy system will invest in what he calls 'policy actor' capacity. He identified three dimensions of capacity (a) research and communication with the external environment, (b) resource development, and (c) governance and management that are necessary to create opportunities for policy influence. However, Mandeville found that these were disproportionately balanced with funders allocating the largest share of their capacity development funding to the development of research and communications capacity. The relative lack of attention that is shown for the development of capital acquisition and management and governance capacity, he argues, compounds the efforts of nonprofit organisations to become self-sufficient and to increase their effectiveness.

In whatever guise, capacity development is instrumental to building effectiveness. Yet understanding of the full meaning and import of the term can be limited. McKinsey and Co. (2001) argued that a broader understanding of capacity is needed than the technical assistance or human resource functions with which it can be associated. They developed a 'Capacity Framework' to provide a common vision and vocabulary for nonprofit capacity. The framework defines nonprofit capacity in a pyramid of seven essential elements: three higher-level elements – aspirations, strategy, and organizational skills – three foundational elements – systems and infrastructure, human resources, and organizational structure – and a cultural element which serves to connect all the others. In this regard, capacity-building goes beyond the limited understanding associated with technical aspects to include a fundamental reappraisal of the ways in which organisations can be supported in the long-term.

#### **2.4.4 Logic models**

Philanthropy's concern with effectiveness requires organisations to document and monitor activities in ways that can demonstrate results. Increasingly, funders are requiring that recipients report and demonstrate effectiveness of programmes through undertaking outcome-oriented evaluation of projects (Carman, 2010). By providing a framework for describing an organisation's work that links inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, the underlying principles of 'logic modelling' enhance organisations' program planning, implementation, and dissemination activities. According to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2004), the logic model offers potential to generate knowledge about what works and why as well as strengthening community voice through providing participants with a clear map of the route ahead. It has value in articulating a systematic and visual mechanism for seeing the relationship between resources used to operate a programme, activities planned and the results or changes it hopes to achieve. The model (Table 2.4.4 below) adapted by the foundation and widely adopted in practice provides a useful illustration of the key differentiators between programme elements and demonstrates the kinds of timeframe for results typically expected by funders.

**Table 2.4.4 WK Kellogg logic model elements**

**Inputs:** The resources (human, financial organisational and community) that go into a programme

**Activities:** The processes tools, events, technology, actions that are intentional part of programme implementation

**Outputs:** The direct result of programme activities including types, levels and targets of services being implemented. They indicate if the programme was delivered to its intended audience and in its intended “dose”.

**Outcomes:** The specific changes in programme participants behaviour, knowledge, skills and level of function often expressed at the individual level. Short –term outcomes should be attainable in 1-3 years, longer term 4-6 year timeframe.

**Impact:** Changes occurring in organisations, communities, or systems as a result of programme activities within 7-10 years

*Source: W.K. Kellogg Foundation*

The pre-cursor to the logic model is often the theory of change. The approach is especially popular among proponents of strategic philanthropy who emphasise the need for clear goals and strategies based on sound theories of change (Brest, 2010). Weiss (1995) introduced the idea of theory-based evaluation, namely basing evaluation on the ‘theory of change’ underlying an initiative. In this analysis, social programmes are based on implicit or explicit theories namely ‘assumptions or hypotheses’ about why a programme is working. A programme evaluation, therefore, ‘should surface these theories and lay them out in as fine detail as possible, identifying all the assumptions and sub-assumptions built into the programme’ (Weiss, 1995 p. 67). The focus of the evaluation is to collect data to determine if the theories hold and which are supported by evidence. Adopting a theory of change approach enables tracking developments in mini-steps, from one phase to the next and ensuring that the ‘often unspoken assumptions hidden within the programme are surfaced and tested’ (Weiss, p. 73). In effect, they require the operationalisation of assumptions to a degree that they can be individually

tracked to a logic model; a feature that makes them popular with funders (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011).

#### **2.4.5 Measuring social value**

The development of new metrics to measure the ‘social return on investment’ (Frumkin, 2003) are infiltrating the broader field of philanthropy as part of the general trend towards adopting investment and business principles (Tuan, 2008; Brest, Harvey & Low, 2009). These approaches quantify positive social effects in monetary terms. Some US foundations have adopted Social Return on Investment (SROI) models that demonstrate the social, environmental and economic outcomes and value to society of interventions. Rauscher et al, (2012, p. 9) describe SROI analysis as a form of cost benefit analysis in which the term ‘investment’ is used instead of ‘cost’ and ‘social return, namely return on investment for society is used instead of benefit’.

Increasingly, arguments for economic efficiency are factored into decisions about whether to fund particular programmes or interventions. Under such ‘integrated cost’ approaches, assessing the impact of investments on the lives of individuals or communities can be demonstrated by showing the tax money saved or income generated through reducing dependency on public assistance or services. Tuan (2008) examined the various ways cost is being integrated into a variety of measurement frameworks by leading philanthropic and nonprofit organizations in the US. These include models such as cost-effectiveness analysis, originating in the health field and involving the ratio of cost to a non-monetary outcome, for instance, years of life saved, or disease prevented. Among the benefits is that programme and policy alternatives within the same domain can be ranked according to effectiveness. While the author identified a host of limitations to the various integrated cost approaches, she concedes that they are bringing a ‘new level of rigour and creativity to the measurement or estimation of social value’(p. 4). Most commentators acknowledge that methodologies are rudimentary and such are the nature of the complexities involved that metrics for calculating the relative

social costs of programmers should be used with caution (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011).

#### **2.4.6 Going to scale**

For strategic philanthropists, the process of identifying promising programmes and helping them to expand is a primary consideration. Having demonstrated a programme's tangible results or impact, the focus then becomes bringing them to a broader scale (Bishop & Green, 2008). 'Scaling up' generally entails significant organisational growth, central coordination and replication. In practice, the diffusion and adoption of model social programs are the primary strategies (Dees, Anderson & Wei-skilern, 2004). Scaling, according to Roob and Bradach (2009) requires an alteration of traditional patterns of funding. Making the case for impacting some of society's most pressing problems, they argue, involves funders supporting fewer organisations with larger sums of money.

Venture philanthropy has proposed different models of achieving scale, drawn from the corporate strategy for venture companies. These include franchising 'in which a programmatic idea is packaged and made available to other social entrepreneurs either through autonomous units or through affiliated entities' (Frumkin, 2003, p. 5). It involves testing, developing and debugging the service model before replication to other sites. Another strategy for scaling up is that of 'building the capacity within nonprofit organisations to design and deliver services for which there is a paying client waiting to consume the service' (Frumkin, 2003, p. 5). This approach is considered problematic since it takes the organisation outside the realm of charitable work and assumes a degree of entrepreneurial skill that may or may not be present.

Others have called for wider understanding of the issue of scale to consider different ways of both defining and spreading their innovations before determining whether and how to proceed. Dees, Anderson & Wei-Skillern (2004), for instance, argue that scaling of innovations can take place through

more diverse mechanisms focused on identifying core elements: Social innovations spread as an *organizational model* – an over-arching structure for mobilizing people and resources to serve a common purpose or in the form of a *program* –an integrated set of actions that serve a specific purpose. Additionally, they suggest, some innovations are framed in terms of *principles* – general guidelines and values about how to serve a given purpose (p.26). This more diverse way of defining social innovations enables clarity as to what are the core elements that can be defined in a way that is both effective and transferable and avoids the confusion associated with scaling up and replication.

In the end, despite the number of successful innovations; replication is rare and expanding programmes with proven impact complex (Bradach, 2003; Frumkin, 2003; Roob & Bradach, 2009). As Bradach (2003, p. 23) reminds us, a paradox of the nonprofit sector and one of the ‘most vexing problems facing non-profit leaders’ is the fact that funding rarely follows success. While the failure to replicate innovative social programs is usually attributed to problems of strategy and management, he concludes ‘much of the time, it is simply a problem of money’ (p. 25).

The process of identifying promising programmes and helping them expand to scale is complex. Particularly relevant to this study is a typology developed by Frumkin (2006) that identified the key features of scale as they apply to philanthropy, namely, programme expansion, comprehensiveness, replication or accepted doctrine. The characteristics of each are summarized below. It includes the dimensions of programme expansion or replication alongside a new aspect, namely scale as accepted doctrine.

**Figure 2.4.6 Typology of scale in philanthropy**

<b>Programme Expansion</b>	<b>Comprehensiveness</b>	<b>Replication</b>	<b>Accepted Doctrine</b>
<b>Elements</b> Refers to bringing services to more people  Measured in numbers of clients reached	<b>Elements</b> Bringing under one roof integrated set of activities and interventions often in form of comprehensive community initiatives Geographic focus	<b>Elements</b> Replication of particular service model  Internally or externally	<b>Elements</b> Creating a new and accepted doctrine within a given field
<b>Assumptions/Features</b> A good programme can never service enough people  State funding will follow a launch with private money	<b>Assumptions/Features</b> Programme proliferation addressed by focusing on integration  Programme linkages as important as creating new programmes	<b>Assumptions/Features</b> Business model Franchising or licencing  Pilot initiatives for government to scale	<b>Assumptions/Features</b> Brings about shift in way people think about their work and carry out programmes
<b>Pros and Cons</b> Rewards performance and incentivises nonprofits  Low-risk for private funders	<b>Pros and Cons</b> Interagency Collaboration  Inclusiveness and diversity Support from grassroots  Sustainability	<b>Pros and Cons</b> Multiplication model – is it appropriate for sector?  Vision and commitment of programme creators can get lost	<b>Pros and Cons</b> Wholesale re-evaluation of a field's standard operating practices and assumptions  Broad infiltration of a field

**Source:** Adapted from Theories of Scale, Frumkin, 2006

### 2.4.7 Challenges to the field

The challenges for service providers under pressure to demonstrate outcomes for their programmes are well-documented in the literature and are beyond the scope of this study. Outlined below, however, are some of the issues raised in the literature facing organisations in implementing and assessing the vast range of instruments and metrics for demonstrating impact.

Criticisms of the accountability movement include a culture of winners and losers where Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, for instance, suggest 'less-intensive'



programmes (citing an example of a 12 week summer jobs programme for disadvantaged youth) that are not perceived as having potential to impact on long-term education or employment can be dismissed and may miss the point that a series of such interventions may be effective (2011, p. 383). Chaskin (2009) analysed the inputs, outputs and expected outcomes in a case study of community-based intervention with disadvantaged youth that targeted improvements in well-being of children, youth and families. Given the complexity and ambiguity of the inputs and the breadth of intended outcomes, understanding the impact that such organisations have is difficult (2009, p. 1128). In implementing theories of change to determine outcome, Chaskin cautioned that it is important to take account of the qualitative nature of the inputs and not to neglect the ‘softer’ components such as creating physical space or creating relationships that are not amenable to crafting simple causal links between means and ends. Likewise, establishing appropriate expectations for both interim effects and broader long-term outcomes is critical he advises.

Emphasis on demonstrating effectiveness has produced a range of ‘data-driven’ philanthropy (Knott & McCarthy, 2007) that prioritises research, evaluation and data collection. However, issues of data usage emerge in the literature. Common problems in practice include the lack of integration of data collected into internal management and decision-making (Carmen, 2010) and diversion from direct service on staff time collecting and retrieving data (Poertner, 2000). Alongside the emergence of ‘data-driven social innovation efforts’ the issue of the need for field intermediaries such as umbrella organisations or entities to assist in meeting the demand for technical application of such field-specifics research and knowledge has been raised (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011; Carman, 2010).

External pressure plays a role in pressuring nonprofits to adopt performance management systems. In the United Kingdom for instance, the drive for nonprofits to adopt performance management systems came about ‘as a managerial responsibility to external accountability demands’ from funders

and other internal stakeholders (Cairns et al., 2005, p. 148). The approaches implemented used mechanisms such as the balanced scorecard for instance, designed for the private sector and arguably not suitable for the non-profit culture. As a consequence, the authors conclude ‘our study indicates that one cannot assume a causal relationship between the use of a quality system and tangible outcomes for beneficiaries’ (p. 148).

For organisations grappling with the planning and resourcing of evaluation and measurement activities, affordability is a major issue. The scope of efforts is constrained by cost factors and, without significant external resources, the extent of activities may be constrained. In considering strategies for assessing impact, Boris & Kopczynski Winkler (2013, p. 76) note the importance of differentiating between evaluation and performance measurement (primarily an internal function) pointing out that the former can provide ‘real-time data useful in day-to-day decision making’ with a shortcoming that the validity of data can be criticised. Evaluation (often carried out externally) on the other hand, is focused on demonstrating that the changes were caused by a particular programme or intervention. These differences are critical in identifying strategies for developing and sustaining evaluation.

A problem with evaluation is the time lag that commonly occurs between the availability of evaluation data and findings and its use for informing the next stage of a foundations’ portfolio development or grantmaking decisions (Boris & Kopczynski Winkler, p. 76). The authors also point to an over-reliance on evidence and that has led to some funders taking it as a mandate to fund only programmes or organisations that produce rigorous evidence.

#### **2.4.8 Summary**

This section has focused on developing an understanding of philanthropy as a form of investment and the centrality of impact as its defining characteristic. The influence of venture philanthropy and social entrepreneurship has been instrumental in identifying social impact goals and objectives and in

introducing concepts rooted in market-oriented and business principles into nonprofit culture and discourse. At the same time, the proliferation of terms and metrics has created confusion and placed pressures on nonprofit organisations to produce results that some scholars have viewed as unrealistic. A range of performance measurement practices now exist, that although mostly originating in the United States, increasingly form part of the landscape of assessment and evaluation for Irish nonprofits. The literature offers insights into how these concerns with impact and effectiveness have been characterised, evaluated and rationalised as well as understanding the preoccupation with proven programmes and ‘what works’ that permeates the philanthropic field.

Philanthropic social investment seeks to identify projects that have impact with a view to scaling up or mainstreaming these interventions. Debates on the adaptability of elements of the venture philanthropy model however, highlight the practical challenges in implementing them and caution against narrow interpretations of ideas imported from business. The debates clarified thinking that the overriding concern with scale is to identify what is transferable from philanthropic investment. Frumkin’s (2006) typology is especially pertinent and the dimensions of scale therein provide a useful point of reference in differentiating the different layers where philanthropic influence may be captured as is used in the data in the study. Differentiating between them enables us to understand how and where philanthropic intervention can have an effect and why it fails.

## **2.5 Civil Society, the State and the nonprofit sector in Ireland**

### **2.5.1 Overview**

In this final section of the literature review consideration is given to the distinct features of nonprofit organisations and, within the discussion, to the characteristics and changing role of the Irish nonprofit sector. Section 2.5.2 provides an overview of the size, scale and scope of the sector in Ireland. This is followed by a discussion of the functions that nonprofits occupy in

society. Although mostly identified with service provision, the literature underscores the importance of the features of innovation and advocacy for nonprofit organisations. In section 2.5.3 the history and context of the sector's relationship with the Irish State is reviewed. The precarious nature of nonprofits as resource dependent organisations is noted alongside developments such as trends toward more formalised structures and processes. Finally, in 2.5.4, the literature on advocacy defines a place for 'policy advocacy' and these contributions are considered as is the importance of funding advocacy as a strategy for foundations.

### **2.5.2 Ireland's nonprofit sector: Size, scale and characteristics**

In Ireland, the nonprofit sector is a significant feature of the economy with annual turnover of €6 billion and employing over 100,000 people (Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising, 2012). However, the term 'nonprofit' is relatively new in an Irish context; only in the 1980s did the first references to a specific sector appear (Donnelly-Cox, Donoghue & Hayes, 2001). At the same time, a multiplicity of terms are used to describe the field including voluntary, community, third, civil society, nongovernmental, independent and charity sector. Such ambiguity is widely recognised as an international issue, with Anheier (2005, p. 38) suggesting that each characterisation depicts one aspect of the social reality of the sector at the expense of other elements.

Studies of the sector in Ireland acknowledge the fuzzy boundaries and interchangeability of the term adopting different descriptors including third sector (Donnelly-Cox et al., 2001) or voluntary sector (Acheson et al. 2005). Daly (2008) observes that the term 'voluntary and community' sector reflects a distinction between 'voluntary' historically, Catholic service-providing organisations and 'community' associated with community development and empowerment organisations targeting social exclusion that began in the 1970s. The use of the term 'nonprofit' defined as 'the sector that is non-market and non-state' (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000, p x.) is perhaps a more inclusive choice and is the one selected for this study.

In Ireland, data gathering on the sector is in its infancy which to some extent this can be attributed to a lack of regulation. The Charities Act 2009 set out to reform the law relating to charities in order to ensure greater accountability. For the first time in legislation it provided for a register of charities and a definition of charitable purpose.<sup>2</sup> Delays in implementation of the public register of charities have meant that there is no centralised venue for financial disclosure that would enable reporting on trends or analysis common in other countries (Irish Nonprofit Knowledge Exchange, 2012). The lack of an infrastructure or databank on activities and scope of the sector exacerbates the problem of definition that scholars encounter (Daly, 2008, p. 159). The first mapping exercise on the sector in Ireland (Donoghue, Prizeman, O'Regan, & Noel, 2006) identified its relative newness with half of the participating organisations established since the 1980s. The research highlighted the growing importance of nonprofit organisations in Irish life, including playing key roles in the delivery of services, in community development, in facilitating organisational and individual engagement with the State and in providing a social space for the expression of diversity (Donoghue et al, 2006, p. 14).

Sources of revenue for Irish nonprofits include grants and donations from public and private entities, earnings from activities (including service fees from government), fundraising and investment income (Irish Nonprofit Knowledge Exchange, 2012). Within the categorisation of charitable donations are grants from philanthropic institutions as well as sources such as legacies, corporate donations, church collections and fundraising events. State funding as a percentage of the income of nonprofits is high, with recent reports estimating 58% for 2012 (Power, Kelleher & O'Connor, 2014). Nonetheless, this is a significant reduction from 74.8% in 1995 (Donoghue 2008 cited in Donnelly-Cox & Cannon, 2010, p. 336.). Beginning in the 1990s, the emergence of new funding sources such as the Dormant Accounts Fund (created from inactive accounts of financial institutions and disbursed

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<sup>2</sup> This legislation defined charitable purposes as where the aim is prevention or relief of poverty or economic hardship, advancement of education or religion: or for the benefit of the community.

to economically and socially disadvantaged groups), the growth of philanthropy and the professionalization of fundraising characterised the nonprofit landscape and provided a contrast to its historical underdevelopment and underresourcing (Keenan 2008a).

From 2008, Irish nonprofits began to be seriously affected by national and global economic downturns as a consequence of which operating in a 'resource constrained' environment became the norm for organisations (Keenan & Montague, 2010). Donnelly-Cox & Cannon's (2010, pp. 341-343) study of nonprofit responses to these altered conditions of support, reflected in both reduced state funding and a downturn in the fundraising landscape, identified distinct patterns of organisational responses. These included an 'economising response mode' in which organisations reported doing more with less and a 'diversification response mode' in which organisations sought to expand their resource base by improving fundraising skills to target new sources of income within and outside of Ireland. Overall, organisations became more introverted and focused on their own survival. Philanthropic funders, the authors note, tend to favour rationalisation responses with mergers, joint campaigns and shared back office functions among the strategies preferred, a reflection of the belief within philanthropy that replication and overlap are common problems for nonprofits.

#### *Characteristics of the nonprofit sector*

As nonprofit organisations themselves, Hammack (2006) contends, that foundations derive their legitimacy from the nonprofit sector as a whole. Theorists looking to understand the functioning of nonprofit organisations often explain their unique role and characteristics by distinguishing them from business or forprofit organisations and government agencies. According to McDonald (2007), private industry is motivated by profit; government addresses the needs of its citizens; and nonprofit entities typically meet needs not adequately met by either sector. Similar comparisons (Toepler & Anheier, 2004; Anheier, 2005) are useful in illustrating the different objectives and, by inference, the priorities of each.

Anheier's assessment of the approaches to understanding nonprofit behaviour stresses the importance of acknowledging that different sectors pursue fundamentally different objectives. Government, through the provision of publicly funded good and services, is primarily concerned with optimising social welfare through resource distribution and addressing basic needs that would otherwise not be met. The primary 'distribution criteria' of outputs are equity and social justice (2005, p. 181). Nonprofits, typically aim to maximise benefits for the client group involved based on solidarity with that group; they are internally focused on clients with the ability to discriminate in terms of members. Business and government agencies are externally focused on citizens and customers respectively and indiscriminate in whom they serve. At the structural level, business, guided by the bottom-line of profit tend to have clear and specific goals that lend themselves to easier management and measurement, what Anheier calls 'high goal specificity'. Government agencies, on the other hand, face complex, ambiguous goals due to changing political imperatives and influence of external agencies. The argument is summarised in the table below.

**Table 2.5.2 Characteristics of nonprofit, government, market behaviour**

	<b>Group Served</b>	<b>Function/Objective</b>	<b>Distribution Criteria</b>
<i>Nonprofits</i>	Clients <i>Internal focus</i>	Maximising benefits for client group	Solidarity with client High goal specificity <i>Discriminatory</i>
<i>Government</i>	Citizens <i>External focus</i>	Social welfare resource distribution	Equity and social justice Complex goals <i>Indiscriminate</i>
<i>Market</i>	Customers <i>External focus</i>	Profit	Exchange <i>Indiscriminate</i>

**Source:** Adapted from Anheier (2005)

Literature on the nonprofit sector highlights the distinctive role that constituent organisations occupy and are uniquely placed to serve in society. These go beyond service provision with which the sector is most associated

(Frumkin, 2002). A Nonprofit Public Sector Role Index developed by Moulton & Eckerd (2012) identified six distinctive yet overlapping roles in the nonprofit sector that define their public value: service delivery, innovation, advocacy, individual expression, social capital creation and citizen engagement. The service provision, innovation and advocacy roles are the most commonly invoked by nonprofit theorists. In fulfilling the service provider role, nonprofits can deviate from the uniformity of government agencies providing services, and, they have more freedom to cater to minority preferences (Anheier, 2005).

The vanguard or innovation role also comes into play with regard to services as nonprofits can develop and test interventions for future adoption by government. Innovation is a function in business associated with the competitive edge; just as successful for-profit organisations strive for innovation to maintain competitive advantage, so too nonprofit organisations seek innovation to serve their missions (McDonald, 2007, p. 258). Nonprofit organisations are considered the ideal source for innovation in the first place as ‘they have a focus that allows them to forfeit short-term profit because of longer-term focus on the greater good’ (Moulton & Eckerd, 2012, p. 675). In their advocacy role, nonprofits give voice to particularistic interests and serve as critics and watchdogs of government with the aim of effecting change in social policies (Anheier, 2005).

Nonprofits are value-driven organisations (Anheier, 2005; Donoghue et al, 2006). Literature on the role of voluntary organisations in society highlights the importance of values as the characteristic that sets them apart from business (profit motive) and government (exercise of power). Values, according to Jeavons (2008, p. 10) drives the work of nonprofit organisations setting the sector apart as the organisational realm where the ‘bottom line’ is value-driven. Not only are values central to the work, they are played out, he argues, through elements of advocacy, service and operations. In the case of services, ‘the kind of services we provide, and the choices we make about what services to provide, are themselves expressions of values.’ (p. 14)



Finally, in reviewing the characteristics of nonprofit organisations, their status as resource dependent organisation is a fundamental consideration. Resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), posits that organisations must manage rather than be controlled by their dependencies. Effective organisations are those that identify, appropriately respond to and continually adapt their strategies to the resource environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Resource dependency theory implies that nonprofits relying on a revenue source tend to mirror the behaviour and structure of that source over time (Anheier, 2005, p. 189). Froelich (1999) notes that the trend within the nonprofit sector has seen organisations strive to reduce their vulnerability to income uncertainties and the influence of resource providers by moving away from concentrated dependence on a single revenue strategy. Revenue diversification brings new concerns and greater complexity, the author argues, (p. 263) as the ‘wider variety of management tasks diverts more resources from mission-oriented efforts, and the growing number of constraints requires a delicate balance of often conflicting demands’. Moulton and Eckerdt (2012) found evidence that certain resource streams are associated with particular nonprofit roles. One such association included the finding that earned income is negatively associated with performance on the innovation role. This finding, while it sounds counter-intuitive, the authors state, is in line with resource dependency theory as organisations that earn revenue from providing a particular service are less likely to ‘terminate or shift the service to explore potentially more innovative, but costly and risky alternatives unless they have certainty in the revenue streams that enable them to undertake such innovations’ (p. 675).

### **2.5.3 State and nonprofit sector relationship**

Given the nature of nonprofits as resource dependent organisations, the focus of commentary can be clouded by the resource issue, and as is the case in Ireland, the relationship between the State and the voluntary sector tends to be viewed only through a resource lens (Donnelly-Cox et al., 2001, p. 201). The dependence on State funding for their existence, the authors suggest,

inevitably causes tensions and raises questions about the autonomy and independence of voluntary organisations. Similarly, Daly (2008, p. 164) argues that loosening links with the State puts organisations in a stronger position 'to foster and engage in public debate about why, how and to whom they should be accountable, debate which has been largely absent in the Irish context'.

Young (1999, 2000) conceptualised government-nonprofit relations as supplementary, complementary or adversarial. In the first of these, nonprofits address needs not met by government and overlooked or emerging issues. The partnership mode sees nonprofits delivering services financed by government and the adversarial or advocacy role sees nonprofits urging government to make policy changes. In applying this theoretical framework across international contexts, the author suggests multi-layered and changing pattern of interaction are the most useful lens in understanding the processes and evolution of such relationships (2000, p. 150).

Historically, in Ireland the nonprofit sector's relationship with the State could be described as 'informal, ill-defined and contradictory' (Keenan, 2008a). However, beginning in the late 1990s, significant change in relationships between state agencies and community and voluntary sector organisations took place involving more formalised structures and processes. Included were greater compliance requirements such as setting of standards for service delivery, the increased practice of tendering, the use of contracts and service level agreements and a focus on quantifying effectiveness of outcomes (2008a, p.18). The trend toward greater formalisation continued with the Charities Act 2009 that provided a regulatory framework for charities, completing a period in which 'in the space of a decade, the Irish non-profit sector had assumed a formal and regulated space in Irish society' (Donnelly-Cox & Cannon, 2010, p. 338). Greater constraints have been noted within the context of Service Level Agreements which preclude funds being used 'to obtain changes in the law or related government policies, or campaigns whose

primary purpose is to persuade people to adopt a particular view' (Harvey, 2009, p. 31).

In policy terms, the White Paper *Supporting Voluntary Activity* (2000) sets out the framework for statutory-voluntary relations. It established a formal interaction between the State and the community and voluntary sector and is widely regarded as important in several respects. It marked a significant development in recognising the role of the sector in contributing to civil society stating that 'an active Community and Voluntary sector contributes to a democratic, pluralist society, provides opportunities for the development of decentralised and participative structures and fosters a climate in which the quality of life can be enhanced for all' (p.10). This is a fundamental shift that incorporates a broader role for the sector than the service-delivery aspect (Daly, 2008; Donoghue & Laragy, 2010; Harvey, 2008). Keenan (2008a, p.32) attributes its importance to the recognition of the 'societal role' of the sector, a key shift and counterbalance to what he characterises as preference for statutory funding agencies to view community and voluntary agencies in a limited capacity as service providers 'without the benefit of a wider and visionary expression of the value of voluntary activity to the wellbeing of society as a whole'. For the first time, the government recognised the advocacy role undertaken by the voluntary sector (Donoghue & Laragy, 2010 p. 117). In the area of funding, it established that resources will be available to the sector 'for mutually agreed programmes of activities and where these programmes are consistent with Government policies and objectives, or where other public interest criteria apply' (p.40). In practice, this took the form of Section 65 grants under which services are provided on the basis of being similar or ancillary to state services.

Interestingly, the White Paper attributed a special, innovation role to the community and voluntary sector in 'developing new and innovative responses to social needs, very often with statutory funding' (p. 41), including pilot projects. It stated that the Government is keen to mainstream the lessons from successful pilot initiatives, as resources allow, by:

- Providing continuing support for the innovative work of the sector;
- State agencies taking on direct provision of previously piloted services;
- Incorporating the lessons of pilot projects into local and national policy development.

#### **2.5.4 Advocacy**

Fundamentally, the importance of an advocacy role is aligned with the democratic deficit function in society (Hindess, 2002; Frumkin, 2002; Onyx et al, 2010). Nonprofit advocacy provides an important counterbalance to the flaws of representative democracy and an instrument for tasks that the community views as important (Frumkin, 2002). According to Jenkins, among nonprofit organisations ‘Advocacy is a question of articulating a position and mobilising support for it’ (2006 p. 309). In this regard, he notes that actual policy influence is less critical than ensuring a broad set of views are taken into account.

Advocacy is a broad topic encompassing a range of strategies and activities. Forms of advocacy range from intervening on behalf of individuals to systemic advocacy (Jenkins, 2006) that seeks to advance the collective interest of a particular group through influencing the political elite to changing the systems (legislative, policy, practice). Reid (2000) differentiates between ‘political’ advocacy focused on government decision-makers and ‘social’ advocacy that seeks to influence public opinion, change policies of private institutions and encourage civic participation. The advocacy of interest in this thesis is advocacy that sought wider policy change or reform, in other words, the intersection between policy influence and advocacy. The section concentrates on advocacy in the literature that addresses the formulation of advocacy as a strategy for policy change, followed by a brief overview of the issues faced by organisations in relation to advocacy in Ireland

The use of the term ‘advocacy’ is problematic. As demonstrated in the literature, it is broadly invoked to encompass a myriad of activities including public education and awareness raising, research, use of media, lobbying, and increasing civic participation (Andrews & Edwards, 2004). Narrower definitions of what is meant by advocacy view it as primarily lobbying or direct communication with elected representatives (LeRoux & Goerdel, 2009; Berry & Arons, 2003). On a practical level, advocacy in whatever form is the means to an end for nonprofit organisations both fundamental to and an instrument in achieving their mission (Frumkin, 2002). Nonprofit organisations, to some degree, engage in explicit or implicit forms of advocacy even if they do not characterise their activities as such. For instance, Jenkins (2006, p. 309) points out that nonprofits are often involved in negotiations over the implementation of government service programmes as well as civic advocacy activities without actually referring to ‘advocacy’.

#### *Advocacy for policy change and foundation strategies*

Policy advocacy according to Reid (2000, p. 3) refers to advocacy that influences government policymaking. She differentiated this from ‘society-centered’ advocacy, a domain in which nonprofits focus efforts outside government in ‘shaping public opinion, setting priorities for the public agenda and mobilising civic voice. Walker (1991) distinguished between types of advocacy as ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ strategies; the former focused on effecting change within the political system and the latter on influencing the wider public agenda.

Among foundations, grantmaking in support of advocacy activities is on the rise in Europe (Leat, 2008). According to a 2012 report on advocacy strategies undertaken by European foundations, advocacy can be broadly interpreted as ‘any activities aimed to influence policy implementation and change’ (Montanaro 2012, p. 2). Montanaro differentiates between advocacy and lobbying as ‘while lobbying is driven by private, commercial or political party agendas, many foundations see advocacy as the pursuit of public-benefit-related issues, within a public policy framework’ (2012, p.3). Among

European foundations, funding advocacy is seen as instrumental in increasing impact and broadening the scope for change beyond immediate recipients. Instead of converting nonprofit resources into units of service on a one-to-one basis, advocacy work takes a small number of resources and tries to multiply their impact by changing public priorities (Keenan & Montague, 2010, p. 19).

For many foundations dedicated to achieving sustainable social change, the use of advocacy to inform public policy or systems change is an important grantmaking strategy (Weiss, 2007). A critical step in this ‘political advocacy’ is identifying who has influence on policy in a specific area and developing relationships with them. Using the idea of pathways to explain how advocacy can affect policy Stachowiak (2013) developed a useful categorisation summarising of six theories that explain “pathways” to advocacy:

***Large leaps theory:*** Significant changes in policy occur when the right conditions are in place. Such conditions include an issue being defined differently; new actors becoming involved; the issue receives heightened media and public attention.

***Coalition theory:*** Policy change happens through coordinated activity among a range of individuals with the same core policy beliefs. Coalitions typically explore multiple avenues for change (e.g. Legal advocacy and changing public opinion).

***Policy windows or agenda setting:*** Policy change occurs through a window of opportunity when two or more of the components of the policy process converge, namely the ways a problem is defined, the ideas generated to address problems and political factors including changes in the national mood or in elected officials.

***Messaging and frameworks theory:*** Individuals policy preferences will vary depending on how options are framed or presented. Accordingly, promising strategies include issue framing message development and media advocacy.

***Power politics or power elites theory:*** Policy change is made by working directly with those with power to make or influence decisions. Critical

strategies include relationship development with key individuals who have influence.

***Grassroots or Community organising theory:*** Policy change occurs through collective action by members of the community

Several features have been noted with regard to the climate for engaging in advocacy in Ireland. Compared to other countries, the accessibility of public representatives, both to individuals and to community and voluntary organisations is a feature (Harvey, 2009, p. 9). A report examining the investments of the One Foundation found predominance for incremental, long-term approaches with commitments over implementation (Hodgett & Sweeney, 2010, p. 4). It also noted a surplus of advocacy capacity in some areas. In considering the various strategies open to funders of advocacy in Ireland, the two organisations choose a power elites theory of advocacy to achieve their goals.

For Irish organisations engaged in advocacy, key findings of a study by Keenan & Montague's (2010) included:

- From 2008 the vast majority of organisations believed the environment for advocacy to be more challenging; and that State funding imposed some element of constraint on their advocacy activities.
- The children's sector is one where there is positive engagement with the State.
- Building relationships and trust is critical in engaging with policymakers.
- While advocacy organisations are indispensable intermediaries in a democracy the space they occupy is often contested

The existence of organisations engaging in advocacy is considered essential to a fully functioning democracy. Whether implicit or explicit, insider or outside strategies, the focus is on some form of change to the political system or public priorities.

### **2.5.5 Summary**

The review above of a body of literature concentrated in the area of nonprofit sector theory and practice has revealed a number of insights relevant to this study. These include understandings of how the nonprofit sector works, how it is funded and the relationship between the sector and the state. Studies point to the sector's unique characteristics, the constraints under which it operates and the factors that differentiate it from the state and the marketplace. Debates on the distinctive role occupied by nonprofits highlight the need to go beyond the service delivery role and to incorporate the advocacy, innovation and civic functions they occupy in society. In this regard, nonprofits are perceived as highly valuable for their contribution to a pluralist society recognised for their role in developing new responses to social needs.

As outlined in the literature, nonprofit organisations are resource-dependent organisations. Lessening of the links with the state through resource diversification on the other hand strengthens the positions of nonprofit organisations to engage in functions other than service delivery. In Ireland, the state has primarily viewed nonprofits as service providing organisations. However, this is changing to reflect the broader role and contribution to the public good. Tensions inherent in the relationships between state and voluntary agencies are manifested in the recognition of the more diverse roles of nonprofits, while at the same time, imposing greater regulation of activities. Finally, the literature in the field of nonprofit advocacy is valuable in elaborating the elements and objectives associated with different forms of advocacy, particularly political advocacy with which this study is concerned.

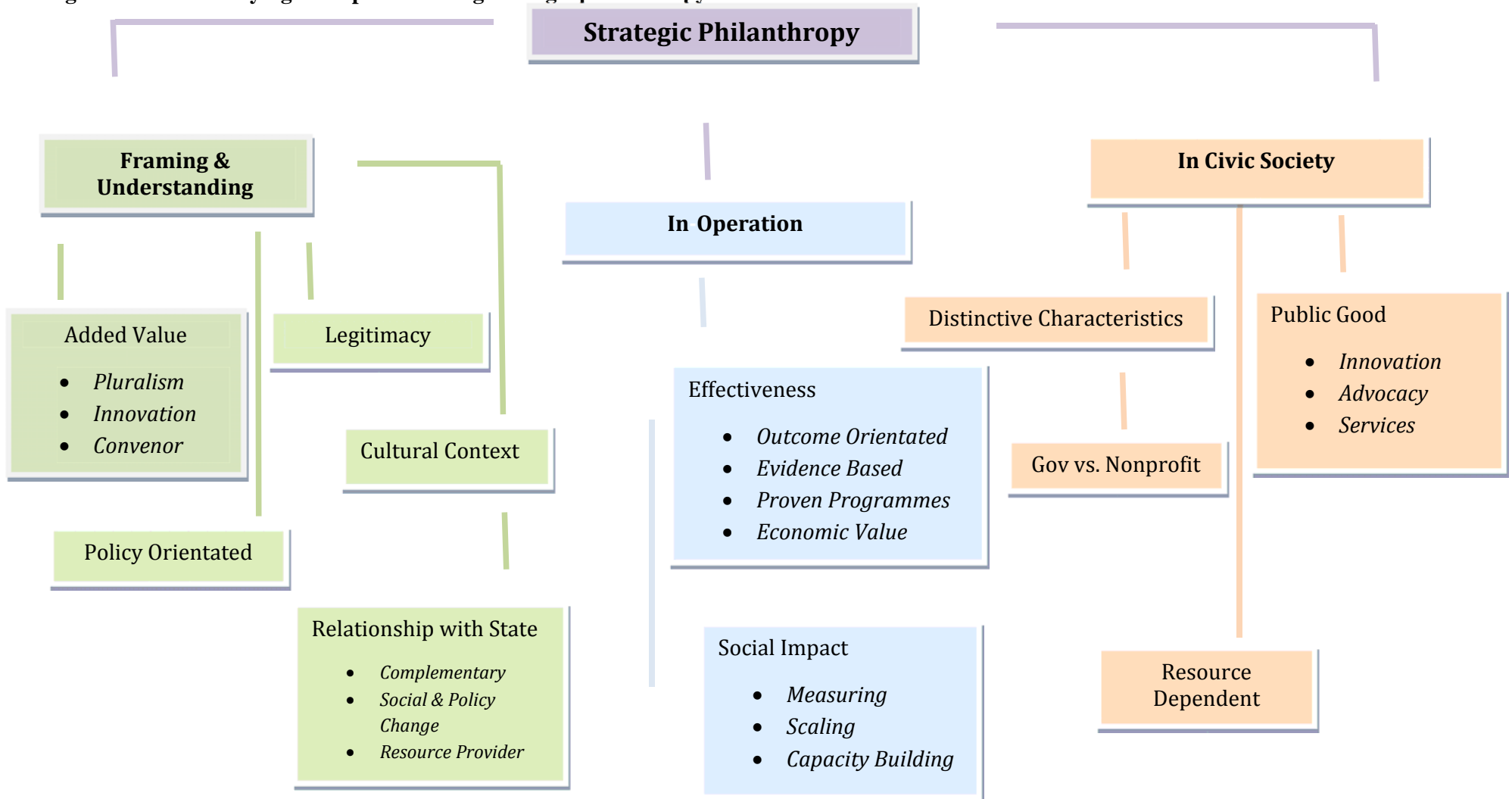
## **2.6 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the relevant literature pertaining to the study across three domains associated with the research objectives. The focus has been on (1) conceptualising, framing, and defining philanthropy; (2) understanding philanthropy as a form of social investment and (3) contextualising the



operation of foundations as actors in civic society. It has introduced a set of key concepts, informing debates and principles to understand philanthropic intervention in society and to distinguish the parameters of strategic philanthropy as a distinctive mode of engagement. The literature on roles and functions offers a useful perspective on the legitimacy accorded to philanthropic actors and draws attention to the ways in which philanthropy interacts with the external environment. Such factors are critical in interpreting how the goals associated with policy engagement are determined, implemented and interpreted. An examination of the literature on philanthropy as a form of social investment informs understanding of the practice of strategic philanthropy in the context of current debates and norms about the best way to achieve impact. It includes key concepts such as scale that inform the aspect of the thesis that examines the implementation of strategic grantmaking as applied to the field. Finally, a review of the literature on relationships operating within civil society and between nonprofit actors and the state in Ireland provides a framework for understanding the dynamics taking place with the broad infrastructure of organisations serving children and youth in Ireland. These themes, illustrated in a summative format in Figure 2.6 below will be considered throughout the discussion chapters.

Figure 2.6 Underlying concepts informing strategic philanthropy



## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology designed and details the approach adopted in order to address the objectives of this study. **Section 3.2** summarises the rationale for the study and reiterates its aims and objectives as outlined in Chapter One. In **Section 3.3**, theoretical and methodological considerations in the research design are discussed and the research position established by the author is addressed. Issues relating to the implementation of the study are presented in **Section 3.4** including sampling, data collection, ethics and methods of analysis. The final section discusses the limitations and challenges encountered

### **3.2 Rationale, aim and objectives**

This thesis is an exploratory study of strategic philanthropy as experienced by the children and youth sector in Ireland. As outlined in Chapter One, significant investment has taken place in programmes for children and youth focusing attention on a form of philanthropic intervention that has introduced a new stakeholder, the private charitable foundation, into the infrastructure for service and policy development. The style of strategic philanthropy practiced has been accompanied by impact-driven, policy oriented approaches to funding. In Ireland, philanthropy is recognised as a relatively recent phenomenon (Donoghue, 2007; Donnelly-Cox et al., 2015). In a culture marked by both lack of engagement with foundations and scant public debate on philanthropic intervention in social issues, the study addresses a need to build an understanding of this new form of philanthropy.

The overarching aim is to explore the emergence of strategic philanthropy as a distinctive approach to investment and to consider stakeholder perspectives on how this engagement has been experienced by and impacted upon the children and youth sector. As such, it shares the characteristics of exploratory research which Patton (2002, p. 193) identified as appropriate for areas in which little is known about the nature of the phenomenon under study and the inquiry provides a reasonable beginning for future research. Key concerns include the degree to which strategic philanthropy is culturally accepted, considerations as to how it fits into the policy environment and questions

about the extent to which it is capable of being implemented in the way intended. The study has four related objectives:

1. To examine the rationale adopted by philanthropy in identifying particular areas within the children and youth sector as the focus of their investment.
2. To explore the experiences of stakeholders in implementing the strategic approach adopted by philanthropic foundations.
3. To determine the influence of such investments on the policy discourse for children and youth.
- 4 To consider the implications of the approach to funding for children and young people examined in the study and make recommendations for the future of philanthropic-state engagement.

Most research studies, it is now acknowledged, have their orientation in the practical interests and the particular social and historical context of the researcher (Flick, 1998, p. 49). The author of this study has a diverse background in the philanthropic sector. This included, during the 1990s, working in a research and fundraising role for an organisation representing foundation staff and trustees, the National Network of Grantmakers in the United States. In Ireland, she has worked in the fundraising field at a University foundation, and at the time of the study, is employed as the manager of strategic development at the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at NUI, Galway that has been the recipient of philanthropic investment. The experience garnered from operating within and outside the world of philanthropy in the respective roles of ‘grantmaker’ and ‘grantseeker’, it is hoped, provides a stance that is open to the perspectives of the different stakeholders. Nonetheless, steps have been taken, both practically and philosophically, to ensure that self-awareness is part of the study (see section 3.3.2 on Reflexivity).

### **3.3 Study design**

#### **3.3.1 Theoretical considerations**

In this study, the research design was based on developing an appropriate methodology to answer the research question. Bryman (2008, p. 31) distinguishes between research design and research method, in which the former provides a framework for and the

latter a technique for the collection and analysis of data. The choice of research design, he notes, reflects the priority given to a range of dimensions including the importance attached to factors such as establishing causal connections, understanding behaviour or social phenomena and their interconnections. Underlying the research objective in this study is a ‘commonsense causal’ approach (Huberman & Miles, 1994, p. 434) where the emphasis of inquiry for a particular phenomenon poses questions about, the conditions under which it appears; what facilitates its occurrence, the conditions present for it to have an outcome and the factors upon which variation can depend. Such lines of inquiry are used to deepen understanding of the experience of and the potential for philanthropic investment. Primarily, questions revolved around meanings and perceptions such as how do the stakeholders view the philanthropic process? How are their actions received and perceived by other stakeholders?

In selecting the appropriate research design, consideration was given to the categories or overarching philosophical systems guiding social science inquiry and their methodological implications. In social science research, the principles and standards that guide a study and, in turn, inform the selection of methods come with an expectation of transparency. The choice of research design is informed by ontological and epistemological perspectives. Ontology is the study of being and understanding *what is* (Crotty, 1998); it raises basic questions about the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). Ontological debate centers on the nature of social reality and whether it exists independently of human interpretation. The two primary ontological positions are *objectivism* and *constructionism*. Objectivism asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence independent of social actors and should be considered objective entities with an external reality. A constructionist ontology, on the other hand, maintains that social phenomena and their meaning are continually being produced through social action and should be considered as constructions built up from the perceptions of social actors (Bryman, 2008 pp. 18-19).

Epistemology is concerned with how knowledge is gained or in understanding ‘*how we know what we know*’ (Crotty, 1998 p. 9). It provides a philosophical basis for determining ‘what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure they are

both adequate and legitimate' (Maynard 1994, p. 10 quoted in Crotty). A central issue in epistemological debate is whether the social world can be studied according to the same principles as the natural sciences (Bryman, 2008, p. 13). The positivist paradigm stems from an objectivist epistemology; it holds that the natural and social sciences can and should apply the same kinds of approach to the collection of data and interpretation (Bryman, 2008). Positivism is closely linked to empirical science and to a conviction that scientific knowledge 'contrasts sharply with opinions, beliefs, feelings and assumptions that we gain in non-scientific ways' (Crotty, p. 27). Above all, positivism adheres to the notion of objective reality. Knowledge is arrived at through the gathering of facts that provide the basis for laws (Bryman, 2008, p. 13) with the focus on observation and measurement of social phenomena (Sarantakos, 2013, p 32). A central principle of the positivist approach is deductive reasoning in which the objective of a study is to test or verify a theory rather than develop it. Favoured by quantitative researchers, the tools employed are instruments for use in measuring or observing attitudes or behaviours of participants with scores used to confirm or dispute a theory (Creswell, 2003, p. 126). The research process is one in which the researcher is value-free and set apart from the subjects.

Constructivism operates on the premise that the study of the social and human world differs from that of the natural world and therefore requires different methods of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). Kvale (1996, p. 11) underscores that such approaches to qualitative research methods are to be perceived as not 'soft technology' added to the 'existing hard-core quantitative arsenal of the social sciences' but rather a new mode of understanding that involves 'alternative conceptions of social knowledge, of meaning, reality and truth' in social science research. This study, focusing on how key actors in the philanthropic process perceive and interpret their own and others behaviours, adopts a broadly constructivist approach. In the constructionist perspective, 'meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting' (Crotty, 1998 p. 43) Meaning is not fixed, rather it emerges out of people's interaction with the world (Sarantakos 2013, pp. 36-37). Constructionism is founded on a belief that objective reality does not exist. The social constructionism worldview holds that culture and society play an important role in constructing meaning. The subjective meanings individuals develop are negotiated socially, formed through interaction with

others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives (Crotty 1998). Knowledge is a shared process in which the researcher plays a part and is not expected to be value-free and external as with positivism. In the constructionist approach, the emphasis is on discovery rather than verification; findings are co-created rather than theories or hypotheses being proven or falsified.

The key process that facilitates constructionism, Sarantakos notes, is interpretation (2013, p. 40). Interpretivism has been described as the framework within which qualitative research is conducted (Sarantakos, 2013) or as a contrasting epistemology to positivism (Bryman, 2008). The interpretative approach has its roots in the concept of *Verstehen* or understanding of social life connected to Max Weber. Interpretivism is a theory of knowledge that highlights the views, opinions and perceptions of people as they are experienced and expressed in everyday life. The qualitative researcher is interested in the subjective meaning, 'namely the way in which people make sense of their world and how they assign meaning to it' (Sarantakos, p. 40). The basis of the framework is on social action as being meaningful to actors and therefore needing to be interpreted from their point of view. The priority for research inquiry is understanding social phenomenon from the actors' own perspectives; describing the world as experienced by the subjects and with the assumption that reality is what people perceive it to be (Kvale 1996, p. 52). There is no expectation that objective reality can be captured; rather the approach is contextual with an emphasis on rich and deep data collection.

In this study, the different stakeholders in philanthropic investment (foundation funders, statutory agencies and recipient organisations) come with different experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon of which they all were part. The core of the study is an exploration of the accounts and interpretations of the various actors and the interactions between participants. The adoption of a constructivist perspective was selected as appropriate as it placed the emphasis of inquiry on capturing and comparing these perceptions and on interpreting the effects of different stakeholder perceptions on the attainment of goals.

In such types of inquiry, the researcher does not attempt to determine the value or reality of each particular set of stakeholders, but rather, to make an interpretation between the different meanings (Patton, 2002, p. 97-8). Aspects of this study are informed by a phenomenological approach to inquiry where the focus is on examining the meaning of several individuals of their 'lived experience' of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, p. 59). In a phenomenological study, the primary focus is on eliciting how individuals who experience a phenomenon feel about, judge and make sense of it to others (Patton 2002). The central questions involve asking participants: What have they experienced in terms of the phenomenon (textual description) and what situations have influenced the participants' experience of the phenomenon (context). Another element of phenomenology, the concept of bracketing or *epoche* where researchers set aside their experiences as much as possible to take a fresh perspective on the phenomenon in question was considered important given the personal experience of the author in the field of philanthropy. It consists of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's own experiences and collecting data from several persons who have experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology as interpreted by Patton has become associated with a wide and divergent range of approaches, including Creswell who views it as a major research qualitative tradition. Patton distinguished between a phenomenological study and a phenomenological perspective (2002, p. 107). The former is focused on the descriptions of what people experience and the latter employs a general phenomenological perspective that elucidates the importance of capturing people's experience of the world. This study adopted the latter position using a phenomenological perspective based on the criteria that Creswell (2007) identified as suited to phenomenological inquiry:

- A type of problem in which it is important to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon
- It is necessary to do so in order to develop a deeper understanding of the features of a phenomenon
- To fully understand how participants' view the phenomenon, researchers must bracket out their own experience



- Data collection is through in-depth interviews with participants who have experienced the phenomenon (recommended 5-25)
- Questions in data gathering will lead to textual and structural description of experiences

Table 3.3.1 below, adopted from Patton (2002), Creswell (2007) and Moustakas (1994) summarises the key features of phenomenology that were used in this study. In particular, the phenomenological perspective was useful in informing the approach taken in data analysis (Section 3.5) and in reflexivity (Section 3.3.2).

**Table 3.3.1 Phenomenological perspective: key characteristics**

<i>Epoche</i>	A process undertaken by the researcher eliminating preconceptions, assumptions personal involvement with the subject material
Phenomenological reduction /bracketing	Bracketing out the world and the researcher's own experiences
Horizontalisation – identifying invariant themes	All aspects of the data are treated with equal value and examined. Highlighting significant statements that provide understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon
Clusters of meaning	Developed from these significant statements
Textual description	What the participant experienced in terms of the phenomenon
Structural description or imaginative variation	Description of the context or setting that influenced how they experienced the phenomenon

### 3.3.2 Reflexivity

Social constructionists hold that any qualitative research is a co-constituted account between the researcher and the researched and the interrelationship fundamentally shapes results. Such a view involves a shift in understanding of data collection from something objective that is accomplished through detached scrutiny to recognising how

we actively construct knowledge. The concept of reflexivity, in which, researchers 'engage in explicit, self-aware analysis of their own role' (Finlay, 2002, p. 531), is considered a central element of qualitative research. It challenges the researcher to take ownership of their own perspective, honour those of others and acknowledge bias and limitations (Patton, 2002, p. 65). Unlike quantitative research, where the researcher has little or no relationship with the subjects under study, the intrinsic position of the qualitative researcher in the process imbues them with considerable influence in the methods selected for and the interpretation of data (Bryman, p. 391; Finlay, 2002, p. 531). On a purely pragmatic level, the choice of inquiry is innately influenced by the researcher's personal history, social background and cultural assumptions (Creswell, 2008, p. 56) and this worldview shapes the research question, methods and even results (Lynch, 2008).

As noted by Probst and Berenson, (2014, p. 816) the ways reflexivity is understood within qualitative research include:

.. as awareness of the researcher's personal biases, attitudes, emotional reactions, and motivations; as acknowledgement of the effects of social positioning (e.g. class, gender, race), context, and power relations; as the inter-subjective dynamics of the researcher-participant relationship; and as the emergent or constructed nature of knowledge.

Reflexivity offers potential to increase the integrity of qualitative research by evaluating how subjective elements influence the data collection and analysis and can be viewed as an opportunity rather than a problem in research process (Finlay, 2002, p. 532). Lynch (2008) believes it is especially important for constructivist researchers to learn to incorporate reflexivity into their research. The researcher's primary duties include: (1) beginning from a position of respect towards the research subject, (2) maintaining openness, not only to cultural difference, but also to evidence or sentiments contrary to one's proclivities and expectations, and (3) constantly reassessing these tendencies and expectations in light of the research experience. (2008, p. 718). Finlay (2002) offers suggestions that include consciousness of areas of shared understanding and areas of divergence; guarding against assuming common language and understanding and the use of field notes throughout the process.

Probst and Berenson's (2014, p. 820) study of the use of reflexivity among social workers concluded that 'participants did not view reflexivity as a set of techniques but rather as an attitude or 'way of being' during the research process'. Reflexivity practices included formal actions participants took to document observations both during the research process and retrospectively including memos, journals and return to the raw data. The use of audit trails and 'member checks' during the course of the interviewing can also come under the frame of data verification exercises that are recommended as standard good practice. It is not the exercise that makes an activity reflexive, the authors argue, but rather the 'inner attitude with which the activity is undertaken' (p. 825).

The process of reflexive analysis is based on an ongoing, dynamic, and subjective self-awareness throughout the research process rather than a single event (Patton, 2002; Finlay, 2002, p. 533). It involves attention to what Patton highlights as a neutrality in which the researcher enters the research process with no particular perspective or predetermined theory (2002, p. 51). Phenomenologists apply reflexive analysis in the research process. The *epoche* is a step in phenomenological analysis that involves the researcher setting aside 'prejudgements, biases and preconceived ideas about things' (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). The process, he states, does or cannot eliminate reality but rather the 'natural attitude, the biases of everyday knowledge as the basis for truth and reality.' In this way, it involves seeing events, things and people in a fresh light and encourages detachment.

Acknowledging the critics of reflexivity who argue that the method presumes a critical ability to identify subjective motivations and feelings, Finlay suggests that 'in the end reflexivity can only be viewed as one way to begin to unravel the richness, contradictions and complexities of intersubjective dynamics' (2002, p. 542). Fontana & Frey (2000, p. 647) point out that interviewing subjects has become a routine, almost unnoticed part of everyday life, social scientists are more likely to recognise that they are 'interactional encounters and that the nature of the social dynamic of the interview can shape the nature of the knowledge generated'.

Using the guiding principle that reflexivity is a way of critically assessing a number of elements of the research process and using the principles and practices referred to above, the researcher in this study applied a number of strategies throughout. These included awareness of the need to review and reanalyse data; keeping a methodological log of research decisions; and examining the themes and patterns emerging for unconscious motivations and implicit biases in the researcher's approach.

### **3.3.3 Methodological basis for the research design**

Qualitative methodologies are generally regarded as supporting the constructivist approach. This study, with the aim of capturing an in-depth understanding of a specialised form of philanthropy, requires participants to provide their views on (1) the choices made (2) their experiences in implementing and (3) their reflections on the influence of this phenomenon. Central to the research design is the importance of participants own accounts of events and experiences of the phenomenon of interest. This concern took precedence in the selection of a qualitative methodology.

In contrast to quantitative research, where theories or hypotheses are tested, in qualitative research, concepts and theories *emerge* from the data collection (Bryman 2008, p. 394). Qualitative inquiry, with the emphasis on exploration and discovery, has a particular orientation toward inductive logic (Patton, 2002, p. 55). Denzin & Lincoln (2000, p. 3) describe qualitative research as a situated activity that places the observer in the world in which they use interpretative material including field notes, interviews, and recordings to understand phenomena 'in terms of the meanings people bring to them'. The central activity of qualitative inquiry is 'getting into the field' namely direct and personal contact with people under study in their own environments (Patton, 2002, p. 48). Qualitative research designs are naturalistic involving real world settings where participants are studied in places where they are comfortable and familiar.

Qualitative data consist of quotations, observations and excerpts from documents (Patton, p. 47). The notion of the researcher as *bricoleur* producing a bricolage, 'a pieced-together, close knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation' is one that Denzin and Lincoln (2000) believe is readily applied to qualitative research. The person is adept at a range of tasks including interviewing,

observing, interpreting documents, and self-reflection and, the bricoleur is aware that research is an interactive process in which factors such as history, social class, and gender are present (2000, p. 6). A key characteristic of qualitative research is that it is open-ended and flexible (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002). In qualitative research, interviewers are expected to engage in open discussion with the respondent and to maintain a 'stimulating but not dominating role' (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 280). The researcher is non-manipulative and non-controlling taking care to adopt a data collection and fieldwork strategy that provides for open-ended inquiry that does not seek to influence the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002, p. 39-40).

The qualitative method selected for the study was through interviewing. In qualitative interviewing, that goal can be seen as 'aiming to understand the meaning of respondents' experiences and life worlds' (Warren, 2002, p. 83) or to find out things that cannot be directly observed, for instance feelings, thoughts, intentions and behaviours that indicate 'how people have organised the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world' (Patton, 2002 p. 341). With objectives that derive interpretations from respondents, an open-ended approach to interviewing and fluidity in design are recommended. The literature attests to a move towards understanding via conversation with the subjects (Kvale, 1996 Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In this kind of interaction, subjects not only answer questions prepared by an expert but 'themselves formulate in a dialogue their own conceptions of their lived world' (Kvale, 1996, p. 11).

### **3.4 Implementing the study**

Having outlined the intent of the research design and relevant theoretical perspectives underlying the methodology, this section focuses on the process of implementing the study. The preparatory steps undertaken in advance of the fieldwork including selection procedures and criteria are outlined. This is followed by a discussion of the key elements of the interview design as well as ethical and practical considerations. Details of the process of data collection are presented and the methods used to analyse the data generated outlined. The section concludes by considering the challenges and limitations of the research.

### **3.4.1 Sampling**

Selecting and approaching participants to participate in the study required a high degree of advance planning and assessment of criteria for participation. With qualitative interviewing Flick (1998) underscores that sampling decisions are based on a choice that depends on the aim of the study and whether this entails covering as wide or as deep a field as possible. The former seeks to represent the field in its diversity in order to present ‘evidence on the distribution of ways of seeing or experiencing certain things’ while the latter seeks to permeate the field by concentrating on certain structures or examples within it (Flick, 1998 p. 71). These aims, he cautions, have implications for the research strategy and should be seen as alternatives rather than approaches to combine.

In order to elicit the views of key stakeholders who could provide in-depth information on the experience of philanthropy, a purposeful (or purposive) sampling approach was employed. Such a framework demands that the researcher think critically about the parameters of the population being studied and choose a sample ‘because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested’ (Kvale, 1996 p. 141). The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in the selection of ‘information rich’ cases for study and in the level of in-depth understanding of the participants (Patton, p. 230). Among the criteria for selecting ‘meaningful cases’ is the interviewees’ knowledge or experience of the issue as a primary consideration alongside capacity to reflect and articulate views and time and readiness to participate (Flick, p. 70).

The study accorded priority to individuals considered to be experts in the field. The expert interview (Flick, 1998) is where the interviewee is of interest in their capacity of ‘being an expert for a certain field of activity’ (p. 92). In seeking to interview high level or expert participants, negotiating access is an issue. In this context, background similarity, Sarantakos notes, makes entry into the respondents’ world easier and ‘promotes trust, understanding and cooperation’ (2013 p. 288). The process of gaining access to ‘elite’ subjects as experts are sometimes called, requires a mix of strategies that include ingenuity, contacts, careful negotiation and circumstance (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002, p. 305.)

As previously mentioned, the author of this study had prior experience in research management in the philanthropic sector in the United States. This included a study of philanthropic elites (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002). The definition of philanthropic elites included wealthy individuals but also representatives of institutes of wealth, such as foundations and their leaders, as well as professionals and advisors who work closely with them (p. 303). This characterisation of elites was in turn influenced by the term *strategic elites* that Suzanne Keller (1965, p. 20) identified as individuals belonging to certain leadership groups that have a ‘general and sustained social impact’ to be found in the worlds of business and politics. These parameters operate in the context of the present study where the choice of participants prioritised directors of nonprofit organisations and government departments. The study design provided for a three-layer strand of stakeholder participants that included representatives of philanthropic organisations; leaders of organisations or programmes in receipt of foundation investment and representatives from the statutory sector with direct experience of engaging with philanthropy.

The underlying selection criteria for all participants, however, concerned their direct experience of philanthropic investment and, importantly, their interaction with representatives of other categories of stakeholders in the negotiation, implementation or assessment of the philanthropic process. In selecting organisations to approach, an issue arose related to the possibility of conflict of interest. As previously mentioned, the author of this study is employed at a university-based, research centre that has both received philanthropic investment. At the time of the fieldwork, the organisation was engaged in the evaluation of programmes funded under the Atlantic Philanthropies Prevention and Early Intervention programme (the programme is described in Chapter Four). As such, some potential organisations to interview were in a client-commissioner relationship with the University. While the author is employed in a fundraising and communications role and is not directly engaged in research on any of the projects, care was exercised in how individuals were approached to avoid any perception of a conflict of interest and to eliminate the possibility of what could be seen as ‘inside information’ entering into the perspective of the researcher.

### **3.4.2 Participant selection**

Potential participants were identified in a variety of ways. Some individuals were clearly identifiable as having relevant expertise and /or were known to the researcher or the thesis supervisor. The study also adopted the strategy of snowball sampling, a technique in which the researcher makes contact with a small group of people relevant to the research topic and uses them to establish contacts with others (Sarantakos, 2013; Bryman, 2008). Like other snowball samples, the respondents were interviewed and then asked to recommend further participants for the study. A common feature of sampling, and one experienced in this study, is that the process tends to begin with acquaintances and move on to strangers (Warren, 2002 p. 88). Participants were initially approached by email with a request for the researcher to make contact and invite them to formally participate in the study. Following agreement, the researcher provided a Participant Information Sheet outlining the purpose and scope of the research (Appendix One). The response rate to the request for interview was high with only two organisations declining to participate by not responding following an initial approach and two follow up attempts in writing.

One issue not anticipated at the beginning of the project related to classification; in practice, the participants in the study defied singular categorisation. Given the small size of both the philanthropic and children and youth sectors in Ireland, representatives of one group may have experienced other roles. For instance, some participants in the study acted as both advisors to and recipients of philanthropic funding at different times in the period under study. Or, within the category of philanthropy, aside from the two main funders (Atlantic Philanthropies and the One Foundation) representatives of smaller organisations that also made grants in the field themselves received funding from the larger organisations, putting them at times in the “grantseeker” rather than recipient role. The researcher accounted for this disparity by clarifying with participants prior to the meeting the capacity in which they were being interviewed and the particular lens through which their perspective would be sought and reflected in the study. However, inevitably participants frequently spoke with different “voices” or perspectives at different points in the interview.



The study is based on 27 in-depth interviews (see Table 3.4.1.1). As outlined above, stakeholders were divided into three distinct categories:

- (1) **Philanthropists**, comprised of staff at foundations, representatives of the philanthropic sector, and advisors to philanthropy
- (2) **Beneficiaries** of investment in nonprofit organisations
- (3) **State actors** with policymaking responsibility for children and youth.

All participants occupied positions of seniority with decision-making responsibilities within their organisation or sector. With the exception of two participants in the philanthropy category all interviewees were selected for their direct experience of the children and youth area. The two outside of the frame were chosen for their specific expertise in inter-governmental and philanthropic sector interaction. The interviewees are coded accordingly in the text with designated letters **PT** (Philanthropist); **B** (Beneficiary); and **PM** (Policymaker) identifying the category alongside a number assigned to each interviewee.

**Table 3.4.2.1 Summary of interview participants**

<b>Participant Group / Sub-Group</b>	<b>No.</b>
Philanthropist = PT	<b><u>10</u></b>
• Foundation Staff	6
• Representative of sector	2
• Consultants/advisors	2
Nonprofit beneficiary staff = B	<b><u>11</u></b>
• CEOs/Directors	5
• Programme Directors	6
State actors/Policymakers = PM	<b><u>6</u></b>
• Senators	2
• Department of Children and Youth Affairs (current and former)	4
<b>Total Interview Participants</b>	<b>27</b>

The philanthropy category included the directors or senior executives of programmes for children and youth, organisation CEOs and advisors to philanthropy with expert knowledge in the children and youth area. The nature of the field is such that the dominance of the two organisations The Atlantic Philanthropies and One Foundation is overwhelming. Given this dominance and the small nature of a potential pool,

attempts were made to reach out to the smaller organisations that make up the foundation field in Ireland, with three organisations participating in the study. However, as stated above, some of the grant programmes of these organisations were themselves funded by one of the two foundations.

This category of statutory representatives included participants at the highest level within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and its predecessor the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. It included the Secretary General (past and present), senior civil servants and two senators. With the primary criteria for this category being experience of direct involvement with the philanthropic sector, the pool of interviewees was extremely limited. However, all of the six individuals targeted as expert interviewees in this category agreed to participate.

The category of funded organisations included a selection of key children and youth organisations that had received significant philanthropic investment (see Table below). Efforts were made to include representation from the children and families (called children below) and the youth sector and to include those organisations receiving the largest grants from philanthropy in each and this was achieved. The table below provides a summary overview of the organisational characteristics for these participants in the study:

**Table 3.4.2.2 Characteristics of NGO participant organisations**

	Children/ Youth	Regional/ National	Philanthropic Intervention	*Funding Base Statutory/Philanthropy
1	Youth	National	Programme (RCT) Service development Capacity building	Combined
2	Children	Regional	Programme (RCT)	Combined
3	Children	National	Programme (RCT)	Combined
4	Children	National	Advocacy	Philanthropy
5	Youth	National	Service expansion	Combined
6	Children	National	Capacity Building Advocacy	Philanthropy
7	Children	National	Programme (RCT) Capacity Building	Combined
8	Youth	National	Advocacy	Primarily statutory
9	Youth	National	Advocacy Service development	Philanthropy
10	Children	Regional	Programme	Combined

\*With regard to the funding base, the designation of funding refers to the status at the time of the interview. The individuals interviewed alluded to their plans or were in the midst of planning to expand their funding base to include statutory streams.

### 3.4.3 Designing the interview guide

In choosing an interview instrument that would best fit the purpose of this study, the format was designed to facilitate an in-depth, semi-structured or ‘conversational’ interview style. Structured interviews involve a particular sequence of standardised questions and response categories are fixed and prescriptive; unstructured interviews contain a number of open ended questions whose wording and order can be changed at will; some involve themes but no pre-set sequence or formulation of questions (Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interviews fall somewhere between the two. The study adopted a semi-structured interview instrument with elements closer to the latter style. This provided a useful format as it offered a structure for interviewing and allowed similar questions to be asked of interviewees in comparable categories while allowing sufficient flexibility to deviate and to emphasise particular topics of relevance.

Kvale (1996, p. 125) describes a semi-structured interview as ‘a sequence of themes to be covered as well as suggested questions’. In the ‘interview guide’ approach topics

and issues are specified in advance with the interviewer deciding the wording and sequencing of questions, a format that facilitates the researcher anticipating logical gaps in data while interviews remain conversational and situational (Patton, 2002, p. 348). A central feature is openness in the approach to changes in the sequence and form of questions in which the interview can be understood as ‘a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 126). This conversation, he is careful to note, differs from the everyday such interaction between people as equal partners, rather, it involves a ‘definite asymmetry of power’ in which the interviewer defines the situation, introduces topics and steers the course of discussion.

Three broad areas of inquiry formed the basis of the interview guide and can be summarised as contextualising, operationalising and legacy or role issues (See Table 3.4.3 below). As the research question was of an exploratory nature and not based on a theory or hypothesis, it was considered important to allow the participants to speak freely and emphasise the issues they felt were important. A generic guide covering the three areas (context, operation and legacy) was prepared for each category and tailored for each organisation.

In designing the interview protocol, care was taken to ensure that questions were devoid of bias and did not involve leading or suggestive questioning. Silverman (2010), for instance, cautions against use of leading questions that communicate the interviewer’s belief about a situation before hearing the respondent’s assessment as well as those that include the use of words that have particular connotations (to the interviewer). Interview schedules were pre-approved by members of the researcher’s Graduate Research Committee in advance of piloting. Two pilot interviews were undertaken in advance of the main study. The primary purpose of the piloting was to explore different styles of questioning.

In Table 3.4.3 below the scope and nature of the questions used in the interview instrument for the study are indicated. Initial questions were of a general nature and asked respondents to give some context to their organisation and their role in it. Such questions proved useful as a way of easing into the interview enabling the respondent to speak on a topic with which they were familiar and comfortable. The questions

grounded the interview in terms of the programmatic priorities and strategic orientation of the organisation in question. At the same time, they provided the opportunity to reflect on the major developments taking place in the national policy arena and the role of philanthropic investment therein.

The next section of the interview focused specifically on the implementation and application of investment approaches within the field. Questions explored the emphasis placed on evidence-based programming and the experiences of organisations in utilising evaluation and performance measurement systems. Respondents were also asked how effective they believed such strategies were and the measures and indicators of success. Questions explored participants' expectations for the future of programmes selected for investment and the specific interactions they had in relation to government adoption of proven or promising models. This section also explored issues of capacity and sustainability including resourcing and income-generation capacity of organisations. The latter regarding income sources and future plans had proved to be an area of some sensitivity in the pilot process. Participants expressed some reluctance to share information in this regard; because this information was not considered essential to the purpose of the study and since it appeared to disrupt the flow of interaction; some of these questions were dropped as a result.

The final section of the interview focused on the learning emerging as a result of philanthropic engagement in the sector. Respondents were asked for their reflections on changes observed and the role of philanthropy in influencing policy and practice in children and youth. This included their views on the policy prioritisation in the child and youth field and the capacity for philanthropy to influence it. Related to this, questions were asked about the role participants believed philanthropy could best occupy in society and the level of intervention appropriate or effective. The interview concluded by asking about the future and potential scale of philanthropy in Ireland as a viable form of social investment for children and youth.

**Table 3.4.3 Interview guide summary**

<b>Research Objective</b>	<b>Interview Question(s)</b>
<i>What was the rationale adopted by philanthropy in identifying particular areas within the children and youth sector as the focus of their investment</i>	<b>CONTEXTUALISING...</b> Strategic orientation of organisation Priority-setting processes and goals Challenges and opportunities Views on public systems serving CYP Changes in policy environment 2000-present
<i>How were the approaches taken in implementing the strategic choices made experienced in the field</i>	<b>OPERATIONALISATING...</b> Impact on organisation development Experiences in using evidence-based models Role of evaluation within organisation Sustainability and capacity issues
<i>What has been the influence of investments on the policy discourse for children and youth</i>	<b>ROLE/ LEGACY...</b> Levels of interaction between sectors Engagement between policymakers Policy options advocated Role for philanthropy in state provision Partnerships philanthropy/government

The detailed questionnaires developed for each of the three stakeholder groups are attached in Appendix Two (Philanthropy); Appendix Three (Beneficiaries) and Appendix Four (Policymakers).

### **3.4.4 Implementing the fieldwork**

In setting up appointments, care was taken to ensure that meetings were arranged at a time most suitable to the respondent and in comfortable and private surroundings or their choice (typically their offices) or, in a discrete area of a public space (for instance, a hotel dining room). All interviews were undertaken in-person and lasted between 40 and 90 minutes with the average time of one hour. Interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder. After each interview, the researcher immediately made field notes on observations, thoughts and questions which came to the fore during the process. The digital recordings were then anonymised and interviews sent in compact disc format to a professional transcription service who then returned the discs upon completion of the transcripts. In one case the interview was completed using notes due to a technical fault with the recording device.

The interview process was informed by the literature on particular techniques designed to elicit the best kind of response and to maximise the time with respondents. With elite subjects, maximising the time available is a core consideration and an investment in finding out as much as possible in advance about the institution of interest is worthwhile. Preparation prior to the interview included familiarisation with the role of the interviewee, reviewing key documents and materials related to the organisation and adapting the interview guide to the participant. The interviews began with ‘breaking the ice’ type general questions before moving into more specific areas related to the topic. The ‘can you tell me more about....?’ approach for instance, as an opening question can often provide spontaneous, rich descriptions in which the subjects provide ‘what they experience as the main dimensions of the phenomenon investigated’ (Kvale, p. 133.). Odendahl and Shaw (2002) found that in elite subjects, the issue of separating the person being interviewed from the institution they represent can be especially challenging. In this study, posing questions in terms of ‘What do you think...’ served to differentiate the individual and circumvented the formulised responses often prepared for the public or as part of general communication strategies.

Prompts or probes used during the interview included what Sarantakos (2013) has called ‘non-directive probing’ and the summary technique. The former manages incomplete, inadequate or unclear responses with probes such as ‘that’s interesting, tell me more about it’; the summary technique acts to encourage respondents to continue a line of thought by summarising a response and inviting the respondent to add new information (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 289; Patton, 2002, p. 371). The interviewer also invoked the interpreting question involving rephrasing an answer in order to achieve clarification (Kvale, 1996, p. 135).

A particular type of questioning that developed after a series of interviews had been conducted was the *illustrative example* format (Patton, 2002, p. 366). The format, he argues is useful in establishing neutrality in an interview, as he puts it ‘I want to let the person I’m interviewing know that I’ve pretty much heard it all—the bad and the good—and so I’m not interested in something that is particularly sensational, particularly negative or especially positive’. In this study for example, one section of the interviews was interested in finding out how respondents found the experience of funder

involvement in their organisation's management, often a feature of capacity building efforts. The particular transcript extract demonstrated how this technique was used:

Q, Some interviewees have indicated that the experience of having funders involved in their planning processes was intrusive and overly time consuming, others have welcomed the opportunity to engage with professionals with expertise in business and strategy experience. What has your experience been like?

The approach proved useful in setting out that the interviews were genuinely neutral and enabled respondents to make more honest and nuanced responses. Many of the participants in this study would have taken part in interviews conducted by academic institutions or consultancy agencies commissioned by funders as part of programme or organisations evaluations or had participated in public events showcasing the impact of philanthropic initiatives.

Overall, the format followed the traditional techniques of qualitative research acknowledged by Fontana and Frey (2000) namely, running the interview in an informal conversational style while adhering to the guidelines of the topic of inquiry and, at times, inconspicuous use of questions to validate the statements of respondents. Nonetheless, techniques must be varied according to the group being interviewed, 'the researcher must adapt to the world of the individuals studied and try and share their concerns and outlooks. Only in doing so can he or she learn anything at all (2000, p. 371). Active listening, Kvale cautions, may be more important than specific mastery of questioning techniques (1996, p. 132).

### **3.4.5 Ethical considerations**

An internal ethics committee in the School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI, Galway oversaw this proposed research. Because this study does not include children or vulnerable adults as participants, was not concerned with a sensitive area or topic, and the participants were all adult subjects in a position to freely give consent, the committee approved the proposed research design. Nonetheless, the committee reiterated the onus on the researcher to adopt an ethical approach in conducting the research at all stages of the process. In order to give guidance and structure to the approach taken in the research, the study was informed by standards of professional



practice recommended by the Sociological Association of Ireland. These include considerations of informed consent, anonymity, privacy and data protection.

The Participant Information Sheet (Appendix One) provided to all participants was developed in accordance with the principles for good practice (Sarantakos, 2013) in order to:

- Familiarise respondents with aspects of the research
- Assure them of anonymity and confidentiality
- Explain logistical details (recording, length, and location of interview)
- Outline possible uses or relevance of the study
- Share researcher credentials (supervisor and contact information)

The principle of informed consent requires that research subjects must be fully informed about the purpose, methods and intended use of research and what their participation entails. It also calls for the participants to be made aware of any possible risks or benefits of participating in the project and that their involvement is voluntary with the right to withdraw. The Participant Information Sheet covered all these areas and was sent to the subject prior to interview along with a Consent Form (Appendix Five). Patton (2002, p. 407) recommends that as well as providing this information in advance and in writing, the interview begins by going over these areas in a less formal manner. The interviews began therefore by outlining the areas to be covered in the process and by ascertaining if the participant had any questions or concerns about the nature of the research.

The views and statements of individuals or organisations are anonymised except where they are already in the public domain. Given the limited number of philanthropic organisations operating in the field and the relatively small community of statutory representatives that would have engaged with donors, issues of confidentiality and anonymity were very important. Participants were notified that every effort would be made to ensure confidentiality. In many cases, while the organisation or agency involved is identifiable and much of the information is on the public record, the perspective of the interview subject is given in a way that does not identify the individual participants. In ensuring confidentiality, participants were assured that

private data identifying the subjects would not be reported. The protection of subjects' privacy was achieved by using numbers and removing identifying features in the text. Despite taking such steps, it was recognised that identification of individuals posed a potential risk to participants in the study, several of whom would be changing jobs or significantly impacted by the planned closure of the two foundations between 2014 and 2016. In consultation with the ethics committee therefore, it was agreed that the thesis would be embargoed for a period of time by NUI Galway.

Primarily, the issue of trust is the most important principle (Sociological Association of Ireland). Particularly in a conversational interview format, the irony of promising confidentiality and anonymity and producing an informed consent statement asking for a signature the legality of which 'may be puzzling to your conversational partner or disruptive to the research' (Rubin & Robin, 1995, p. 95.). The researcher felt for this reason that it was preferable to ask for the signed consent form at the conclusion of the interview rather than at the outset. In this regard, participants were offered the opportunity to review a copy of the transcript if they wished and to revise or retract information they believed would be compromising to themselves or their organisation.

A key issue that can arise in relation to participants can be getting the permission of individuals in authority or "gatekeepers" to provide access to study participants. In this study, the sample targeted people in the most senior positions within their organisations primarily directors, CEO's or programme directors. No negotiation was required with participating organisations to engage with the respondents selected.

Ethical issues are not related to one particular stage of the research design or process. Creswell (2003) emphasises the importance of ethical issues in data analysis and interpretation. This includes ensuring that procedures are in place in the interpretation of data and that the researcher use strategies to check the accuracy of the data with participants. Creswell suggests the use of member-checking, clarifying the bias the researcher brings to the study and also presenting negative or discrepant information that run counter to the themes (2003, p. 196). Data verification is therefore considered a part of ethical practice. The requirement to behave ethically, Rubin and Rubin (2005)

note, includes an obligation to be accurate. These considerations were fundamental in setting out the processes and considerations for the data analysis outlined below.

### **3.4.6 Data analysis**

In developing a plan for analysis of the data, a number of key considerations arose. These included decisions over the use of deductive or inductive methods, choices of content analysis as well as coding strategies, tools and techniques.

The analysis framework used in this study is that of inductive analysis. In qualitative research, the researcher is faced with a conscious choice between inductive or deductive methods at each stage of the process or, as is common within larger studies, a combination of the two. Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes and analysis on the data; with findings emerging from the data through the analyst's interaction. In deductive analysis, by contrast, data is analysed through existing frameworks or pre-determined categories. Deductive analysis is related to testing and affirming ideas or hypotheses. It is common for qualitative analysis to take an inductive form in the early stages and once categories, themes and patterns have been established to then move to deductive analysis.

Thematic analysis was selected as the form of qualitative analysis for the study. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) define thematic analysis as a method where a theme 'captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning in the data set'. It differs from content analysis, which tends to focus on the more micro level and uses frequency counts with the unit of analysis being a word or phrase. Thematic analysis has been criticised for the lack of attention to the process underlying the methods of analysis and a reliance of descriptors of themes 'emerging' in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bazeley, 2009; Attride-Stirling, 2001). However, these authors argue that such criticisms can be overcome by making choices of method more explicit.

Typically, processes involved in data analysis are represented as being part of stages or cycles of analysis that involve scope for data preparation, examination, categorisation into themes, interpretation and presentation (Creswell, 2003). During the coding of

data, the primary form of organisation of text takes place through descriptive and interpretative phases that are clearly differentiated (Patton, 2002; Creswell 2007). The first stage begins with looking for key phrases, terms, and practices highlighted by participants, what Patton calls 'indigenous categories' often called 'in vivo' coding. The second phase, involves turning these labels into meaningful categories and themes that can be used as part of a typology or hypothesis that will permit analysis of the different types of experience described. The third interpretative phase involves attaching significance to what was found making sense of findings, offering explanations, considering meaning and 'otherwise imposing order on an unruly but surely patterned world' (Patton, 2002, p. 480). It includes 'fleshing out' the patterns or categories as well as looking for data that does not fit the identified common patterns. This attention to deviant or negative cases is considered a critical part of establishing validity (Creswell, 2007). While this involves interpreting causes, consequences and relationships, Patton cautions about linear cause-effect type interpretations. Rather, he advises, the object of qualitative inquiry is to give a holistic picture of what a particular phenomenon is like and understand the specific context operating for the particular set of activities or people.

In the plan for data analysis, the researcher was guided at a practical level by the need to develop a scheme of organisation that would facilitate meaningful categorisation of data, and more importantly, provide a structure that incorporated mechanisms for credibility and validity. As Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 124) point out, validity refers to how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena referring not to the data but to the inferences drawn from them. Qualitative researchers therefore ensure credibility by returning to and revisiting the data several times 'to see if the constructs, categories, explanations and interpretations make sense' (Patton, 1980 p. 339 quoted in Creswell & Miller, 2000). The data analysis plan (see Figure 3.4.6 below) therefore incorporates a spiralling technique in which parts of the analysis took place at different stages yet constantly interacted with and informed each other, thus facilitating ongoing reorganisation, reinterpretation and reassessment. Furthermore, it incorporated elements of a phenomenological approach discussed in section 3.3.1 above.

In this study, a useful framework that of thematic network analysis described by Attride-Stirling (2001) as an organising principle and a technique for breaking up text informed the data analysis. It provides for the extraction of three levels of themes, often represented in web-like illustrations:

*Basic themes:* lower-order themes derived from the textual data, simple premises characteristic of the data;

*Organising themes:* middle-order themes that organise the basic themes into clusters of similar issues;

*Global themes:* Macro themes that summarise or make sense of lower order themes. They are ‘both a summary of the main themes and a revealing interpretation of the texts’ (p. 389).

To manage the process outlined above the NVivo software package (version 10) was used. The use of computer-aided data analysis is increasingly seen as a way of enriching the qualitative research process. Programmes such as NVivo have both capacity for tasks such as recording, coding and retrieving data as well as higher level functions such as linking, displaying and integrating material. These make for efficiency in handling large volumes of data as well as capacity for rigour and testing typologies and theories (Sarantakos, 2013). As Bazeley (2007) cautions however, qualitative data software should not be confused as a method of doing research but rather as a tool with the reliability and trustworthiness of the results obtained depending on the skill of the researcher.

The researcher undertook a two-day training on the use of NVivo software and the principles underlying its orientation, in particular, the recommendation that on average three cycles of coding would provide the best way of fully investigating the data, develop patterns and examining divergences (QSR International, 2008). Coding in NVivo is conducted through attaching segments of data to particular nodes. The following stages of analysis were facilitated through NVivo with all the interview transcripts and a selection of accompanying documents provided during interviews (strategic plans, commissioned research, funding reports, for example) inputted in the database. Using Nvivo, this process found application in three phases of analysis. The detail of the analysis can be found in Appendix Six.

**Phase 1: Basic themes.** This phase, essentially data management, involved open or broad coding. Through a ‘bottom up’, data led approach, using inductive analysis where identified themes were linked to and associated with the data themselves emphasis was placed on ‘hearing’ the participants. It began by reading all transcripts highlighting exact words in the text that captured key thoughts and concepts. After open coding from a selection of 6 transcripts, a number of preliminary or emergent codes were selected. The remainder of the transcripts were coded into 25 broad themes (Appendix Six). Codes included explicit boundaries with a memo on “rules for inclusion” generated for each. As recommended at this stage, data was coded inclusively i.e with surrounding text kept if relevant in order to maintain the context and individual sets of data coded to a number of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Phase 2: Organising Themes.** This phase refocuses the analysis at the broader level of themes rather than codes. It is also the stage where interpretative analysis of the data takes place. As such it involves analysing for relationships between themes and different levels of themes and between overarching themes and sub-themes. In this phase, the initial coding scheme is used to sort and group codes into meaningful clusters (Patton, 2002). In this study, the process involved refinement into themes and sub-themes that Attride-Stirling (2001, p. 392) describes as ‘specific enough to be discrete and broad enough to encapsulate a set of ideas contained in numerous text segments.’ Of the original 26 basic themes, 25 were coded on to create a hierarchical structure of tree nodes (parent and child nodes) into three key organising themes relating to rationale, strategy and impact. In this phase, coding took the form of a more top-down, less inductive approach using codes that related to the specific research objectives.


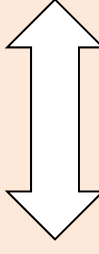
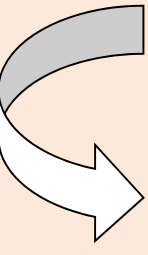
A tree diagram was used to organise these categories into a hierarchical structure (Appendix Six). The hierarchical structure made it easier to view and get a sense any emerging findings. Braun and Clarke (2006) contend that in qualitative analysis there is no rule for ascertaining what proportion of a data set needs to display evidence of a theme for it to be considered as one. The judgement of the researcher is critical to determining what constitutes a theme with the ‘keyness’ of a theme not the prevalence or on quantifiable elements but rather, whether it captures something important in relation to the research question. Consistent with thematic analysis within a

constructionist framework, the focus was on theorising the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions that enable the individual accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85).

**Phase 3: Refining themes.** In this phase, the process focused on comparing and relating ideas to each other and of asking questions of the data. It involves breaking down the restructured themes to sub-themes to offer more depth of understanding to the qualitative aspects under scrutiny and to enable consideration of divergent views, attitudes and beliefs in the data (Creswell, 2000). In particular, the use of thematic networks provided a tool to facilitate deeper analysis. As described by Attride-Stirling, (2001) maps of basic, organising and global themes provide a mechanism to take the researcher deeper into the text and to return to the data. An example of one of the thematic maps generated is provided in Appendix Six.

A thematic network serves as an organising principle and an illustrative tool in the interpretation of the text (Attride-Stirling, 2001 p. 389). This assisted in the process of comparing and relating ideas and concepts to each other. It also facilitated a process of returning to the data extracts for each theme. As Braun and Clarke emphasise, it is important to remember that analysis is not a linear but rather a recursive process with movement back and forth required. A clear sense of a thematic map provided the basis for asking questions such as what are the assumptions underpinning the theme? What are the implications? Do themes occur more or less frequently for different groups? This included recording associations across or lack of association across groups or contexts and examining the conditions under which a theme arises. This validating process involved testing, revising and interrogation of the data drawing on relationships across and between categories, observations and literature. Throughout the analysis, using the NVivo programme, annotation and memos were used to orientate material and to assist in deeper analysis of the data. They also provided scope for personal reflections on the data that proved useful in the writing up process.

**Figure 3.4.6 Data analysis plan**

Stage	Purpose/strategic intent	Practical Implementation	
<b>Loop 1</b>  <b>Data Management &amp; Organisation</b>	Identifying major organising ideas- emphasis on ‘hearing’ ‘ what interviews said Forming initial categories  Emphasis on reading and memoing Inductive analysis	Converting files into text units for analysis located in large database (NVIVO)  <i>Coding cycle 1:</i> Broad coding generated larger list of general categories (26)	
<b>Loop 2</b>  <b>Describing, Classifying &amp; Interpreting Data (Loop 2)</b>	<i>Phase 1:</i> Taking text apart, looking for categories, clusters or dimensions of meaning  <i>Phase 2:</i> Interpretation through stepping back & forming larger meaning of what is going on Textual (what happened) Structural (how phenomenon experienced)	<i>Coding cycle 2:</i>  Coding on (refining) Combining (26) categories of information into 6 themes or “families” to produce narrative  Generating proposition statements; reordering and distilling data  Querying data	
<b>Loop 3</b>  <b>Interrogating and Presenting Data</b>	Narrative capturing essence of experience in discussion  Coherent and consistent account with accompanying narrative	Asking questions of themes  Examining assumptions and implications  Comparing and relating of ideas	

Source: Adapted from Creswell's (2007) Data Analysis Spiral



### **3.4.7 Limitations and challenges**

The key challenges and limitations of the study can be summarised as follows:

- The study is relatively small and based on a particular sample dominated by two organisations. While five organisations were initially selected as fitting the criteria for philanthropic foundations with priorities in the field of children and youth, the interviews indicated these organisations were in receipt of significant funding from the two main organisation that were passed along in the form of re-grants. Similarly, the institutions advising or supporting philanthropy were also in receipt of foundation funding. Given the small scale of the philanthropic sector in Ireland it was not possible to compensate for this element by including, as would have been preferable, a diverse pool of organisations with which to offer comparison and deviations in practice
- The methodology focused on the expert interview. While this was deemed necessary in order to gain first-hand information among key decision-makers in organisations and individuals that had authority and experience of negotiation with other actors in the process, this nonetheless provided the perspective of the person at the top only.
- Given the high level of responsibility exerted by the participants it was deemed necessary to preserve their anonymity where feasible. The relatively small number of individuals involved in the circle of Irish philanthropy and the high level of interaction and personal relationships involved required acknowledgement of sensitivities in the area. Participants were encouraged to speak frankly and give opinions that in some cases reflected their personal views more than the official standpoint of the institution. In writing up the research results, limited background information therefore is given about organisations in order to preserve anonymity. In some cases, provision of this information would have made for greater clarity.
- The timing of the interviews was an issue. The fieldwork took place during a period when the foundations featured were making critical decisions about their own future and determining which organisations would be supported in the final phase of funding. Negotiations were taking place affecting the future of foundation staff and the programmes for which they were responsible. Beneficiary organisations were facing the prospect of a last big grant or

alternatively not being included in a final round. The dynamics of such an environment created a sense that participants were reluctant to criticise the ‘hand that feeds’ or to admit to areas that have not worked.

- Finally, philanthropy is a new phenomenon in Ireland. As Anheier and Leat (2002) observe philanthropic institutions by virtue of being seen as ‘good’ and serving the public interest they can be protected from criticism. This study is based on the perspectives of individuals who benefitted from philanthropic investment, a factor which it could be argued makes for even less likely criticism. This could have been balanced by interviewing participants from the children and youth sector who did not receive philanthropic funding. However, as this study sought in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon it was decided to focus on participants with direct experience of the process involved. Also, the key organisations in the children and youth sector are all represented in the sample.

### **3.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has set out the methodology selected and implemented in the course of this study. The rationale, aim and objectives of the study were outlined, followed by a discussion on the research design selected. This included ontological and epistemological perspectives and informing research paradigms that influenced the adoption of a constructionist framework for the research. A qualitative research approach was selected as the appropriate one to answer the research question. The position of the researcher incorporating the use of reflexivity was described. The research methods were discussed with particular attention given to the process of qualitative interviewing including the approach and techniques used. Ethical considerations and challenges presented in the study were discussed. The next chapter provides contextual information for the research.

## **Chapter Four: Context for the Study**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides contextual information for the study and is divided into two parts. In **Section 4.2**, the primary goals associated with philanthropic intervention for children and young people in Ireland over the course of a period of intense investment beginning in the 2000s are outlined. It explores the rationale and the underpinning assumptions on which investments were made and examines the intent of key objectives for the programmatic areas selected. The adoption of public policy goals associated with these programmes must be placed in the context of the external environment. **Section 4.3** therefore, provides an overview of the prevailing policy and service culture within which philanthropy operated. Included are relevant legislative and policy developments as well as a description of the infrastructure in place to serve the needs of children, families and youth in Ireland at the time.

### **4.2 Philanthropic goals and investment rationale**

Since the early 2000s, more than €100M has been invested in targeted programmes for children and youth primarily by the One Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic), two limited life foundations, that, by 2016 will have ceased operating in Ireland.<sup>3</sup> The appearance onto the Irish nonprofit landscape of targeted organisational giving, operating with a planned structure and programme orientation accompanied by funding capacity of this scale is unprecedented in the limited experience of philanthropy in Ireland. While this study included the perspectives of representatives of five philanthropic foundations funding children, youth and families, only two had designated programmes in the area. Moreover, these two funders had significantly greater resources and also made grants to the other three organisations, for re-distribution within the field. The core priorities and theory of change adopted by Atlantic and the One Foundation are described below. Two strategies, firstly, prevention and early intervention and secondly, advocacy dominated the approach to funding and these are explored in sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 respectively.

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<sup>3</sup> The time period for the fieldwork included grants up to 2012.

#### 4.2.1 Philosophy and ethos

Founded in 1982 by Irish-American billionaire Charles ‘Chuck’ Feeney, The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic) is a global organisation that, by the time it ceases to operate will have invested €800M in Ireland’s higher education and non-profit sectors. The One Foundation, based in Dublin and co-founded by Declan Ryan, son of Ryanair founder, and Deirdre Mortell, invested €75M in Ireland over the decade 2004 to 2014. Together, they accounted for an estimated 86% of philanthropic funding to nonprofits in the Republic of Ireland (Crosbie, 2013). This included fifteen joint investments in areas of children, youth and rights resulting in a shared portfolio of €60M (Proscio, 2010b). In addressing the needs of disadvantaged children and youth in Ireland, both foundations committed to tackling some of the most difficult issues in society. The largest organisational investments made by these funders at the time of this study are summarised below.

**Table 4.2.1 Key investments: Children, youth and families**

Co-partnership sites	36 M	Atlantic Philanthropies & Irish State
Barnardos	19.7 M	Atlantic Philanthropies & One Foundation
Foroige	7.5 M	Atlantic Philanthropies & One Foundation
Headstrong	3.8 M	One Foundation
Children’s Right’s Alliance	3 M	Atlantic Philanthropies and One Foundation
Centre for Effective Services	5.9 M	Atlantic Philanthropies

**Source:** Crosbie, 2013

Both organisations are limited life foundations that embody the philanthropic principle of ‘giving while living’. From the outset, One Foundation was established with a ten year timeframe of operation. At Atlantic, in 1999, Chuck Feeney made a decision to limit the term of the foundation, and in 2012, the organisation announced that it would complete its grantmaking by 2016, closing in-country offices in advance and finally ceasing operations four years after (O’Clery, 2012). For both foundations, the decision to limit the lifespan of the organisation came with a heightened concentration of efforts to achieve impact.

Established in 1982 by Charles Feeney, whose wealth was created through the Duty Free Shoppers Group, Atlantic opened an office in Ireland in 1990, and until 1997, operated in anonymity with the majority of its grants directed to higher education (O’Clery, 2007). In 1999, for the first time the organisation adopted a formal mission statement ‘to bring about lasting changes that will improve the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people’ (Proscio, 2010a, p. 27). Disadvantaged children and youth made up one of four core programme areas alongside ageing, population health and reconciliation and human rights. At Atlantic, the emphasis on ‘spending down’ and adherence to the principle of ‘giving while living’ marked a distinct strategic phase in the organisation’s development. The willingness to make ‘big bets’, namely the ability to make a critical difference in the short to medium-term was a central feature of the strategic decision to opt for the children and youth programme. Focusing on a smaller number of areas in order to bring about change, Atlantic characterised its approach as philanthropy of enduring impact, which included the following key characteristics (Proscio, 2010a. p. 26)

- Willingness to make long-term investments
- Accent on solvable problems
- Readiness to take risks
- Proactive, pragmatic, and entrepreneurial approach
- Willingness to support advocacy

Two key features of the Atlantic strategy are notable. Firstly, the capacity to leverage additional sources of income formed a critical part of the investment rationale. According to a board member quoted in Proscio (2010a, p. 30) “there had to be leverage, with the state or public entities or from private donors as funding partners, to ensure the sustainability of whatever we’re supporting”. Secondly, deliberations at the time highlighted an explicit intent to focus on improving public policy as the most effective strategy for affecting the greatest number of people. In 2007, then CEO Gara LaMarche reiterated the approach, “For the issues on which Atlantic is concentrating”, he wrote, government “is the only level at which these problems can be seriously

addressed. So we choose to engage in supporting advocacy for increased and smarter government funding, and stronger and fairer laws.” (Quoted in Proscio, 2010a, p. 32).

The Atlantic focus on disadvantaged youth spanned four regions - Bermuda, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the United States. While each had distinct programme objectives, general aims included the following (Atlantic Philanthropies, 2005, p. 10):

- Demonstrating that prevention and early intervention are effective;
- Increasing the efficiency of resource allocation;
- Supporting influential voices that speak in the interests of disadvantaged children and youth;
- Helping to build exemplary programmes and services that target at-risk youth aged 8 to 16; and
- Influencing the broader policy frameworks that govern service delivery for low-income children and youth

The identification of problems in the area of children and youth in the Republic of Ireland as understood by the foundation include: an environment in which policy implementation to date has been weak, services are fragmented and do not meet the needs of all children and families, and issues such as poverty and early school leaving pose significant challenges. According to the programme goals, the problem perception is one in which:

*The country’s low levels of provision for early childhood care and education; and mental health, family support, and other preventive programmes for young people are underdeveloped and underfunded. Moreover family support services tend to be reactive and patchy, and the resources invested in schools addressing disadvantage do not appear to be yielding consistently better outcomes.*  
(Atlantic Philanthropies, 2012).

In selecting potential organisations for funding, criteria applied include demonstrated strong organisational leadership, evidence of past and current successes, financial strength, and the capacity to implement projects and evaluate their services

From the outset, the One Foundation set out to improve the life chances of disadvantaged children in Ireland (and Vietnam). The organisation concentrated on four

programme areas: children and families; integration; mental health and social entrepreneurship. The organisation's goals explicitly refer to a social change agenda through the dedication of substantial resources in the form of money, time and talent to generating momentum towards solving some of the country's serious social problems (One Foundation, 2012). The intent to limit the operation of the foundation to a ten year period formed part of the organisation's rationale from the outset (One Foundation, 2009).

One Foundation characterises its investment strategy as 'active philanthropy'. Like other active or venture philanthropists, the organisation is upfront about stating its intention beyond simply donating money; rather, 'we underpin our funding with the high level knowledge, skills and resources necessary to help non-profit agencies maximise the impact of their activities' (One Foundation, 2012). In adopting this approach, the Foundation linked in closely with a United States based venture philanthropy fund adapting their model to testing out a new way of funding in Ireland (O'Carroll, 2013). Prior to undertaking to invest in an organisation, potential grantees were required to engage in due diligence. This detailed assessment was followed by a period of business planning, facilitated by consultants from leading strategy consultancies. In some cases, investment included involvement of the foundation on recipient organisations' board of directors or in the selection of their Chief Executive Officer. Once in receipt of funding, beneficiaries were required to track progress using tools such as balanced scorecard or Key Performance Indicators. The foundation sought a 'return on investment' to be clearly defined in terms of social change or social impact. Recipient organisations were typically required to demonstrate strong leadership; show evidence of success; advocate for change or 'think big' and demonstrate service models that could be replicated and scaled. The grantmaking philosophy is characterised by targeting support in four key areas:

**Strategy:** creating an impact strategy

**Performance based culture:** using performance metrics and tracking performance

**Leadership development:** building talent through management team, board and networks

**Financing:** providing core funds to build capacity and leverage other funders.

For the foundation, a core strategic goal is in supporting capacity building of funded organisations. The emphasis on capacity building is aligned directly to social impact. Investment strategy prioritised multi-annual investments that facilitate the development of robust efficient organisations that ‘achieve significant results and long-term impact for people they seek to help’ (One Foundation, 2009, p. 8).

#### **4.2.2 Theory of change approaches**

The use of a theory of change approach is common amongst foundations looking to accomplish specific programme targets through an articulated strategic orientation. For funders and the organisations they invest in, theories of change can elaborate their role in addressing the problem at issue. Both Atlantic and One Foundation employed a theory of change approach to the application of the children and youth issues they sought to impact. Theories of change contain implicit or explicit assumptions about how and why a particular programme will work (Weiss, 1995, p. 66) and reveal much about an organisation’s perception of its place within the broader social and political environment. In articulating a theory, foundations express a statement of intent and an understanding of the conceptual or structural change they wish to bring about.

The One Foundation adopted a theory of change for each programme area. The tables below set out the elaboration of the problem statements and the strategies adopted for the areas relevant to this study, namely, youth mental health and children and families.



**Table 4.2.2.1 Theories of change: One Foundation**

**Disadvantaged children and families**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Goals and Strategies</b>
We recognise that living in difficult circumstances often creates a cycle of disadvantage for families and children. Our aim is to break that cycle. To do this, we invest in organisations that provide Parenting Programmes and Direct Family Support, using proven early intervention and prevention models that are ready to replicate and scale and in organisations that advocate for children's rights and to end child poverty. (One Foundation)	<p>Investing in organisations that make children's rights real</p> <p>Building effective family support programmes <i>through</i> a distribution network for effective family support programmes in Ireland (supporting organisations to get programmes ready to scale.</p>

**Youth mental health**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Goals and Strategies</b>
Ireland has good policy ( <i>A Vision for Change</i> ) on mental health but poorly established rights for young people seeking mental health services. Good policy is hampered by poor plans for implementation.	<p>Build political will on mental health reform <i>through</i> investing in organisations</p> <p>Improve mental health outcomes for young people <i>through</i> piloting an effective service delivery model for the state to mainstream or scale</p> <p>Increase resilience and well-being of young people <i>through</i> investing in national organisations that provide direct support to young people</p>

Source: One Foundation 2012

The overarching aim of Atlantic's Children and Youth Programme (CYP) is to improve the lives and foster the healthy development of disadvantaged children. (Atlantic Philanthropies, 2012) In supporting this fundamental goal, the programme in the Republic of Ireland adopted two core objectives each underpinned by theory of change as outlined below.

**Table 4.2.2.2 Atlantic Philanthropies: Children and youth programme**

Objective 1: *Promote Prevention and Early Intervention (AP)*

Goal	Performance Indicator
Demonstrate effective practice leading to policy reform	Strong body of well-evidenced programmes and practices
Inform and influence policy and practice	Evaluation evidence disseminated and strong networks established
Develop sector capacity and infrastructure	Research, evaluation and data collection capacity of NGOs and universities developed

Objective 2: *Advance Children's Rights (AP)*

Goal	Performance Indicator
Build Core advocacy capacity	Strong body of core children's rights organisations built
Develop voice of communities, families, children and young people	Participation and leadership skills of communities, families, children and young people developed
Support key campaigns	Campaigns with potential to make significant changes to children and services impacted.

Source: Paulsell & Pickens Jewell, 2012

### **4.2.3 Priority on prevention and early intervention**

Both as a direct programme in the case of Atlantic, and as part of the approach to targeting disadvantage at the One Foundation, prevention and early intervention occupied a central place in the strategic orientation of philanthropy. The One Foundation stated its intention under the disadvantaged children and families programme as ensuring that proven family support models of prevention were available nationally as quality programmes (One Foundation, 2009). At Atlantic, programme strategy focused on improving the service delivery system for children and youth in Ireland by promoting prevention and early intervention services with evidence of

effectiveness. Core elements of prevention and early intervention strategies adopted internationally and identified as pivotal to the programme included services that promote the healthy development of young children to prevent later problems; and services for children and youth that intervene earlier in a problem cycle. Both factors involve a cost implication with earlier intervention identified as less expensive (Paulsell, Del Grosso, & Dynarski 2009).

As a strategy, prevention and early intervention offers a departure from traditional forms of intervention that target social disadvantage. Rather than focusing on crisis-driven or child protection approaches to services, prevention and early intervention strategies are oriented to realising the full potential of children, families and communities; building skills and capacities to prevent the occurrence or escalation of problems and intervening at a young age or early in development of a difficulty. They incorporate a prevention element in relation to child abuse and neglect as well as future emotional and behavioural problems. The adoption of this approach reflected a recognition of historically poor outcomes in areas of disadvantage; minimal resources targeted at the beginning of the life cycle; an absence of evidence-informed, integrated service design; and lack of parental and community involvement with services (Prevention and Early Intervention Programme 2012).

Prevention and early intervention was chosen for its capacity to improve outcomes for children and young people. Fundamentally, a knowledge-based model, it prioritises designing services based on specific community needs that fit with the local culture and delivery system; selecting service models with evidence of effectiveness; and testing their effectiveness in local communities (Paulsell and Pickens Jewell, 2012). Key characteristics that marked the strategy as different included extensive community engagement processes, working with schools and community-providers to implement services in different ways, rigorous attention to delivery, and a culture of continuous improvement. Atlantic's prevention and early intervention investment (PEI) included internationally known models of proven effective programmes such as the *Big Brother Big Sisters* programme and *Incredible Years* programmes for reducing children's behaviour problems and increasing social competence at home and at school involving parent training, teacher training, and child social skills training approaches. The PEI

programme included €96M in 20 agencies and community organisations involving 52 prevention and early intervention programmes in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Table 4.2.3 below provides a list of the beneficiaries of the programme in the Republic of Ireland.

**Table 4.2.3 Atlantic Philanthropies PEI grantees (Republic of Ireland)**

Service/Programme	Organisation	Objective/ Purpose
Incredible Years Parent Training *	Archways	Training parents in supporting children's (aged 3-12) social, emotional and pro-social development
Functional Family Therapy*	Archways	Systemic family prevention and intervention therapeutic programme targeting young people (aged 11-18) at risk
Incredible Years (Teacher Training) *	Archways	Training and supporting teachers in classroom management techniques
Parent and child training for children with ADHD	Archways	Training and supporting parents of children with ADHD
Mentoring for Achievement Programme*	Archways	School-based early intervention transition programme for children aged 11-13 at risk of early school leaving
Partnership with Parents Programme*	Barnardos	One to one home based parenting intervention for parents of children with complex needs
Wizard of Words	Barnardos	In-school paired literacy improvement programme for children aged 7-9 involving older volunteers
Friendship Group*	Barnardos	In-school programme for children aged 6-9 to develop peer relationships and social skills
Tus Maith*	Barnardos	Early years care and education programme (aged 3-5) to ensure school readiness
Big Brothers, Big Sisters Ireland*	Foroige	Youth mentoring programme in schools and community for young people (10-18) at risk
Leadership Development Programme*	Foroige	Developing an evidence-based manualised programme for leadership (aged 15-18)
Citizen Engagement Programme*	Foroige	A centre-based leadership programme for young people aged 10-18
Jigsaw*	Headstrong	Bringing community services and supports together to meet young people's (12-25) mental health needs
Reachout.com*	Inspire Ireland	Online, quality assured youth mental health service (12-25)
Growing Child Parenting Programme*	Lifestart	Home visitation service to support parents of children from birth to 5 and promote school readiness

Triple P Parenting Programme*	Longford Westmeath Partnership MCI Ireland	To support children's social, emotional and pro-social engagement
Protective Behaviours Programme*		To build self-esteem and support for children experiencing domestic violence and negative family conflict (primary and post-primary schools)
National Early Years Access Initiative	Pobal	Improving access to quality Early Years services for children aged 0-6
Quality Improvement support	Northside Partnership (Preparing for Life)	To implement Siolta Framework to improve quality and integration of existing services
Childcare providers		
Preparing for Life*	Northside Partnership (Preparing for Life)	Home-based early intervention programme for pre-natal parents and children aged 0-5 focusing on child development and parenting
Out of School Time Initiative	Rialto Learning Community	Supporting children aged 11-14 in schools and after school clubs to manage transition from primary to secondary education
Supporting Social Inclusion and Regeneration in Limerick	Strategic Innovation in Education, UL	To support the embedding of new service delivery models across the life course (children, young people, older people)
Early Childhood Care and Education Programme*	Childhood Development Initiative (CDI)	2-year service for children 2.5 to 5 to develop and enhance all domains of children's physical, psychological and social well-being
Doodle Den Programme*	Childhood Development Initiative	In school and after school literacy programme including child, parent and family components for children aged 5-6
Mate Tricks Programme*	CDI	Mentoring programme to enhance pro-social behaviour for ages 9-10 including child, parent and family components
Healthy Schools Programme*	CDI	Supporting schools to develop capacity to improve children's health and increase access to primary care (aged 7-9_
Community Safety Initiative	CDI	To improve safety within the home, school and wider community environment
Speech and Language Therapy Service*	CDI	Delivered through Early Years services and primary schools
Restorative Practice*	Childhood Development Initiative	Developing capacity in the community to manage conflict by repairing harm and building relationships
Ready, Steady, Grow*	Youngballymun	Area-based infant mental health strategy to promote and support infant-parent relationship (0-3)
3, 4, 5, Learning Years*	Youngballymun	Improve Early Years service provision for pre-school children and increase school readiness
Incredible Years*	Youngballymun	School and family programmes to support social and emotional

Write Minded	Youngballymun	development of children aged 3-12 with parents, teacher and family support services
What's Up	Youngballymun	Area-based literacy strategy for children including literacy, teaching and learning and parental engagement (12-25)
Literaciviv*	Youngballymun	Improve capacity of practitioners and front line workers and parents to respond to mental health needs of young people To build capacity of local organisations to activate civic literacy

**Source:** Prevention and Early Intervention Network, 2013

In sum, the investments focused on activities in the following areas:

- Parenting skills to support children's social, emotional and pro-social development
- Emotional and behaviour difficulties experienced by adolescents and their families
- Pro-social behaviour
- School engagement, participation and motivation
- Language and literacy development
- Children's peer relationships and social skills
- School readiness (primary)
- Transition to secondary schools
- Social, emotional and cognitive development for young people at risk
- Community services and support for youth mental health
- Positive protective relationships
- Access to early years services
- New service delivery models

A notable feature of the investments is the number of programmes designated 'standalone' (indicated in the table above with \* as opposed to complementing an existing statutory service programmes).

A key element is the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of the activities undertaken and the learning from the individual sites. The selection of programmes reflected a belief in the value of scientific evidence based on evaluation

research that suggests good outcomes and cost-effectiveness. In adopting such programmes, key features are the importance of implementation with fidelity and the commitment to rigorous evaluation often through the use of Randomised Control Trials. The outcome-oriented approach tracks the benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in the programme activities and places a high emphasis on implementation to ensure targeted outcomes. Operationally, a priority is placed on the collection of data to monitor implementation and service delivery necessary for tracking outcomes.

As a strategy, this form of investment calls for resources to be directed to organisational capacity and the skilling up of beneficiaries to undertake research and evaluation and to design, deliver and implement innovations. Until the mid-1990s, funding for research on children's needs or evaluation was non-existent (Keenan, 2007). Reflecting on his tenure as Head of Barnardos at the time, Keenan (p. 73) identified a lack of capacity and expertise among the indigenous research community. Organisations beginning to embrace a more scientific approach to design of interventions including knowledge from international evaluation programmes or those looking to determine if their services provided effective outcomes had limited access to knowledge and support. This applied research and practice element was supported by investment in university-based research centres including the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at NUI, Galway and a Centre for Effective Services in order to provide service design support, evaluation services and policy research.

The prevention and early intervention focus provided the context for the first co-funding partnership between philanthropy and the Irish State. The Prevention and Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) was established in 2006 by the Office of the Minister for Children. The intention of the PEIP was to test new models of service delivery in areas of severe disadvantage in order to improve outcomes for children and their families. Three area-based sites in Dublin were chosen, Tallaght West Community Development Initiative; Youngballymun; and Preparing for Life (Darndale, Belcamp and Moatview). In total, €36M was provided to three sites over five years, with each partner providing funding of €18M. Atlantic had already invested in research and planning activities in these areas since 2004. The service implementation plan for the

three projects required action among a range of local service providers in collaboration with their local communities; in practice, involving statutory and non-statutory agencies working across sectors and collaborating in both service design and interagency delivery.

The co-funding recognised the fundamental importance of prevention and early intervention and the commitment to making a shift in policy. Commenting on the plans, Minister for Children Brian Lenihan (2007) highlighted the Government's aspirations for the programme to promote better outcomes for children in disadvantaged areas through innovation, effective planning and integration and delivery of services. He emphasised the importance on selection of a fit with national policy objectives and the informing principles of evidence of local need and what works 'If these models prove successful' he informed the Oircheas 'the results of these projects may provide the basis for enhanced resource allocation processes and policy changes'.

#### **4.2.4 Advocacy goals**

Atlantic Philanthropies funded ten grantees under its Advocacy programme in the Republic of Ireland which included a mix of funding dedicated to organisations that provide both services and training in advocacy to children and youth; organisations advocating on behalf of children and youth and those that combine these approaches (Paulsell & Pickens Jewell, 2012, p. 31). At a global level, the foundation provided the following general definition of their style of advocacy as 'public policy advocacy' in which the aim is 'to bring about a change in public policy or the law, its interpretation or its application, typically with the objective of correcting a perceived injustice or achieving specific legislative, legal or other change' (Atlantic Philanthropies, 2008, p. 3).

The funding strategy In Ireland encompassed a commitment to capacity-building and sustainability of the field. Priorities included equipping organisations with internal capacity to influence policy as well as resources to network and develop strategic alliances with other advocacy organisations. The programme identified a need for creating organisations with the ability to influence the children's rights agenda especially with regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It recognised



that in order to provide critical analyses of government programmes and policies, organisations needed a degree of autonomy and independence. Grants in the area strengthened the ability of organisations to influence policy and included capacity to hire new staff; freedom to focus on new or specialist areas, and capacity for research or evaluation. In particular, the foundation adopted a focus on two of the strategies seen as critical to policy influence: (1) reliable research as ‘an excellent tool for raising the profile of a problem that deserves attention’ and (2) developing policy options than can ‘aid change by providing advocates, legislators and others with credible suggestions for solving problems (Atlantic Philanthropies, 2008, pp. 3-4).

Advocacy grants supported the following activities:

- Models of active participation to strengthen the voice of children and young people on issues that affect their lives
- Increased capacity for organisations looking to fully implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Youth leadership models that empower young people to bring about personal and social change
- Support to voice of young people living in care
- Advancement of high-quality early childhood care and education

Within the final years of its grantmaking, the foundation moved away from support for long terms advocacy strategies such as strengthening leaders, organizing constituencies, and cultivating nascent fields of practice. Rather it opted to support ‘advocacy of public-policy reforms but only with near-term aims’ associated with ‘significant but achievable milestones and objectives’ (Proscio, 2012, p. 10). Funding would depend on capacity for precise and realistic impact in the foreseeable future. In practical terms, in Ireland, this meant that assessment of the children and youth programme identified prevention and early intervention as having a ‘realistic opportunity to make a significant, large scale change’ and would be maintained. For the children’s rights area, the organizational recommendation meant that it ‘didn’t see an opportunity for significant further impact so exit expeditiously’ (Prosico, 2012 p. 14)

The One Foundation invested almost 20% of its overall funding (€15M out of €75M in Ireland) in advocacy work (One Foundation, 2014). Over time, the organisation's funding philosophy moved to an increased focus on advocacy. Advocacy investments accounted for 31% of spend in the area of children's rights during the first five years, and 66% in the remaining five years (O'Carroll, 2013, p. 24). Following a strategic review mid-way through its lifespan a significant shift in strategy took place. As outlined in an Impact Report, having opted to invest in frontline services initially in areas like disadvantaged children and youth, 'We came to the realisation that supporting advocacy on such issues could represent a complementary, and sometimes better approach' (One Foundation, 2014, p. 48). This explicit strategy shift can be attributed to 'a realisation that a foundation could fund social services for many years, but that funding advocacy provided the opportunity to end the problem that requires the services' (O'Carroll, 2013). The onset of the economic recession and the shift in government funding patterns toward organisations funding services and away from advocacy provided a perceived gap in support to the existence of independent nonprofit organisations was another contributing factor to the advocacy emphasis. (O'Carroll, 2013)

The definition of advocacy incorporated a strong political intent with emphasis on influencing the policy decision-making processes in Ireland. An evaluation of the funding undertaken at One Foundation included the following definition of advocacy as representing 'the strategies devised, actions taken, and solutions proposed to inform or influence local, regional and national level policy decision-making processes in a democracy' (O'Carroll 2013). It manifested itself in support for the kinds of activities that divide into the classification below namely, impact factors taken from a framework developed by Quinn Patton for effective advocacy: evaluation:

- Strong high capacity coalitions
- Strong national grassroots coordination
- Disciplined and focused messages with effective communications
- Timely, opportunistic lobbying and engagement
- Solid research and knowledge base
- Collaborating funders, strategic funding

Overall, the advocacy goal areas identified were non-controversial "our advocacy positions are largely aligned with social policy" (quoted in O'Carroll, 2013, p. 17).

The foundation's grantees advocated for structural and systemic changes to improve the lives of vulnerable children and their families. Unlike many funders, One Foundation did not shy away from the use of the term 'lobbying'. For instance it included as a major grantee the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) supporting work in crafting legislation, lobbying tactics and CRS's monitoring work (a scorecard system) to rate progress on children's rights as well as implementation of agreed policy. During its strategic review in 2008, the foundation identified three targets to address the main issues affecting the progress toward improving the lives of disadvantaged children and youth namely:

- an absence of any legal or constitutional basis for children's rights,
- inadequate implementation of government policies and
- poor practices in terms of services

As part of this process objectives and indicators of achievement of the goal were identified as:

- securing children's rights in Constitution via a referendum
- ensuring children's rights in policy
- implement the recommendations of the Ryan Report Implementation Plan 2009

In practice, the first of these objectives received by far the most attention. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the foundation's advocacy goals in the area of children for instance devoted a large section to identifying its role in supporting the Children's Rights Alliance in 2012 yet left the other objectives largely ignored (O'Carroll, 2013). The emphasis on Family Support, a key feature of the original strategic plan received less attention after the first five years of operation

#### **4.2.5 Summary**

Both Atlantic and One Foundation prioritised improved service provision and ultimately a transformation of the service delivery system for children and youth. One Foundation focused its intent on bringing about improved and expanded services through increased organisational effectiveness. The context for the Atlantic grantmaking programme emanated from critiques that the children and youth field was

narrowly focused and ‘siloed’ (Paulsell et al., 2009). It also incorporated a philosophy that the best way to better the lives and opportunities of children and young people is to improve the public systems that serve them (Prosico 2010b). This commitment to public policy reform called for strategies such as improvement in quality and standards of service delivery as well as an emphasis on coordination or integrated services. It also required a compelling body of evidence as to what constitutes best services for children and families.

Both organisations adopted a theory of change approach to addressing targeted areas within the field. Key strategic priorities for the two foundations can be summarised as follows:

- Demonstrating effectiveness leading to influencing policy
- Demonstration models, piloting, replication and scaling up
- Dissemination model - evidence and networks
- Research, evaluation and data collection
- Core sector capacity on realising children’s rights
- Enhancing youth participation and voice
- Supporting key campaigns

### **4.3 Policy and services: the external environment**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of the key policy and legislative developments pertaining to the welfare of children, families and young people over the course of two decades beginning in the early 1990s up until 2013. In selecting the timeframe to be covered, the early 1990s marked the beginning of a period of considerable activity in the policy environment for children, families and youth in Ireland. Understanding these changes is important in the context of the objectives associated with philanthropy in the previous section. Richardson (2005, p. 164) describes the period as one characterised by a move toward policies of prevention and support for families in providing for the care and welfare of children. Beginning in 1992 with the Irish government’s ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and culminating in the adoption of a referendum in 2012, the era witnessed the rise of a rights-based agenda for children.

The decades are also marked by vacillating shifts in economic circumstances. Daly and Claverno (2002) credit an acceleration from the mid-1990s in public funding of services for families to the economic climate and buoyancy of the State's finances which acted to 'give more leeway in social policy than ever before' (2002, p. 50). In contrast, to the 'Celtic Tiger' economy, the ensuing economic recession experienced in Ireland has since 2007 perceptibly impacted the State's budgetary provision. Finally, over the two decades, the policy infrastructure for children, families and young people has undergone considerable realignment with responsibility shifting to a full government department in 2011.

The sections below are organised to provide an overview of (i) children and family policy; (ii) the service and infrastructure context and (iii) youth policy. Reflecting the differing policy goals, objectives and lines of statutory responsibility for children and families and the youth sectors, these are treated separately. Given the priority accorded to changing public systems for children and families by philanthropic funders, the structures and operational context for service provision in Ireland during the time of philanthropic intervention are highlighted. At the time of data collection for this study, 2012-2013, upcoming developments in the policy landscape, including the development of a new Child and Family Agency, were referred to and these are included for reference.

#### **4.3.2 Child and Family Policy**

The section below outlines the key social policy developments for children and families that took place in Ireland beginning with the introduction of the Childcare Act in 1991. In the context of the informing goals and objectives for philanthropy discussed in Section 4.2, emphasis is placed on three areas: a move toward prevention and support for families in providing for the care and welfare of children, recognition of the rights and participation of children, and outcome-based planning.

In public policy debate, children's welfare, as a discourse, emerged relatively late in the Irish context (Harvey, 2011). Historically, the social policy approach to children reflected the principle of family autonomy in which children's needs were perceived as

a matter of private responsibility solely within the domain of the family with the State adopting a minimalist approach to intervention (Kiely, 1999; Richardson, 2005). From the foundation of the Irish State, family policy has been shaped by the influence of the Catholic Church. The 1937 Constitution (Article 41) recognises and ensures the protection of the family as the fundamental unit group of society while acknowledging a role for the State in protecting the welfare of children when family cannot. In what became the overarching framework for child protection in Ireland for over eighty years, the introduction of the 1908 Children Act provided legislation to protect children against offences (Richardson, 2005 p. 159). Children who were subject to abuse or who had committed an offence were provided for in industrial and reformatory schools run on behalf of the State by religious orders. The publication of two key documents, the Kennedy Report (1970) on the state of the residential and industrial schools (1970) and the Task Force Report on Child Care Services (1981) were instrumental in recommending a shift toward prevention of family breakdown and support for families in the community rather than residential care.

The Child Care Act 1991 emerged as a landmark legislative development for the protection and welfare of children that triggered a decade of greater attention to the needs and rights of children in social policy discourse (Considine & Dukelow, 2009, p. 374.) The Act, while based on the principle that it is in the best interests of the child to be brought up in their own family, placed a duty on the State's health authorities the Health Service Executive (formerly, and at the time of the Act, the health boards) to identify and respond to children not receiving adequate care and protection. It established the functions and duties of the health boards in defining three areas of childcare: child protection, alternative care for children who cannot remain at home, and family support and required each health board to provide a suite of services and supports for families. The underlying principle of the Act is that while having regard to the rights and duties of parents, the welfare of the child is to be at the centre of any decision-making process and that consideration is to be given to the wishes of the child. It signalled a more interventionist approach aimed at promoting the welfare and rights of children.

In 1999, the government introduced national guidelines to strengthen arrangements for the protection of children. *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (DOHC, 1999). Intended to provide a framework for interagency and multi-professional work practices, the guidelines are based on specific principles and responsibilities to meet the needs of children abused or at risk, they underline that child protection will only be achieved when accompanied by training, resources and support services for all families and children (DOHC, 1999 p. 18). Key principles underlying the guidelines include the welfare of the child as paramount; children's right to be heard; a commitment to early intervention and support for families and a partnership approach between parents and agencies in delivery of services.

#### *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1992*

In 1989, the United Nations adopted its Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) setting out rights guaranteed to children and young people under 18 years and imposing obligations on the family, community and the State in this regard. Ireland's ratification of the UNCRC in 1992 marked a significant shift in policy toward a rights-based focus. Once a country ratifies the Convention, it is obligated to review its national law to ensure full compliance with the articles therein and to submit reports on the situation for children's rights at periodic intervals. The underlying principles include non-discrimination regardless of race, sex, religion, disability or family background; that the child's best interests must govern all decisions affecting them and the child's view must be taken into consideration. The identification of basic human rights to which the Convention commits, includes children's right to survival, to full development of their physical and mental potential, protection from harm, and to full participation in family, cultural and social life. Ireland's decision to ratify the UN Convention, it has been suggested, was made without the Government fully appreciating the implications of doing so (Keenan, 2007). The provision of Ireland's first report and the resulting criticisms of the UN Committee regarding the country's performance provided the impetus for the announcement in 1998 of a government commitment to publishing a National Strategy for Children (Keenan, 2007).

*National Children's Strategy Our Children: Their Lives (2000)*

The first national strategy for children *The National Children's Strategy: Our Children Their Lives* (DOHC, 2000), introduced a ten year government plan and set goals that define policy for children. The NCS is underpinned by the UNCRC and works from a 'whole child perspective' which recognises the capacity of children to interact with and shape the world around them. It identifies nine key dimensions of children's development from physical and mental well-being, to social and peer relations all of which must be addressed if a child is to enjoy a satisfactory childhood and transition to adulthood. In doing so, the NCS set the agenda for what developed into a cross-sectoral approach to children and youth policy and services. Three main goals established that:

- Children would have a voice in matters that affect them
- Children's lives would be better understood and benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs
- Children would receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development

The NCS is widely accepted as a key policy development in several respects.

According to Hanafin, Brooks, Roche and Meaney (2012), it marked a major shift from the 1990s orientation of the need to protect children at risk toward a more holistic approach to children's lives based on their overall well-being. The combination of values (consultation, voice) institutional mechanisms, attention to services, coordination systems and reporting therein made for a positive response within the field (Harvey, 2011, p.13). Developed in consultation with children, it reflects a holistic view of children's needs and recognises the multi-dimensional aspect of children's lives. It also recognised children as citizens and rights holders themselves. According to Daly and Claverno, the recognition of children as individuals 'to some extent treats them as a group with interests that need to be reflected in the public policy agenda' (2002 p. 71).

The NCS marked an important milestone in shifting attitudes to children in Ireland and was heralded as providing a basis for policy development and service delivery. The Children's Rights Alliance, a coalition of over 90 non-governmental organisations working to secure the rights and needs of children in Ireland, undertook a review to determine whether the strategy met its objectives (CRA, 2011). A core part of the



CRA's mission is to secure the effective implementation of government policy relating to children. Their assessment concluded that progress on the first two goals had been effective; the third objective had been limited with inadequate supports and services for vulnerable children, children in care and homeless children. The review also criticised 'a strategy of two halves' (p. 2) characterised by 2000-2006, an initial period of action marked by development of key infrastructure and 2007-2010 marked by a slow-down in investment and reduced investment including closure or merging of key agencies; reduction in budgets for agencies representing vulnerable children and failure to provide adequate child protection services (p. 3). On implementation of the policy, it identified a lack of a clear plan driving delivery and outlined practical issues such as the need to establish a timeframe, budget and accountability systems.

### *Family Support Policy*

The importance of family support as a major strategic orientation in services for children and families recognises the role of prevention. In family support, 'The primary focus of these services is on early intervention aiming to promote the health and well-being and rights of all children, young people and their families. At the same time particular attention is given to those who are vulnerable or at risk' (Dolan, Canavan & Pinkerton, 2006, p. 17). The definition recognises family support as 'both a style of work and a set of activities that reinforce informal social networks through integrated programmes' (2006, p. 17). The model is one in which the needs of children and young people are met through levels of support starting with their families which, in turn, are part of a network of supportive relationships including community, school, wider organisations as well as policy and legislation.

The 1991 Child Care Act, for the first time, made it a statutory function of the Health Boards to provide childcare and family support services. However, as Millar (2006) points out, in response to child abuse inquiries of the time, the implementation of the Act was dominated by a largely child protection focus. It was only with the report on the Commission of the Family (1998) that a focused policy emerged having preventative and supportive measures for family life (p. 91).

The report of the Commission on the Family *Strengthening Families for Life* (1998) was instrumental in the emergence of a State policy on family support. It emphasised the need for public policy to focus on preventative and supportive measures to strengthen families and argued for a coordinated, comprehensive and effective approach to service delivery for families in adversity (Dolan & Holt, 2002). The report called for health boards to prioritise family support work at the preventative level. The main recommendations related to building strengths in families, assisting families carrying out their normal functions, promoting stability in family life and protecting the position of dependent and vulnerable family members and children. A national Family Support initiative, 'Springboard', was established in 1998 with an initial 14 community based services set up in designated disadvantaged areas. The following year, in line with the recommendations of the Commission, the government committed to establishing 100 family and community centres around the country to be run by voluntary and statutory agencies.

Family support services incorporate a range of interventions that are geared toward helping families address difficulties and include, for example, pre-school services, parental education, home visiting, and educational youth projects. In the early 2000s, family support functions moved from the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs to a designated agency, the Family Support Agency (FSA). The FSA was charged with responsibility for running community-based resource centres in Ireland providing family support and supporting organisations providing marriage, relationship, child and bereavement and family mediation services.

#### *Agenda for Children's Services*

The *Agenda for Children's Services* (Office of the Minister for Children, 2007) set out the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA)'s strategic direction and policy goals in relation to children's health and social services in Ireland. As a national policy document, the Agenda is regarded as significant in two respects. Firstly, the core principle of the policy is that provision of these services is based on the child being supported within the family and within the local community; an acknowledgement of the role of family support in preventative services for children and families. Secondly, it committed to adopting an outcomes approach to planning

services drawing together five National Services Outcomes for Children in Ireland as outlined in the National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives 2011-2016 (DCYA, 2011) that have become central to public policy and according to which children should be:

- Healthy, both physically and mentally
- Supported in active learning
- Safe from harm
- Economically secure
- Part of positive networks (family, friends, community) and participating in society

### **4.3.3 Service and Infrastructure Context**

#### **Service Context**

This section provides a brief overview of the systems in operation in Ireland under which services for children and families are planned, implemented and funded. Children and family services are provided directly through the health services as well as indirectly through the voluntary sector. Ireland has a long tradition of institutional services for children at risk in which religious orders and voluntary agencies acted as the main providers. In the 1950s, reflecting a shift from a punishment to a casework approach (Ferguson, 1996) the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) undertook responsibility for development of child protection services delivered by social workers in the ISPCC. With the establishment of the health boards in 1970, child care and protection services were taken over from the ISPCC and transferred to the statutory health services provided by Community Care teams within the local authorities and subsequently transferred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) in 2005. From 1991 to January 2014, services for children and families were located within the Primary, Continuing and Community Care pillar of the HSE. Local HSE health offices (LHOs) were responsible for the assessment and investigation of child abuse, fostering and residential care, as well as the provision of family support services to vulnerable families in the community. Professionals involved include social workers, primarily concerned with child protection and welfare; family support workers, and child care workers providing support to families engaged with child protection services.

The precise nature of the service provided is determined at the local level with the 32 LHO districts. Services are provided across the four Hardiker levels of need, namely universal services, support services, specialist services for those at risk and out of home care. In practice, services have focused on targeted areas of disadvantage and on families and children with complex or multiple needs with up to 85% of resources being steered here (Harvey, 2011, p.16) at the expense of investment in community-based more preventative services. These services are supplemented by specialised projects and services delivered by the voluntary and community organisations, for example Barnardos, and the Family Resource Centres run by the FSA.

The nature of the service landscape has meant that implementation and service-coordination are problematic with system failures well-documented in a number of high profile reports. Of these, the 2009 Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, the Ryan Report, called into focus the history of abuse and neglect of children in the industrial and residential institutions. The Commission made a total of twenty recommendations, four of which validated the experience of children who were detained in residential care historically and the remainder addressing the standard of care, protection and welfare for children at risk and in State care in 2009. The Report was accompanied by an Implementation Plan that acknowledged the presence of ‘common deficits in the delivery of services and arrangements for vulnerable children and families’ (OMCYA, 2009, p. 11). This included ‘a failure of modern child care practice is that national policy and legislation, in many instances, has not been fully implemented or has been unevenly applied.’ (OMCYA, 2009, p. 62). Specific challenges identified included the need for effective, joined up services across statutory and non-statutory agencies and recognition of duplication and piecemeal approaches in service provision for young people at risk. The Plan highlighted the importance of agencies and staff working together and identified as a failure a system in which collaboration takes place with no operational mandate depending on local leaders rather than standard practice. Effective services and good care would require the introduction of performance management with a focus on delivery and outcomes related to national policy (p. 14). From 2009, a requirement of HSE contracts to external providers included built-in performance and quality measures.

A strategic review of the delivery and management of child and family services (PA Consulting, 2009) highlighted a number of system problems. These included variation in practice at local level as well as the existence of debates within the HSE about what family support means with interpretations at the local level ranging from managing risk to providing supports. A major constraint the report found to be the ‘lack of a clear model for delivering child protection in the context of wider children and family supports’ (2009, p. 12) without which ‘practitioners on the ground will continue to operate within the bounds of what individual professional are prepared to provide rather than what the child, the state or the HSE require.’ Among the challenges in service delivery systems highlighted by the report are the following (PA Consulting 2009, p. 14):

- Collaboration between services and agencies is uneven and often depends on the quality of local relationships
- No multi-disciplinary approach
- Referrals across services is problematic
- Interaction with education bodies is difficult.

Among the criticisms of the sector, the absence of an effective system for knowledge collection to look at resources or outcomes has been identified as an information deficit. This lack of an “input model” that includes no national inventory on services makes it extremely difficult to track the resources invested in children’s services. (Harvey, 2011, p. 16). The HSE service plan for 2011, he noted, provides only a global figure of €87M. Importantly, the level of funding to voluntary organisations for children is not itemised, however, the report quotes an informed estimate of funding for voluntary organisations providing children and family services as €100M.

### **Infrastructure**

Over the past two decades, the policy infrastructure for children, families and young people has undergone considerable realignment with responsibility shifting to a full government department in 2011. These developments are outlined below along with a summary of the primary strategy documents in force and in development at the time of the study.

In 2001, a National Children's Office was established within the Department of Health and Children. In 2005, the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) was set up to bring greater coherence to policymaking and support the implementation of the National Children's Strategy. The Office became the Office of the Minister for Children and Young People (OMCYA) in 2008 with youth work becoming part of the Children and Youth services Development Unit. Following a general election in election in 2011, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) was set up with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs becoming a full cabinet minister. The Department operated with 'a mandate to put in place a unified framework of policy, legislation and provision across Government in respect of children and young people' (DYA, 2012, p. xi). It followed a Government decision to consolidate a range of functions that were previously the responsibilities of the Ministers for Health, for Education and Skills, Justice and Law reform, and Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

At a strategic level, these changes provided the structure with which to bring about a harmonised approach to children's lives in policymaking across domains as well as in areas such as children's and young people's participation, research on children and young people, youth work and cross cutting initiatives (Hanafin et al, 2012). Setting up the DCYA brought together the key area of policy and provision including the National Educational Welfare Board, the Family Support Agency, the Adoption Authority of Ireland and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children. It indicated a commitment to harmonising policy and service delivery across Government on a cross departmental basis through which it was envisaged that focused interventions dealing with child welfare and protection, family support, adoption, school attendance and reducing youth crime for instance could be better implemented (DCYA, 2012).

Information on the lives of children and young people has improved tremendously over the period. A biennial *State of the Nation's Children* report and surveys such as *Growing Up in Ireland* provide a wealth of information for policymakers and ensure that the public is informed and updated on the positive as well as negative aspects of children's and young people's lives and comparisons with other countries.

The DCYA Strategy (2012) sets out the Department's mission to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. The alignment of policies, legislation and resources to bring about better outcomes for children and young people and provide support for parents and families is established as core focus (p. ix) alongside a commitment to placing outcomes at the centre of policy and service delivery, informed by evidence (p. v). It included a number of commitments for children and young people that the DCYA was charged with implementing:

- holding of a Referendum in relation to the rights of children;
- establishment of a Child and Family Support Agency on a statutory basis to reform the delivery of child protection services and remove responsibility from the HSE
- investing in targeted early childhood education for disadvantaged children

Of the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme the strategy spoke of integrating and leveraging the lessons, combined with an area-based focus on poverty.

It committed to adopting a focus on prevention and early intervention, acknowledging that 'significant research evidence indicates that in many cases targeted interventions would result in improved outcomes' DCYA, 2012, p.4) whilst acknowledging that 'The shift in balance from *short-term remedial* planning to *longer term prevention* planning' is complex in a climate of resource constraints. Evidence on effectiveness, it stated, would inform current State funding which could be redesigned or reviewed.

In November 2012, a referendum to strengthen children's rights in the Constitution was held. As a result of a positive endorsement, a new article 'children' (42a) will be inserted in the Constitution. The amendment, with several provisions:

- recognises the rights of the child
- provides for state intervention in the family where the welfare or Safety of the child is negatively affected, and
- Enshrines the State's duty to pass laws to make adoption available to all children.

In addition, in certain judicial proceedings, it makes the best interests of the child paramount and ensures that the child's views are heard.

### *Future directions and orientation*

At the time of conducting the fieldwork for this study, a new Children and Young People's Policy Framework was proposed to provide a seamless, whole-of-childhood approach to policymaking with a focus on the key developmental periods for children and young people. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020* (DCYA, 2014) adopts a whole of government approach underpinned by a number of constituent strategies in the areas of early years, youth and participation. Key aspects include the establishment of a shared set of outcomes for children and young people towards which all government departments and agencies, statutory services and the voluntary and community sectors will work, attention to key cross-cutting transformational goals under each outcome area; and emphasis on an integrated and evidence informed approach to working across government. The strategy adopted a number of Transformational Goals to support the achievement of better outcomes for all children and young people including supporting parents; a shift in emphasis from crisis intervention to prevention and early intervention; a culture that listens to, and involves children and young people; and quality services, that are outcome driven and obliged to prove their effectiveness and value for money.

### *Child and Family Agency Act (2013)*

In January 2014, following the enactment of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, the Child and Family Agency was established with responsibility for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. Described as the 'comprehensive reform of services for the development, welfare and protection of children and the support of families ever undertaken in Ireland' (Tusla, 2014, p. 1) the creation of the new agency, Tusla, brings together 4,000 staffs from within Children and Family Services of the Health Service Executive, the National Educational Welfare Board and the Family Support Agency. Tusla has responsibility for the following range of services:

- Child Welfare and Protection Services, including family support services
- Family Resource Centres and associated national programmes
- Early years (pre-school) Inspection Services



- Educational Welfare responsibilities including School completion programmes and Home School Liaison
- Domestic, sexual and gender based violence services
- Services related to the psychological welfare of children

Key principles underlying the plan include a commitment to support and encourage the effective functioning of families, including the provision of preventative family support services. It established the best interests of the child as a paramount consideration in making decisions and prioritised enhanced agency co-operation to ensure that services for children are co-ordinated. In relation to Family Support, the Agency has approved a national practice model, Meitheal, for agencies that work with children as a standardized approach to ensuring children and families receive support in an integrated and coordinated way. The Act also created a new framework for accountability for the use of resources. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* requires Tusla to introduce the commissioning of services, moving away from a grants system to outcome-based contracts (p. 69).

#### **4.3.4 Youth work: practice and policy**

Alongside the priority placed on programmes for children and families, the youth sector has received targeted support from the two foundations. In policy terms, youth work in Ireland refers to out of school education, recreation and other activities operated primarily by voluntary organisations (Kiely & Kennedy, 2005). As a form of provision for young people, key principles that differentiate youth work include the following (2005, pp. 186-7):

- It is based on young people's voluntary rather than compulsory participation
- It involves a transfer of power to young people prioritising their active participation
- It is youth centered
- It seeks to raise young people's awareness of the society in which they live

Within the youth work sector, the principle of subsidiarity operates with the role of the State principally that of enabling and supporting voluntary organisations in the development and delivery of services, rather than providing direct services (Devlin,

2012). Three voluntary organisations historically served as the main providers of youth services – Foroige, Youth Work Ireland and Catholic Youth Care. The largest of these, Foroige, the National Youth Development Organisation provides a comprehensive range of youth work services through the operation of Foroige clubs, local youth services, youth development projects and Youth Information Centres. Alongside universal services it provides programmes that focus on vulnerable young people in relation to issues arising from poverty and social disadvantage.

Two trends have dominated the youth sector in the area of funding, firstly the tendency for public revenue streams to concentrate on targeted populations and secondly, the financial cutbacks that began in 2008. Leahy and Burgess (2011, p. 20) note that the idea of youth work as primarily a recreational and social activity under the broader social education area is changing as policymakers view the sector as having a key role in delivering services to disadvantaged young people. A study of youth work provision in Ireland (Powell et al., 2010) highlighted the bifurcated nature of the landscape with clear differences in the provision of mainstream and targeted youth work in terms of funding allocations. Targeted provision is defined as ‘specific programmes facilities or activities which are offered to young people and to which they have been referred to due to falling into a certain category or condition of behaviour’ (p. 20). In practice, this takes the form of disadvantaged youth projects, youth outreach centres, youth diversion projects, young people’s facilities and services projects. Their increasing share of the youth work budget raises ‘the issue of the possible need to re-focus some efforts on mainstream youth work if the sector wants to be seen for its ‘complementary’ rather than ‘compensatory’ function’ (p.4).

This tension between universality and targeted provision had been noted with Kiely and Kennedy commenting that youth work is an area where ‘young people are recognised as constituting a universal group, but at the same time they are differentiated and demarcated in terms of the levels and kinds of interventions they are perceived to need’ (2005, p. 187). In contrast with targeted or specialised interventions or services, ‘mainline’ youth provision is characterised by its universal ‘open to all’ feature and is consists largely of youth clubs in local areas staffed primarily by volunteers. Both tend to employ a community youth work model, with either a geographic or a community

of interest (Leahy & Burgess, 2011, p. 24). Alongside and particularly in the case of the specialised interventions, a significant increase in professionally trained youth workers working directly with young people has been observed (Devlin, 2010.)

#### *Size, Scale and Scope of Sector, Trends in Funding*

A 2012 study of the sector estimated there are over forty voluntary youth organisations overseeing local community-based projects and delivering services on the ground (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2012, p. 36). In addition to the category of “multi service organisations” that comprise Foroige, Catholic Youth Care and Youth Work Ireland, the list is made up of issue-based organisations including faith-based, equality-based, environment, Irish language, arts and uniformed organisations such as Scouting Ireland.

In the public domain, the sector is financed by three primary streams as evidenced from 2011 figures —Department of Children and Youth Affairs (78%); the Health Service Executive (11%) and Irish Youth Justice Service (11%) (NYCI, 2012, p. 12). Of the income from the DCYA, Special Projects for Youth (SPY) schemes primarily community-based projects for disadvantaged areas, accounted for the largest portion at 29.5%. The HSE funding related to neighbourhood youth projects and specific health-related issues for young people. The funding from the Department of Justice and Equality focused on diversion and rehabilitation through community-based interventions in the form of Garda Youth Diversion projects. The sector has been significantly impacted by cuts in public funding with estimates of 30% decrease cuts in funding lines between 2008 and 2013 (NYCI, 2012).

According to the NYCI (2012) report, the vast number of youth work organisations (80%), provide recreational, arts and sports-related activities while over half are engaged in activities which are focused on welfare and wellbeing. Issue-based activities form an important focus for youth work organisations. The report estimated that 43.3% of the total youth population aged between 10 and 24 participate in programmes provided by youth organisations throughout Ireland; and that 53.3% of young people participating are believed to be economically or socially disadvantaged

(p. 13). The economic value of youth work was addressed in a cost benefit analysis suggesting that over a 10-year period the economic benefit to the state through investment in youth work exceed the costs by a factor of 2.2.

### *Infrastructure and Legislation*

At the policy level, youth work and services have historically come under the Departments of Labour and Education and subsequently the Youth Affairs section of the Department of Education and Science. In 2008, Youth Affairs amalgamated with the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) itself established in 2005, which then became the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). As outlined above, the OMCYA operated under the Department of Health and Children until 2011 when the Department of Children and Youth Affairs was established headed by a full Cabinet Minister.

The Youth Work Act and the National Development Plan are the primary legal and policy instruments that address social policy for youth.

The 2001 Youth Work Act provides a definition of youth work as:

*A planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation which is:*

- a) complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and*
- b) provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations*

.’ (Youth Work Act, 2001 sec. 3).

Among the notable elements of the definition is the emphasis on the fundamentally educational nature of youth work. In this regard, the move from the Department of Education to the DCYA has caused some consternation in the sector of the need to preserve this particular ethos and orientation (Devlin, 2012, p. 36). The Act also states that particular regard be paid to the youth work requirements of young persons who are socially or economically disadvantaged and the need for resources to enhance their social and personal development. The principle of subsidiary is formally recognised in

the legislation which states that services are provided primarily by voluntary organisations. At the same time, a partnership between the State and voluntary sector is provided for with statutory responsibility conferred on the Minister for Education for coordination of policies relating to youth work programmes and services. These statutory responsibilities were devolved at the local level to Vocational Education Committees (VECs) to coordinate youth work services and monitor expenditure.

The Act provided for a National Youth Work Advisory Committee to advise the Minister on implementation of the accompanying National Youth Work Development Plan. It also created a national body, the National Youth Council of Ireland as the designated representative youth work organisation for young people's voice and interests. The Act has been criticised as imposing an overly bureaucratic structure on the sector and for its lack of implementation of several of the provisions therein (Kiely & Kennedy, 2005).

The introduction of the Act was accompanied by the National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-7 (Department of Education and Science, 2003) intended to guide its implementation. Overarching goals included:

- To facilitate young people and adults to participate more fully in youth work programmes and services
- To enhance the contribution of youth work to social inclusion, social cohesion and citizenship global and national context
- To put in place an expanded and enhanced infrastructure for development support and coordination
- To put in place mechanisms for professionalism

In line with this policy trend toward more meaningful participation, in 2009, the DCYA enhanced its capacity by creating the Children and Young People's Participation Support Team to support the development of representative bodies and children and young people's participation initiatives. Taken together the value of the YWA and the NYWDP, although widely criticised for lack of implementation have been acknowledged as valuable in the recognition of youth work itself. Making the 'case' for youth work, where it takes place and what it involves, has served to advance

understanding of the importance of the sector and to address a public need. As Powell points out by holding up a positive image of youth work, seeking to engage positively with young people public policy ‘informs and shapes public opinion, often driven by media stereotypes’ (Powell et al, 2010, p. 8).

#### **4.3.5 Summary**

The section above outlines the policy and service context for children, families and young people in Ireland with a focus on the period from the early 1990s. Major changes in social policy direction and legislation with resonance for this study are reviewed. These include a more active role by the State in relation to supporting families through a family support, early intervention orientation; a shift toward children and young people seen as citizens in their right with emphasis on social and personal development opportunities for their healthy development. For organisations delivering services, the increased focus on outcomes has impacted their core funding and income streams. The move away from viewing youth work as a volunteer led universal service to supporting interventions targeted at disadvantaged communities is notable. The operational context for services outlined in this section highlights both the complexity of the service delivery system and the shortcomings therein. It also points to a number of practical challenges in implementing these policy objectives. Finally, the creation of a dedicated department for children and youth provided the impetus for the adoption of widespread change and these developments are reviewed.

#### **4.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter set out to provide contextual information for this study. The first section provided a detailed narrative of the ethos, purposes and goals associated with the programmatic interventions undertaken by the One Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies. The level of legislative and policy activity immediately prior to and during the period at which philanthropic funding peaked is notable. The centrality of prevention and early intervention as a fundamental focus for philanthropy took place alongside it occupying a key space in the policy frameworks for children and young people. The second half of the chapter focused on the wider context in which social policy for children and young took place. The extent of change in the policy landscape presented an opportunity for philanthropy including working with organisations to keep

government focused on monitoring and implementation aspects. Importantly, given the emphasis on systems change adopted by philanthropy as key goals, the operational context for children services is described. Among the challenges to implementing policy are the complexity of the service delivery system and the degree of autonomy extended to local actors within it.

## Chapter Five: Foundations, the State and Public Policy

### 5.1 Presentation of study findings: Organisational overview

The findings of this study are presented in the following three chapters. As set out in Table 5.1 below, through an exploration of the strategic goals undertaken by foundations operating in the children and youth sector, each chapter focuses on one of the three research objectives for the thesis. This, fifth chapter provides results on the selection of policy engagement as a key point of intervention for foundations. Chapter Six focuses on findings in relation to the experiences of participants in implementing the impact-driven approaches associated with strategic philanthropy. An overview of the perceived influence of philanthropic investment on the discourse for policy and practise emerging in the children and youth field is contained in Chapter Seven. In presenting the views of participants, these chapters are structured to integrate results from the data with discussion. Accordingly, reference is made throughout to key informing debates in the literature outlined in Chapter Two.

**Table 5.1 Location of results related to the study objectives**

Source	Strategic goals	Thesis Objective
Chapter 5 <i>Policy Engagement</i>	Through policy engagement as a point of intervention	<i>Understanding</i> the rationale for strategic orientation
Chapter 6 <i>Creating Social Impact</i>	Through social investment	<i>Exploring</i> the implementation of strategic approaches
Chapter 7 <i>Influence on field &amp; legacy</i>	Through changes in policy and practice discourse	<i>Considering</i> the influence on policy and practice

As outlined in Chapter Three, the data required to address the study's research objectives was collected from 27 expert informants. These individuals represented three categories of stakeholder: (1) representatives of philanthropy (denoted by the abbreviation PT); (2) nonprofit beneficiaries (denoted by the abbreviation B) and (3)



statutory representatives with policymaking responsibility (denoted by PM). Where feasible, the responses of these stakeholders are clustered together to present views on a singular aspect of material. However, at other times in the narrative, their responses are intermingled to illustrate divergent or common perspectives. In some instances, elements of the inquiry generated disproportionate amounts of material between stakeholder groups and these are noted.

Chapter Eight, the final chapter of the thesis, draws together the sub-questions that framed the exploration of strategic philanthropy in the preceding three chapters into a framework that enables an overall assessment of the opportunities, benefits and challenges that accompany this form of philanthropic intervention.

## **5.2 Overview: Policy objectives**

As outlined in Chapter Four, the foundations in this study sought to influence policy through a variety of strategies including:

- demonstrating the effectiveness of prevention and early intervention;
- supporting service models for replication and scaling;
- producing a body of well-evidenced programmes and practices; and
- increasing the capacity of organisations to influence policy.

This chapter, focusing on policy engagement, is organised into three sub-sections. It begins with a discussion of the roles and relevance of foundations in Ireland as perceived by the stakeholders in the study and, related to that, their appropriate level of intervention (5.3). The remainder of the chapter is then devoted to an exploration of the strategies adopted by funders with public policy goals, namely, site-based demonstration models and the use of advocacy. Section 5.4 examines perspectives on how a partnership with government (Atlantic Philanthropies and the Irish State) operated in a site-based model of co-investment that formed part of the Prevention and Early Intervention programme. The following section (5.5) highlights the importance of advocacy as a strategy for foundations adopting a systems change orientation.

## **5.3 Foundations in Irish society: roles and relevance**

### **5.3.1 Understanding roles**

This section sets out to clarify the understanding of respondents with regard to the functions foundations perform that cannot be provided by the State or the market as well as the basis on which they are seen as legitimate actors in society. The extent to which foundations can be effective in achieving their goals depends on whether they are perceived as legitimate actors by other stakeholders in a particular domain. According to Dogan (2006, p. 273), foundation legitimacy is based on the belief that ‘they are considered more efficient and more appropriate institutions to fulfil certain social functions sensitive to the needs of the society than the state bureaucracy or the liberal market’.

The organising framework in this section is around the roles occupied by foundations with reference to common characteristics in the literature that identify their distinctive contribution. Consistent with findings in Europe (Anheier & Daly, 2007), for the most part, participants conveyed little in the way of conscious identification with distinct roles or functions for philanthropy. The views expressed below are primarily those of the philanthropic and statutory sector interviewees. Not surprisingly, the beneficiary group, many of whom, at the time of the fieldwork were negotiating further investment were reticent in expressing views on the legitimacy of philanthropy.

#### *Views of philanthropic representatives*

The philanthropic representatives included six staff at five funding organisations and four advisors to the sector. None of the staff had prior direct experiences in working at a philanthropic organisation and all were in post since 2000. Their personal backgrounds contained a mixture of nonprofit and for-profit expertise. Of the five organisations, The Atlantic Philanthropies’ (Ireland) programme was a branch of the main organisation in the United States. Of the four other organisations represented, staff at three reported going to the United States to undertake training and education on the diverse models of philanthropy and its operation.

Overall, in developing social or public policy goals, foundation representatives identified a limited number of options for philanthropic intervention citing the need for close alignment with the State and the realities of ‘working with the system’.

Respondents spoke of the conscious attention given to positioning their investments in order to ‘add value’ and highlighted a number of the areas, unique to the sector where they had capacity for influence.

*Complementarity:* As defined in the literature, this role involves foundations in complementing State activity through ‘filling the gaps’ in statutory provision. It includes operating in areas where the State has not acted or in providing specialist services and typically involves elements of partnership or leveraging funding from other sources. In this study, representatives from philanthropy characterised their actions clearly within the confines of existing State provision. Participants consistently referred to the kind of society and the type of democracy operating in Ireland as a mitigating factor that limited the choices for intervention in public policy and services. Contrasting the situation to the United States, where the philanthropic sector has an acknowledged role in the delivery of social services, in an Irish context, the routes selected for investment necessitated close association with government:

I mean, public services are essentially in Europe provided by the state. Now, maybe not directly, maybe through NGOs and others so if you want to influence that you have to be in dialogue with the people who hold the power and the purse strings in respect to that. And I don’t think there’s a choice. (PT3)

In such an environment, effecting change meant working ‘within the system’ through direct engagement with policymakers:

...if you're really going to do philanthropy you almost have to engage with government. We've only in the latter days really engaged with government *per se*, but engaging with government policy, because you can't ignore it, there's absolutely no point. You can work to change it but you need to know what it is .....and you need to know what your levers towards change are, otherwise you won't get anywhere. (PT4)

*Social (and policy change):* When foundations identify with a social and policy change objective, it is often associated with addressing structural change and the promotion of a more just society (Anheier & Daly, 2007). This study found little evidence of any debate about the nature or ethos of philanthropy taking place in Ireland. In contrast to the United States where social justice or social change philanthropy is considered somewhat controversial and associated with a minority of ‘progressive’ foundations occupying what Suarez (2012) terms an ‘sensitising discourse’ within philanthropy, foundations operating in Ireland expressed little need to justify their efforts as targeting

disadvantage or injustice. Rather, an inherent commitment to a social justice framework was assumed. It was however acknowledged by foundation representatives that philanthropy needed to counter its public image of being associated with the wealthy. PT6 captured the perspectives of others in outlining that:

...it's about getting people to realise that this isn't about some kind of elitist, and airy-fairy stuff I suppose so it's is a little bit about trying to ground it, and to actually demonstrate, have a look at what philanthropy has done in Ireland and it works in some of the most difficult issues in some of the most difficult areas.(PT6)

Representatives from philanthropy questioned the capacity of foundations to be socially transformative. Citing the example of youth unemployment as an area that was considered and not selected for investment, a respondent explained the decision was made on the basis that the foundation would be unable to impact the issue given its limited resources and the large scale of the problem.

Foundation representatives perceived their role in society primarily as an 'added value' function. The majority of respondents indicated that where foundations can be particularly effective is in fostering new ways of doing things. Proponents of this view often assume that the State system could not accommodate change:

I think that government is a very large bureaucratic thing to move and getting new ways of working or getting new approaches to old problems takes a very long time and I think philanthropy has a huge contribution to make in terms of funding early work in whatever the new kind of emerging area is....(PT5)

For funders that took on what can be characterised as 'big' problems, the respondent below suggested that philanthropic intervention would be best positioned to identifying blockages in the system:

They will identify barriers to things happening and so you are trying to influence that to happen but it's coming from what's happening on the ground. We don't set up with 'oh, we need to change that policy' For intractable problems, we know that things haven't worked in a certain way. Is there a way of making them work in a better way. (PT1)

*Innovation:* It is widely accepted that innovation is a role for which philanthropy is ideally suited (Anheier & Daly, 2007, Leat, 2005). While innovation takes many forms, it is generally understood to include new perceptions, values and creative ways of working. As discussed above, a significant number of philanthropic representatives

highlighted the capacity of philanthropy for facilitating solutions and the development of new approaches to existing social problems. Questioned about their role in innovation, for the most part, foundation representatives acknowledged the capacity to innovate as existing within nonprofit beneficiary groups, characterising their own part as that of facilitators. For instance, commenting on the foundation's aspiration to affect change, PT4 described it as an enabling mechanism:

Well, you know it's multi-agency working, it's people working together, but it's not hugely more than that because in a way so much of what's out there in the voluntaries is what we want to be working towards, we don't actually have to re-imagine it, (PT4)

Core characteristics of innovative or creative funding include the development of knowledge concerning new ways to address social needs and reaching across established boundaries in organisations or fields (Anheier & Daly, 2007, Leat, 2005). An area of consensus in the data related to the value of foundations in convening or bringing diverse groups of people together. This resonates with the idea of foundations as 'knowledge brokers' which can include 'questioning the conventional wisdoms, making the connections, thinking and working outside the box' (Leat, 2005 p. 10).

In this sense, philanthropy can be credited with facilitating strategic partnerships. A number of beneficiaries spoke about the experience of engaging in soliciting funds or managing programmes funded in partnership with joint recipients as requiring elements of community engagement and consultation that had not been present in the sector. The process forced agencies to work together and to come out of their "silos" for instance:

We were building a new way of doing things, and bringing groups together in a very different way because you are promising them they'd all get something at the end of it and so that was fantastic because I've worked long in the community and people were all in their little silos, we did move beyond that at least for a period of time. (B2)

Commenting on the experience of bringing together people from different parts of the sector to work together to talk about service coordination, the respondent below reflected on the value of philanthropic money as a means of facilitating activities that did not happen under current alignment with government departments:

We know this can't be done without additional resources. I know from experience. Because they're always talking about if Departments

pooled...Departments can't pool, won't pool. So this is where philanthropic money comes in. (B7)

The idea of philanthropists as risk takers or entrepreneurs resonated strongly with the foundation sector. Philanthropists, one respondent noted “don't have to answer to shareholders and they don't have to answer to the vote, so there's a lot about that” (PT6). Philanthropists can take risks; while government will incur consequences if these risks are perceived as failures. Moreover, at an individual level, “if you're a civil servant you're never rewarded for success but you are punished for failure and that's a limiting factor” (PT5). In this regard, accessing ‘policy entrepreneurs’ namely, public servants that acted as champions for new or innovative approaches proved critical for philanthropy. Generally, the respondent above reflected, government will need external pressure to help something happen; for individuals innovating within the system, ‘If they have an idea, they'll need someone to fly cover for it’.

*Pluralism:* Pluralist arguments for philanthropy highlight the promotion of experimentation and diversity as the primary contribution made by the presence of foundations in society and the importance of their role in acting as a counterbalance to the market and the State. In the broad context of benefiting democracy and civil society, the true benefit of foundations is less on what they do and more on what they represent (Payton & Moody, 2008). The importance of philanthropy to funding independent civil society was cited by a number of participants as a key factor in legitimising a role for foundations. This perspective acknowledges the unique capacity of civil society to innovate. One participant observed that while business can innovate, “business typically innovates for its own functions it doesn't necessarily innovate for others”. Nonprofit organisations are free from pressure to generate profit and therefore well placed to address the public good, a view elaborated below:

There are things that business can do and there are things that government can do but there are also things that civil society does better than either or that you can have a co-operation of all three. Business can't do everything and despite what some pro-business enthusiasts say applying the tools and techniques of business to every other problem does not work. There's a role for an independent civil society that does a lot of the things which make a country a good place to live in. And I think philanthropy's role and charity's role is to fund that to make sure that it is actually genuinely independent. (PT6)

Another interesting aspect of the role of philanthropy vis-a vis government is in its function in ‘creating discomfort in a helpful way’. Another representative reflected that in the absence of philanthropy “who’s job is it to fund advocacy?” before going on to express a view:

My biggest concern would be around advocacy and social justice because I think philanthropy has probably done more for advocacy and social justice than it has for anything else and in fact it has really in fairness developed very good structures. Now some of it may end up having to be run on a voluntary basis but at least there's a legacy there of advocacy. (PT10)

The concerns of the above participant and the belief that regardless of perceptions of the particular intervention or choices in funding, a sense pervaded that the sector would be more vulnerable without philanthropy.

#### *Views of policymakers*

The term ‘policymaker’ is employed widely in the study and incorporates senior civil servants from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and elected representatives with direct experience in the field of philanthropy and children and youth. Their views on the function of philanthropy ranged from resigned acceptance of its role in offering an alternative viewpoint to pragmatic understanding of the benefits of mutual engagement around shared outcomes. For the most part, this group believed that foundations should not have a role in the formation of policy.

The predominance of two primary foundations created a sense of a monopoly and, for some, enabled foundations to exert a disproportionate influence. One policymaker attributed this over-influence to the small size and underdeveloped nature of the sector in Ireland:

The difficulty I always found and this is the tricky part probably in Ireland more than any place because we’re so small, as a philanthropist you have the power because you’ve got the money but then if you’ve got also the ear of the policy makers you have that additional power... I don’t think that’s a good thing. I don’t think philanthropy should have that much power (PM6)

For the respondent, who expressed a strong view of the need for a ‘decoupling’ between philanthropy and government, the critique related to the size of the sector which had not reached maturity. The best alternative would have been to actively encourage the

development of philanthropy bringing the field to the point where a plurality and diversity of options for partnership would operate. Going on to elaborate:

...we need a whole lot more different forms of both philanthropists, philanthropy and ways of investment so that one or two doesn't control the whole way (PM6)

The policymaker group indicated that invitations to partner with philanthropy involved an element of coercion. A partner in the Prevention and Early Intervention programme (discussed in the following section) commented that in the choice of sites for investment:

And it never felt like we had much power to influence it because a lot about that they decided ultimately... (PM5)

Another participant who had actively encouraged partnering with government, offered the following reflection:

You see there was always that 'will you match this?' but then if you're going to match it you have to agree with it (PM3).

Policymakers interviewed expressed a largely ambivalent relationship with philanthropy with respondents largely confining a role for philanthropy to innovation or in early identification of problems. A senior policymaker expressed a preference for philanthropy's contribution in the following terms:

it should be about stimulation, it should be about identifying problems and issues at an early stage and moving quickly and rapidly to try and address them. Going to the political theory I think if you believe in a properly functioning democratic theory which says the people decide on what the kind of public good is and then they vote their taxes to pay for that, I think there is a social provision for that in the democratic process and I don't think that should be handed over but that's a kind of an imperfect slow moving beast so I think philanthropy does have a role (PM3)

The quote demonstrates a preference for a limited role and an explicit resistance to the idea that philanthropy could impinge on the system of democratic decisionmaking or engage too directly in the political sphere. Rather, the view common within the group, indicated that the ideal role envisaged for philanthropy would be a civic or social responsibility function.



A related area in which participants accorded a role for philanthropy was in addressing system inefficiencies described as “rigidities” where “they can change direction and put something in place that looks better and then people say “oh, well that’s much more effective, let’s move there” (PM1). This participant noted that the role described as “influential yet modest” and was careful to characterise its limited nature:

it’s kind of system change but all of the time the ultimate decision on whether the system is going to change has to be played back into the democratic sphere, you can’t be a small number of people deciding where we are all going to go and they are funding us to get there. (PM1)

Policymakers experienced the differences in the kinds of philanthropic approaches in different ways.

I think AP from the start have had engagement with government and has seen that and it’s important and has seen that trying to build an appetite within government for the changes they are trying to bring about would be important and that part of that would be part of the process. So for me we can critique their execution but they had a systemic kind of objective. (PM3)

The small scale of the sector and the approach taken by the two foundations not to accept unsolicited funding proposals prompted some criticism of the overly prescriptive role occupied by philanthropy in the field. This counted against the ethos of the spirit of innovation and capacity of a sector in other areas as experienced below:

definitely I don’t think they should be coming and pointing the direction. I think what they could be interested in is supporting advocacy and human rights and social justice and whatever, in a very generic form but I think in relation to being prescriptive I just don’t think that would run. (B6)

### **5.3.2 Summary**

This section has considered the relevance and legitimacy of foundations in Irish society. While the assumption of a social justice orientation is assumed in the realm of philanthropic activity in Ireland, foundation representatives interviewed demonstrated no inclination for seeking structural change in society. Rather, they took care to align their programmes with State policy while identifying levers of change within existing frameworks. In practice, identifying leverage points for change and intervening at effective places in the policy environment represented a conscious decision to work ‘within the system’. Particularly in Europe, the approach typifies that of foundations with public policy priorities in which strategic operation is understood to be a conscious awareness of the role philanthropy can occupy in relation to public systems.

In seeking changes to public systems and public policy, tensions and conflicts about the role and relevance of foundations and the State in the social policymaking process appeared. Overall, the views of participants, both from a philosophical and pragmatic perspective, revealed a deep-rooted belief that the policies of the State should not be dictated or overly-influenced by philanthropy. At most, the data suggests a peripheral role for philanthropy. Participants viewed philanthropy's 'added value' function as best served by fostering new ways of doing things and in developing alternative approaches to existing social issues. Philanthropic intervention therefore, respondents characterised as best suited to the identification of early or emerging problems and to targeting deficiencies such as barriers or blockages in the system. The unique ability of philanthropy to take risks was perceived as an important counterbalance to a latent tendency by government to be risk adverse. In attributing an innovation role for philanthropy, participants believed it to be best served by enabling the capacity already existing in civil society. Across the sector, the function of foundations as knowledge brokers or convenors emerged as a key role.

Overall, as outlined above, respondents highlighted the key function believed appropriate, the 'legitimising role' for philanthropy to be that of funding independent civil society. This view accords with Payton and Moody's (2008) understanding of philanthropy's purpose as beneficial to a fully functioning democracy in which its contribution must be considered as part of the broader nonprofit sector environment that operates with a general mandate to serve the public good.

## **5.4 Philanthropy and the State: A Partnership model**

For funders with public policy goals, the use of 'site-based' also called place-based grantmaking is a popular strategy. It involves the funding of interventions in particular communities as 'demonstration' projects on the assumption that based on the results, larger and more sustainable sources of funding will come on board and broaden their impact. Among foundations, such demonstration projects are favoured as a way of showcasing innovative approaches and of strengthening community engagement and participation in advocating for policy change in the long-term (Coffman, 2008; Knott

& McCarthy, 2007).

As outlined in Chapter Four, the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programme included a funding partnership between the Irish Government and Atlantic to support three large-scale model prevention and early intervention projects in disadvantaged areas of Dublin (Childhood Development Initiative in Tallaght West, *youngballymun* in Ballymun and Preparing for Life in Darndale). The development of a formal partnership in which each party invested €18M represented the first such collaboration between philanthropy and the State in the Republic of Ireland. In its execution, the co-investment manifested two fundamental principles of strategic philanthropy; the importance of site-based grantmaking and leverage in which foundations use their resources as a catalyst for larger funding streams. The basis of the €36M co-investment included a commitment for beneficiary organisations to undertake rigorous evaluation to determine effectiveness in improving outcomes for children and for the learning to be adapted for wider dissemination among the broader community responsible for design, delivering and funding of services for children (Rochford, Doherty & Owens, 2014).

This section focuses primarily on the perspectives of respondents in relation to their experiences of negotiating a government-philanthropic partnership. Responses below present the views of individuals who had first-hand knowledge of and engagement in the partnership process. As such, they are primarily those of the philanthropic and statutory groups; however, representatives of the three community partnerships involved in the sites also engaged with State representatives in negotiating for funding and their views are included. The views of beneficiaries with regard to implementation of the programme are explored fully in the following chapter.

The investments in the three communities centred on the adoption of prevention and early intervention as a core strategic orientation and spanned early childhood, literacy and learning, child health and behaviour, parenting and youth mentoring interventions. For policymakers, this represented a departure in funding for services in several respects. Rather than focusing on crisis-driven or child protection approaches to services, prevention and early intervention strategies are oriented to realising the full

potential of children, families and communities; building skills and capacities to prevent the occurrence or escalation of problems and intervening at a young age or early in the development of a difficulty. The adoption of this approach reflected a recognition of historically poor outcomes in areas of disadvantage; minimal resources targeted at beginning of the life cycle; absence of evidence-informed, integrated service design; and lack of parental and community involvement with services (Prevention and Early Intervention Programme 2012).

Representatives of the philanthropic community were of the view that, against the background of substantive economic growth that characterised the period up to the mid-2000s in Ireland, political will existed to address some of the problems in marginalised communities. One participant characterised the ‘developmental approach’ with which it was associated as follows:

So it was at that kind of level that the negotiations took place about doing something serious for children and young people in disadvantaged communities and trying to take a longer term non-project based approach with a real view about taking the learning, evaluating it, really rigorously and using the learning to inform how services were developed beyond that. (PT9)

Both philanthropic and statutory respondents referred positively to the community engagement process as unique in:

- the involvement of a consortium of local actors actively engaged in the recipient communities
- the participation of key individuals with capacity to bring local groups together; and
- community consultation of primary needs.

At the outset, the emphasis on evidence-based approaches to proven models upon which the investments were based was founded on expectations that successful versions would be ultimately adopted by government for expansion into other communities. According to one participant:

I suppose the expectation was that if you could demonstrate that it worked effectively in an Irish context and we did a number of randomised control trials (RCT) around it, that the government would sit up and say this is what we should be doing. (B2)

Another referred to a pre-recession kind of optimism that private or public money would follow the demonstration of a successful programme. At the statutory level, the long-term nature of the investment was new. CDI, Youngballymun and Preparing for Life were all 10 year strategies. While the funding was agreed for five years; the expectation was that the State would continue for a further five thereafter. However, the timeline was truncated due to changing economic conditions. As one participant in a key site lamented;

I bought into it because it was a 10 year process. It was reduced to 5 because the world around us changed now that's a pity because we know it needs 10 - 20 years to make a serious impact'. (B3)

According to those engaged in the negotiations, considerable pressure was required to convince the State to engage in the co-investment. This involved advocacy on the part of Atlantic itself, and by the three partnerships involved in the community sites, all of whom engaged in discussions with statutory representatives. Ultimately, securing government participation required intervention at the highest level between Atlantic's founder Chuck Feeney and the Taoiseach at the time Bertie Ahern.

Among statutory representatives, there was a definite perception that the parameters of work were set by philanthropy with little opportunity for state partners to influence the direction or focus for the programme. A number of challenges emerged that illustrate the social, cultural and philosophical distance between the partners.

The demands placed on statutory funders by the new approach required considerable adjustment in the way that government departments traditionally operated. At one level, the change in focus from a reactive to a preventative approach introduced new terminology into the fabric of policy. As the initiative did not fit into any existing statutory funding stream, a new Programme for Prevention and Early Intervention (PPEI) was created within the DCYA (at the time the OMCYA). The shift in orientation to prevention incorporating an emphasis on the capacity of families represented a fundamental change of direction that, according to the participant below:

For the policy makers it was double Dutch, they didn't really know what we were talking about, they were quite sceptical of the whole thing and definitely if Atlantic hadn't put their money up it wouldn't have got off first base (B2)

For statutory funders, the introduction of language and expectations around evaluation and outcomes placed a high priority on delivering results. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the culture in which government departments operate offers limited reward for risk-taking. The potential for failure caused some trepidation on the part of policymakers involved:

I think a lot of government officials are sceptical and some of them certainly have voiced fear, well what's going to happen if this doesn't work out and we don't get any great results here everyone will think it will be a disaster....(PM5)

Another difficulty related to the optics of political decision-making; the selection of the three sites caused concern for policymakers who were required to justify this level of investment in particular communities. As experienced by PM2, political pressure was exerted from ministers and other political representatives from locations outside the three selected sites:

I had huge difficulty from my own minister, the minute the ink was signed on that (NAME) said 'all that money going out to those places, they get all the money, what about Blanchardstown' so they wanted to scatter the money. (PM2)

A fundamental element of the PEI sites related to the need, as perceived by philanthropy, for greater coordination among service providers, what one foundation representative called the "joining up of services piece". As explained by the respondent, it originates in the belief that:

philanthropists tend to come at things from kind of a quasi-private sector point of view and they kind of say to all these government things like 'why can't you just join up better?' and that is helpful pressure on government and statutory agencies to try and get them working a bit together. (P7)

The participant did acknowledge that government found this aspect frustrating at times.

The partnership mode ensured shared ownership and responsibility for the new service or programme and a degree of investment by the State in its longer term sustainability. This aspect proved attractive to philanthropy as well as to the beneficiaries of funding, several of whom highlighted the value of 'co-opting' government in this way. Reflecting on the reality of the economic climate that overtook the country from 2008 onwards and threatened the viability of long-term investment, one observer stated that the co-funding experiment meant "Even though they are being closed or very limited

amounts of money or whatever, government is having to worry about it ... it's not just AP having to worry about it" (PT8). In contrast, some policymakers expressed frustration at their involvement in a programme into which the private partners could withdraw leaving the State to carry the project or with the expectation that it should. PT5 spoke of the cynicism at perceived interference and resentment at wealthy people determining where tax money is spent:

That's very strong and it's very much in the DNA of the Department of Finance, or it certainly was in the senior echelons, now some of those people have probably moved on but there's still a very strong notion of 'why should rich people choose what issues are important?' (PT5)

Not all statutory representatives were sceptical of philanthropic engagement. Philanthropy had a number of "policy entrepreneurs" or allies in the public service who respondents believed played a critical internal role. A statutory representative described the culture at the time, prior to the establishment of the Department or the creation of a Minister for Children and Young people, as a challenging environment in which undertaking new initiatives was discouraged. Partnering with philanthropy, the respondent suggested, offered a number of advantages. Of the criticisms, PT2 suggested:

But they miss the point. I mean, I saw philanthropy as an opportunity to help me get resources to do things that I couldn't get otherwise. ... (PY2)

Ultimately, the partnership with philanthropy was feasible, the participant reflected:

Well I felt we wanted the same thing. By the same thing, I mean we wanted outcomes. That's all it was for me. They might say it differently. They might phrase it differently. As far as I was concerned we were in the same space. They can use all the language they liked and all the stuff, it never bothered me

The critical point for backing the decision to co-partner, however, was explained as:

the reason why I got involved is it could only happen if the mainstream service providers were heavily involved. ... you might as well burn the money if the mainstream people don't take on board the learning that comes out of it and are engaged in it so that they are capable of learning and that it's so blindly evident that they'll want to take it on board.

While philanthropy's ultimate goal may have been larger-scale adoption, this did not appear to be the view of the majority of policymakers who instead concentrated on the potential for its incorporation into practice or "mainstreaming". The participant went

on to explain that if the philanthropic money only had an impact on additional services in the three communities then it would be wasted. The issue of mainstreaming is explored in Chapter Six.

In summary, several aspects of the funding model discussed above diverged from standard practice. These included the developmental approach marked by a community focus and systematic addressing of needs; the preference for an area or site-based approach and incorporation of a knowledge-development element through evaluation. The creation of a formal partnership introduced new dynamics into the relationships with the State. For example, one element of philanthropic funding is that it can put pressure on partners to 'join up' services better. At another level, co-funding brought with it co-ownership of the problems involved. By co-funding the State assumed some responsibility for the long term sustainability of the investments. Inevitably, tension arose as in some quarters concerning the tendency within philanthropy to initiate programmes and to exit leaving the state to fulfil expectations for future resourcing and sustainability. Implicit in the partnership model is the understanding of philanthropy's role as going beyond money; this aspect caused consternation on the part of several officials who queried the appropriate nature of the engagement and for some, clearly involved an element of coercion.

## **5.5 Advocacy: a strategy for change**

### **5.5.1 Interpretations of advocacy**

As outlined in Chapter Four, the overarching advocacy goals of both Atlantic and One Foundation included support for activities that bolstered organisations' internal capacity to exert influence on the policy system as well as their ability to effect change through networking and developing alliances with other actors in the field. This approach is common among foundations with public policy goals, where advocacy, defined as activities directed at policy implementation and change (Momtanaro, 2012, Leat, 2008) occupies a central role. Focused on achieving change in public policy and public systems, this particular form of advocacy is understood to encompass strategies devised and actions taken to inform and influence political decision-making (Weiss 2007). An indirect strategy, policy advocacy is manifested in the funding of groups that have as a goal to alter government spending priorities (Prewitt, 2006), what Reid



(2000) characterises as ‘political’ advocacy (2000).

In this study, the availability of funding with which to undertake research, to focus on specialist areas and to generate new ideas or paradigms for policy and services resulted in the production of new knowledge and the generation of data within the sector. Foundations in the policy arena favour ‘data-driven’ philanthropy in which the application of knowledge for societal benefit and the creation of networks for the development of knowledge are considered instrumental in bringing about policy change (Prewitt, 2006). Frumkin’s differentiation of macro and meso levels of influence for strategic philanthropy provides a useful framework for reference. What Frumkin calls ‘points of leverage’, namely the mechanism by which foundations will achieve greatest impact includes tactics that operate at the macro level of politics and ideas, as well as the meso level of field development. In both, the role of knowledge is critical. Ideas philanthropy, namely the ‘production of new ideas and paradigms that can re-orient entire fields’ Frumkin suggests, has the potential to lead to new perspectives that can penetrate a field or to translate into new practices (2006, p. 186).

Policy advocacy is underpinned by a goal to develop learning, to use research and evidence to bring about ‘field level’ change. It includes support for strong organisations as well as for collaboration and the creation of networks for fostering and sharing information (Frumkin, 2006). It prioritises the collection and presentation of knowledge that provides policymakers with the information needed to advance policy change. Foundations active in this area prioritise goals that promote the long-term ability of policy actors to influence the policy system through investing in their capacity and effectiveness (Mandeville, 2007).

Figure 5.4.1 below summarises the operation of policy advocacy strategies at the level of macro and meso change and highlights the importance of the knowledge function.

**Figure 5.5.1 Policy advocacy: Macro and meso levels of change**

Macro Level = Politics and Ideas	Meso Level = Field Development
Activities	Activities
Developing new services	Collaboration / interagency work
New approach to services	Policy Actors
Power elites advocacy – targets key decisionmakers	Research and Evidence
	Networking Convening
K N O W L E D G E	

The remainder of this section explores the interpretation of advocacy at the macro level of systems change followed by a discussion of advocacy activities at the field level.

### 5.5.2 Advocacy as macro level change

Beneficiaries of foundation funds were asked about their own strategic orientation, their primary goals and objectives and how their experience of philanthropy facilitated organisational development. Of the ten organisations that received philanthropic investment, eight were involved in delivery of services; two engaged in advocacy only. Six had an advocacy post or a dedicated research and policy function. Of the eight, all engaged in activities with a reform agenda that could be broadly defined as having advocacy components. Organisations that engaged in advocacy only, reported a precarious existence outside of philanthropy having previously operated as loose networks hosted by larger member organisations and without the benefit of paid staff. The kinds of activities prioritised by the nonprofit organisations in this research resonated with the findings of a study on advocacy among Irish nonprofits (Keenan & Montague, 2010, p. 34) that ranked the following areas as the most effective:

- Policy development
- Protecting existing resources
- Minimising a reduction in resources
- Developing a new service

In Ireland, as outlined in Chapter Two, the advocacy role of nonprofits is often underestimated and certainly underfunded, with policymakers recognising the service provision but not the advocacy function of nonprofits (Keenan, 2008). Beneficiaries in this study rarely used the term ‘advocacy’ in describing their key organisational functions. In fact, several participants questioned the meaningfulness of the term referencing its all-encompassing nature. Nonetheless, they all embraced an explicit agenda for change with activities that fit the characterisation of policy advocacy forming a regular part of their overall work.

In practice, while nonprofits are often viewed as either advocacy or service providing organisations, the interviewees highlighted that differentiations between advocacy and services are somewhat artificial for the field. Often, advocacy manifests itself in demonstrating ‘what works’ on the service side. As one funder questioning the value of separating out advocacy as a strategy for a major beneficiary put it:

We’d invest in their services as well as their advocacy but when I talk to them our investment in their services is really investment in advocacy because it’s showing what could be and it’s showing the capacity that it takes to deliver really good quality outcomes for children. And then if the government can see that and other people can see that, then hopefully you raise the bar for the whole field and people can actually work toward that. (PT4)

Beneficiary organisations engaged in delivering services all placed a high priority on influencing policy or informing practice with innovation in public service provision a key feature of funded activities. Fundamentally, they sought reform, captured in the data as ‘systems change’ that included facets of a differentiation in approach to providing services. These elements, summarised in Table 5.5.2 below, include a number of critical factors believed necessary for improved public service provision.

**Table 5.5.2 Systems change goals identified by nonprofits**

<b>Advocacy for</b>	<i>System Change Goals</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early stage identification of problem/need</li> <li>• Evidence-informed approach to services</li> <li>• Participation of stakeholders in structures and processes (children, parents, youth)</li> <li>• Prevention and Family support competencies</li> <li>• Integrated service delivery (planned and systemic manner toward common outcomes)</li> <li>• Community-based needs assessment and consultation</li> </ul>
Political Commitment	
<b>INNOVATION</b> in public sector service provision	
Characteristics Different approaches	
Network of <b>KNOWLEDGE &amp; EVIDENCE</b> (building credible evidence for policy influence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic evaluation</li> <li>• Research data, evidence base, metrics</li> <li>• Independent and scientific research generating positive results</li> <li>• Developing links with academic partners</li> </ul>

For philanthropy, funding services had to incorporate an innovation or policy objective. Within the literature, the notion of service differentiation and offering a plurality of options is an area where philanthropy is understood to make a real contribution. Pluralism ‘allows a multiplicity of programmes to exist in the public domain rather than a limited number of “preferred” solutions’ (Frumkin, 2006, p. 17).

### **5.5.3 Advocacy capacities: equipping a sector**

As outlined in Chapter Four, the goals for advocacy funding reflected philanthropy’s intent to provide organisations with the skills to engage in key policy debates in the children and youth area. Through the provision of independent funding, Atlantic and One Foundation sought to enable the capacity for nonprofits to influence government policy through providing organisations (previously dependent on statutory funding streams) with autonomy to critique government policy, increase their credibility and develop relationships with policymakers. As a result, a number of core advocacy competencies emerged in the children and youth sector. These developments are considered below firstly, in the context of existing relationships and trends taking place

between the statutory and nonprofit sectors, and secondly, at the meso level of field development.

### *State / Voluntary sector relationships*

In Ireland, the relationship between the State and the voluntary sector is viewed primarily through a resource lens (Donnelly-Cox, Donoghue & Hayes, 2001; O'Donoghue et al, 2006). The dependency on State funding for their existence causes tensions and raises questions about the autonomy and independence of nonprofit organizations (Harvey, 2011). Beneficiaries interviewed for this study reported levels of philanthropic funding at between 30% and 100% of their overall organisational budget in 2011. All experienced a lessening of dependency on State financing as a result of philanthropic investment. Loosening links with the State enables organisations 'to foster and engage in public debate about why, how and to whom they should be accountable, debate which has been largely absent in the Irish context' (Daly, 2008 p. 164). At the same time, the State has tended to view the nonprofit sector as primarily a service provider. Only since 2000 has policy acknowledged a role other than a service-delivery aspect with a recognition of the advocacy role undertaken by the sector (Donoghue & Laragy, 2010, p. 117).

For nonprofits dependent on the State, philanthropic funding provided organisations with a certain degree of autonomy. It was widely acknowledged that a diversity of funding sources provides a healthy balance for facilitating programme development and innovation. The following perspective demonstrates how organisations introducing systems change or departures in the way of doing things needed to have a degree of independence that would be absent in the case of state funding, in this instance, through the Health Service Executive (HSE)<sup>44</sup>:

...ultimately we wouldn't want to be 100% funded by the HSE because it's harder in terms of system change - in general once you're seen as part of the system and also our vision is broader than what they would see within it. So we would see that ultimately you could have (organisation) funded by local fundraising, some major donations of philanthropy, the HSE, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Youth Justice, and so on across the board. (B9)

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<sup>44</sup> Prior to 2013 and the transfer of responsibility of child welfare functions to Tusla, the funding streams for organisations serving children, youth and families were provided through the HSE.

The participant went on to elaborate that with the HSE “their formal statutory obligations can be an impediment” in terms of changing systems and that the mix of funders would be important in achieving change within existing systems:

It allows us to be much more innovative and introduce those things and follow them through in a much quicker way so the decisions are made in a more streamlined, more straightforward way with it and part of it then is around how do you work, that’s the challenge because we’re working with the current system and while, when we’re talking about systems change we’re ultimately saying to the HSE we want to work with you to change your system, it’s not some abstract system out there in the community.

Echoing the need for diversified income streams, another participant cautioned against a scenario in which a project or entity funded by philanthropy would not be optimal either:

I think it should have a mixed stream of funding. If it was to remain funded privately it would be seen as potentially a luxury, certainly a non-necessity and certainly not something that the state need to have responsibility for.(B11)

The perspective, that for a programme or project to be fully valued or viewed as legitimate it had to become State responsibility, pervaded in the data in this study.

A characteristic of the relationship between the State and nonprofit sector in the 2000s has been a trend toward more formalised structures and processes (Keenan, 2008). This mostly found expression in greater compliance requirements such as setting of standards for service delivery, increased practice of tendering, use of contracts and Service Level Agreements and a focus on quantifying effectiveness of outcomes (p.18). Particular constraints have been noted within the context of Service Level Agreements which preclude funds being used ‘to obtain changes in the law or related government policies, or campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade people to adopt a particular view’ (Harvey, 2009, p. 31).

Organisations represented in the present study reported experiencing increasing constraints in using statutory funds. In practice, and fuelled by the economic downturn, one respondent explained that, at the local level, projects for services funded would have in the past provided scope for engaging in “extra-curricular” work which might result in recommendations being made to the government as an add-on to the project.

By the late 2000s, the participant noted, considerably less scope existed in this “grey area” of advocacy space, elaborating that “That local autonomy has gone with the cuts and they are now much more directly controlled by the Department saying these are the services you have to deliver and nothing else ...” (B6)

In this environment, the place of advocacy is particularly vulnerable. Advocacy is one area where there is an especially strong need for philanthropic funding. Indeed, institutional investment from philanthropy is critical to its existence. Advocacy activities are unlikely to be receiving core funds from statutory sources. At the same time, funding advocacy is not viewed as a need by the general public, who in responding to fundraising campaigns tend to be much more receptive to cause-related or service type appeals for funding. As one Executive Director lamented when it comes to fundraising from the corporate sector or the general public “advocacy isn’t seen as charitable” (B4).

Advocacy organisations are doubtless less constrained without statutory funding, indeed, for one such organisation, so much so that the board of directors would not accept government funds as the lack of it “keeps us completely independent and the latitude to say exactly what we think” (B4). The degree of autonomy as well as anonymity that engagement with advocacy organisations offers was posed as a benefit to the field. Advocacy associations are often member-based coalitions that would include organisations that engage in service delivery; through linking in with an advocacy forum, members have a more independent voice with which to develop messages on policy.

Across the beneficiary organisations interviewed, the following activities emerged as operating at the meso level of influence:

#### *Research and Communication*

Typically, funders interested in exerting influence on policy invest in ‘policy actor’ capacity in order to bolster the long-term ability of recipient organisations to remain active in a policy system. In the present study, philanthropy facilitated a systematic approach to advocacy, in particular, the funding of in-house capacity for effective

advocacy. Research and communication with the external environment is an important dimension of policy actor capacity. Typically, statutory sources do not fund research as an internal, integrated aspect of nonprofit organisational operations. A respondent reflecting on the organisation's in-house research function that aligned with advocacy goals, surmised that if the organisation was solely funded by statutory sources, in this case the HSE, then this element would be compromised:

It would be part of the overall agenda. I suppose the big thing in terms of setting off is that if you were just with the HSE they would look at service development and what we're saying, we're more than service development so ultimately what we'll end up with probably is that the HSE and other departments will want to pay for the service development part and you have to look to philanthropy and other beneficiaries to do the research, but to be an evidence led and evidence based focused organisation you do need all the three together. We struggled with that but also I think we tried to maintain that in terms of having a balance across them. (B9)

The capacity of organisations to adopt a holistic approach with staff skilled in advocacy, service development and research provided an unprecedented opportunity to advocate for change. The facility to provide the arguments and the analysis is a critical role and function associated with advocacy. Civil servants, many interviewees believed, do not have the time or the mandate to seek out creative solutions. One funder explained the decision to fund research centres at universities as an investment in advocacy and rights as follows:

it's not necessarily that we expect them to be doing the advocacy, it's about them providing the arguments and the policy papers and the analysis that enables other advocacy organisations to do their advocacy more effectively. (P3)

Given the audience for research is policymakers, politicians and senior civil servants, respondents highlighted the increasing use of the media. Effective engagement requires dedicating resources to communications in order to establish a presence in the media. For one beneficiary in receipt of a significant budget for communications, seminars and events, the Executive Director commented that in the absence of another philanthropist standing in, the prevailing environment made such activities untenable:

But policy makers, especially politicians are also very driven by the electorate and what the electoral concerns are so you have to be sort of shaping messages in the media and so on as well so that's also part of our strategy is trying to do that. (B7)



This view of the media function as one which is critical to changing perceptions in the public provided the means for organisations to impact policy as the example below illustrates:

We measure media coverage - we look at the responses in that, we look at the measurement of the words 'youth mental health' by and large before 2006/7 really that wasn't part of the vocabulary in Ireland so we can look at that in terms of media impact and how that's been viewed and discussed. (B9)

Organisations reported a new emphasis on media monitoring or tracking their profile using tools to monitor how the issues they worked on were being covered in the media and a strategy to accompany it.

#### *Collaborative working among NGOs*

Nonprofits are better positioned for advocacy when they have capacity for and experience with external collaboration or networking. This support has the effect of moving organisations from being insulated and fixated on particular services to engaging with organisations with similar type missions and with coalition-based or professional associations in ways that enhance their mission (LeRoux & Goerdel, 2009 p. 517). Philanthropic investment enabled the organisations in the study to undertake collaborative activities including networking, coalition-building and the development of alliances. These functions, participants underscored, are especially important in a competitive policymaking environment.

In 'making the case' to policymakers, participants expressed a strong belief in the value of collaborative and inter-agency working. Effective advocacy involves a convergence of organisations pushing the same agenda, "because you have other people knocking on the door saying the same thing, or saying slightly different things, which always helps with advocacy as well" (B7). Staff typically prioritised networking, either informally or as part of committees or networks involving engagement with policy makers as well as other NGOs. For smaller NGOs in particular, collaborative working was viewed as critical as they did not have a large enough voice or reputation to be effective. NGOs reported increased co-operation in making joint submissions on issues of policy and on the production of joint research reports. As summed up by B4, "What the sector does is to try to lever a situation where a critical mass of NGOs are saying the same thing, thereby forcing the issue where the government has to listen".

### *Developing relationships with key decision-makers*

The power elites advocacy pathway posits that change can be achieved through the development of strategic alliances with key decision makers (Stachowiak, 2013). A critical step is identifying who has influence on policy in a specific area and developing relationships with them. The need to engage in the political process reflected a reality that “it's not just good enough to provide services you need to try and change things and how decisions are made at the top level” (B5).

Key decisionmakers that affect children and families in Ireland were identified as within the DCYA and a range of departments including Education, Health, the Department of Community and Local Government. Also important were senior managers in agencies like the National Education and Welfare Board, people with operational responsibilities yet have a role in terms of informing and developing policy. The idea of finding ‘champions’ within the system and sustaining individual relationships with them was perceived as important. Several respondents remarked on the openness of policymakers to engaging in communication with the sector. The importance of contacts and networks was emphasised:

I think the personal contact and the behind the scenes informal relationship building is very important. I think particularly in an Irish policy context. A lot of policy is done in that way, it's about personal relationships and those really matter. So we put a lot of our energy into informal relationship building (B1)

Alongside these informal mechanisms, respondents highlighted the value of formal venues for exchange. Effective political advocacy requires participation in advisory groups where key decisionmakers are present (LeRoux and Goerdel, 2009, p. 518). In this regard, the incorporation of nonprofit representatives onto expert groups or advisory panels initiated by government departments added an element of engagement to a relationship that had not previously reached out to this extent.

Organisations providing services were seen as having more clout with policymakers, “we’re not a service delivery organisation so they can dismiss us easily” one representative of an advocacy organisation explained. For organisations involved solely in advocacy, core funding must be sourced from non-statutory streams. As one organization director put it “we are a watchdog and we sometimes say unpopular things

and we know that” (B6). The respondent goes on to say that while the organisation has a mostly partnership approach with government, it does take unpopular positions on issues of government policy and the funding from philanthropy provided the freedom to do that. For the most part, organisations interviewed tended not to adopt an adversarial approach with government. Typically, the first step is to attempt to resolve an issue by dialogue:

The temptation wouldn't be to go out into the media straight away and say look this is a problem, it would be to talk to them directly about what the issue is and why it's happening and if anything can be done about it, and how we can help them, is there a way we can help them to address this issue; that kind of thing, that would be the approach (B6).

Another participant alluded to the tension between the extent to which advocacy organisations are playing the role as an “insider” helping supporting the policy makers to get their policies right and the extent to which:

you are an outsider trying to make a big song and a dance and trying to complain publicly and so we always have strategic decisions we make, which way do we go? How polite are we? And so on. (B7).

A key aspect of relationship development related to trust. Commenting on the value of these informal relationships, one policymaker stated “If it's all formal it's not going to work, there's going to be no trust and the trust has to be mutual” (PM1)

Within the policy system the importance of having a champion at the ministerial level was perceived as being a huge advantage for the field. The following is typical of the view of the critical role occupied by the then Minister Frances Fitzgerald for children and youth:

I think it's important that having a ministry where she's at the cabinet table is very important because hard decisions in politics are really made by the cabinet, I mean that's where it really happens and even the parliamentary parties have less influence than they ever had on political decision making so having someone who's a champion for children and young people is critical (B11)

For advocates in the sector seeking to develop relationships with policymakers the emergence in 2011 of the new government department (Department of Children and Youth Affairs) created a changed environment and for some disrupted the relationships already in place with the Department of Education for instance. One respondent

referred to the multitude of departments involved in policy issues relating to children and youth and expressing a sentiment typical of many welcomed the centralised role of the DCYA:

of course all the departments have a role to play in relation to children and young people so is it advisable to do that, but I suppose there's so many specific child law and policy reforms taking place, I do think having a separate ministry at this place and time is the right thing to do (B1)

### *Economic Rationale*

To a large extent, economic considerations dominated the discourse with policymakers. In the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger era, the importance of protecting and minimising reductions in resources featured strongly among the advocacy activities of Irish nonprofits (Keenan & Montague, 2010). In a resource constrained environment a number of study participants reported that arguments advocating on behalf of services needed to be couched in economic terms in order to mitigate against further encroachment. As described by a respondent:

We'd be making arguments for different types of service provision so if you can make an economic argument definitely it holds more water. And I suppose where we're at and most of us in the sector is that we want to safeguard what's already being spent on children and not diminish it anyway but they're just going to cut, slash and burn, unless you come up with a better alternative. So there's no doubt the economics of things is dominating but a lot of change does not cost money, it's changing the mindset, changing an approach...(B6)

Participants in the beneficiary group shared this concern with protecting resources. In exploring strategies believed to be most effective for influencing policy, consensus emerged that decisions on service provision had to be economically sound as well as socially responsible. The move to an economic rationale and language was largely attributed to the recession “those organisations in the social field have had to move into the economic field” (B7). For instance, the director of national youth organisation made a conscious decision to adopt an economic approach to making the case for youth work having witnessed the effectiveness of the children's sector in using financial justifications:

So in terms of investment in early years, producing healthy functioning children and young people was kind of a long term strategy in terms of the future economic wellbeing of the country. And it had some resonance with me because I thought well actually that's the language you're talking, we don't talk that language so we need to learn that language and kind of move into that space so

I put a proposal to my board that we would explore the possibility of doing an assessment of the economic value of youth work (B8)

Within the children's sector, economic consultants were commissioned to undertake an economic analysis. According to the commissioning organisation, the impetus was directly a response to considerations in which cost implications were being constantly raised:

What prompted it was the recession and I suppose the simple recognition that in the recession you have to frame your arguments in an economic language. And if you can't ...you know, it's the first question that gets asked back to you on anything now is 'how much does it cost? Can you justify it?' (B4)

In advocating for broader adoption of a prevention and early intervention strategy, the efficacy of making an economic case for adoption gained increasing resonance. According to one provider from the co-funded sites:

I mean governments don't like prevention, early intervention, that's one of the things we learned very quickly, we'd a speaker in the British Ministry for finance at the time and he gave us a seminar in Trinity and he made it very clear that governments don't like prevention, early intervention and he said they never will (B2)

Asked why this is so, the respondent explained:

He said they think in three year, four year terms, they don't think in 15 or 20 so he said we want something that's going to give us a result in three or four years and he said prevention, early intervention won't do it and he said that's why they don't embrace it because they can't wait for the results. But he made a very good point, he said the argument has to be one with finance and he said the reason the UK have progressed a bit is that people like himself who are in the Dept of Finance bought into it

The response of the organisation in question was to move to making the argument for prevention and early intervention with a range of government departments.

#### **5.5.4 Summary**

As discussed above, the adoption of a policy advocacy orientation as a systems change approach in the funding of organisations serving children and young people included interventions at the macro level of politics and ideas as well as the meso level of field development. In the latter, the collection, presentation and dissemination of knowledge were prioritised. The ability to engage in research and communication enabled organisations to fulfil a critical role associated with advocacy namely, to provide the

arguments and the analysis for policymakers to advance change. Field level activities also included supporting organisation to collectively network and collaborate. At the macro level, for the organisations in this study, innovation in public service provision emerged as a key orientation at the heart of systems change goals. The independence and autonomy conferred on nonprofit organisations by private funding proved critical in enabling organisations charged with delivering services to explore new or better ways of providing these services or to introduce an element of service differentiation. Among beneficiary organisations engaging in the political process required developing relationships with policymakers. This took place at the individual level as well as through increased interagency-working to participating in forums where key decision-makers were present. While respondents reported more discourse with policymakers, this was increasingly dominated by the need to make economic arguments to make the case against the encroachment of services and resources.

## **5.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter has focused on findings in relation to policy engagement as a fundamental objective for philanthropic funding to the children and youth sector. It examined the key elements of the public policy engagement strategy adopted by philanthropic intervention and raised consideration as to whether the ambitions associated with them could be realised. The focus has been on the primary points of intervention identified by foundations working with policy goals as their defining strategic orientation, namely, site based demonstration and policy advocacy.

The capacity for foundations to have a social impact is dependent on the extent to which they are perceived as legitimate by other actors. In identifying the core legitimacy for philanthropic intervention, the provision of funding to independent civil society resonated with a majority of respondents including policymakers. As a counterbalance to limitations of State funding streams, philanthropy provided the independence and autonomy with which to enable beneficiaries fulfil their innovation role in society. Participants identified a clear contribution by philanthropy to the sector's capacity to operate at the level of policy influence. Much of this involved networking and coalition-building among key organisations. The presence of external

pressure to stimulate change was widely acknowledged as an important element in a system that inherently discourages risk. Clearly, philanthropic funding had a role to play in destabilising the existing relationships between the State and the sector; relationships which had emphasised resource dependency and a focus on delivery rather than transformation of services.

This chapter has clarified what is meant in practice by systems change as well as the kinds of activities prioritised to bring about outcomes. It highlighted the characteristics of innovation in public sector service provision. In this sphere, the principle of service differentiation is an arena where philanthropy is credited with making a viable contribution. In the realm of innovation; foundations appeared best placed to focus their efforts on unblocking system rigidities and facilitating or brokering knowledge. Aligned to this, the role of foundations in enabling the innovation capacity in civil society emerged with elements of Frumkin's (2006) social innovation, namely promotion of new thinking, of responding to enduring problems and new ways of providing services perceived as key legitimising activities for philanthropy.

As discussed in this chapter, strategic giving, in its orientation, identifies policy engagement as a key point of intervention. In its execution, it views philanthropy as a form of investment with an emphasis on creating social value and impact. This is the focus on Chapter Six.

## Chapter Six: Funding for Impact: Capacity, Assessment and Scale

### 6.1 Introduction

In its operation, strategic philanthropy is largely understood as a specific form of social investment that, primarily results-orientated, is accompanied by a set of goals and objectives for creating impact. For several of the large foundations in the United States, the question of how resources can be used to achieve the greatest impact is an overriding concern. Indeed, the fundamental principle behind ‘Outcome Focused Grantmaking’ is informed by foundations’ desire to seek well-targeted and cost-effective solutions to challenging social problems (William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2009). The focus on impact forms the organising framework for this chapter which examines the experiences of stakeholders in implementing philanthropy’s investment-oriented approach

To a large extent, this concern with impact has been associated with a set of practices emanating from venture philanthropy. Proponents, often entrepreneurs, hold that society’s most pressing challenges are best addressed by applying business skills and market-based theory to nonprofit operations (Porter, & Kramer, 1999; Bishop & Green, 2008). Frumkin (2003, p. 4) describes this transfer of market-oriented or entrepreneurial logic to the philanthropic sector as ‘turning philanthropy into social investing’ while also acknowledging that the practices, initially associated with venture philanthropy, have permeated the broader foundation field that is increasingly concerned with effectiveness and demonstrating the impact of giving.

As outlined in Chapter Two, examinations of social investment approaches in the literature have illuminated the emergence of specific practices and styles with which it is associated. Three critical tenets can be identified that characterise the strategies of funders prioritising impact:

- **Capacity building:** Investing in the capacity of organisations to do their work effectively is a core part of the investment-oriented style of philanthropy. The



provision of funding to their internal functions and development is seen as a precursor to enabling strong organisations poised for impact.

- **Assessing the social value of investments:** The emphasis on impact requires indicators for measuring outcomes and performance. Under the rubric of ‘social impact’ assessment frameworks, a range of tools, indicators and measures have been adopted by venture philanthropists, foundations, and high performing nonprofits to understand the impact of programmes.
- **Scaling up and mainstreaming:** The rationale for investment is informed by the overriding goal of achieving tangible results and bringing them to scale. After demonstrating a programme or intervention’s capacity for impact, the focus shifts to embedding and sustaining these innovations.

Against this framework, the chapter examines the primary goals and objectives adopted by One Foundation and Atlantic in order to achieve impact. It explores how this manifestation of philanthropy as a form of social investment, previously unknown in Ireland, was experienced in the children and youth sector. Questions ranged across a number of areas including the impact of philanthropic funding on organisational development and culture; experiences in using evidence-based models, data management and performance systems, and issues of capacity and sustainability. As such, this chapter, while soliciting the views where appropriate from philanthropic and statutory representatives, features strong representation from nonprofit beneficiary stakeholders.

## **6.2 Building capacity and effectiveness**

### **6.2.1 Overview**

As a precursor to facilitating strong organisations poised for impact, strategic philanthropy prioritises investment in the capacity of nonprofits to work effectively. The provision of long-term funding commitments designed to enable organisations to develop and grow represents a reversal of traditional short-term, project-based funding approaches. Sometimes referred to as ‘active philanthropy’, strategic giving is accompanied by high engagement by the donor, both in the selection of recipients or ‘due diligence’ prior to investment and, after funding has been dispersed, into providing recipient organisations with specialised skills and advice not typically found in

nonprofits, such as business planning, networking and communications expertise (Cobb, 2000; Frumkin, 2003; Bishop, 2008).

Historically, for the organisations serving children and young people in Ireland, attention to core capacity had not been a priority. Statutory funding streams, on which most depended, are directed to programme grants and activities, with recipient organisations having neither the resources nor the time to devote to their internal functions. Among the organisations in this study, for the first time, the availability of philanthropic funding provided the latitude to engage in strategic development and mission-focused activities to enhance their organisational capacity. The experiences of stakeholders in working with these core capacities are considered in Section 6.2.2 below. Acknowledging that philanthropic funding is by nature a transitory phenomenon and that investors typically prioritise self-sufficiency among beneficiary organisations, Section 6.2.3 explores the experiences and challenges encountered by organisations in bolstering their capacity to generate ongoing resources.

### **6.2.2 Core organisational capacity**

In Ireland, venture philanthropy, while popular in the United States and increasingly in Europe, was unknown prior to the establishment of the One Foundation in 2004. Atlantic Philanthropies' funding, whilst not associated directly with the doctrine of venture philanthropy, also prioritised investment in critical aspects of organisations' development and capacity. Such investments, undertaken in order to position nonprofit beneficiaries' for impact, required organisations to develop systems and infrastructure to report progress in the form of demonstrable outcomes.

In practice, and discussed below, the attention accorded to capacity building reflected the multifaceted, holistic approach to organisational development that McKinsey's (2001 p. 34) Capacity Framework characterised as encompassing seven essential elements needed to facilitate social impact. These include three higher-level elements – aspirations, strategy, and organisational skills; three foundational elements – systems and infrastructure, human resources, and organisational structure; and a cultural element which serves to connect all the others. For those in receipt of funding, this degree of attention to internal functions, while providing critical resources to strengthen

organisations, also presented a number of challenges. Within this stakeholder group, responses indicated that organisations struggled with the dynamics of the kind of relationship that defines high-engagement, ‘active philanthropy’.

Among funders, the commitment to funding core organisational capacity had considerable appeal as an alternative to traditional funding practices, in which, as explained by PT4:

People always want to fund end thing and actually what the organisation needs is their systems, their finances, their HR, those things...and venture philanthropy speaks to that.

Before deciding on major investments, both the One Foundation and Atlantic engaged in a pre-investment or due diligence phase of funding with potential grantees. Organisations were funded to undertake extensive strategic planning processes which often entailed engaging the services of business consultants. The quote below captures the dilemma felt by a number of beneficiaries who recognised the benefits of accessing this expertise, yet believed it involved a degree of scrutiny that could be perceived as invasive:

you’d be commissioned to doing leadership development with your management team, they wanted to know who you’d got to do it and was it really good ...now that is helpful to some organisations in some cases because actually...you’re not just getting the money you’re getting the expertise and their advice, to some it feels like ‘get your nose out of my business’ you know, so there’s a bit of that (B8)

Part of the due diligence phase involved potential recipients in identifying a set of goals and objectives that aligned with the funders’ programme priorities. Whilst recognising that philanthropic organisations come with an agenda or a particular worldview, several beneficiaries spoke about a process of negotiation as a notable element of the interaction. In some instances, this included philanthropy’s adherence to particular models or programmes that had been used elsewhere. Describing the dynamics at play in negotiating for investment in ‘their’ own service, B5 gave the following example:

And there was a few bits of going ‘oh we saw this great program over here, have you thought about doing that?’ and we’re kind of like ‘Yes, we’ve been looking at that program for years and it’s fine but this is better’..... I suppose trying to be confident enough to go actually we are the model, we have the knowledge here. The better approach is to develop the knowledge and the model we already have, you know it’s been up and running for five years as opposed to dumping it and trying something else.

At a management level, engaging with philanthropy took time and energy, in some cases requiring a re-direction of organisational resources that could otherwise have been spent on programmes and services. The data revealed one example of a nonprofit organisation that turned down an initial investment from a foundation on the basis that their involvement would “overwhelm” them at a time when other, statutory sources of funding had been secured for project work.

The majority of beneficiaries interviewed commented on the adjustment required to accommodate unprecedented involvement by the donor in the operation of their organisations. Positioning themselves for philanthropic investment, beneficiary interviewees acknowledged, often entailed a fundamental reassessment of organisational high-level goals. Making the case for investment required organisations to elaborate their strategy, mission and vision and included drawing up medium and long term instruments such as annual, five or ten year plans. Such exercises, nonprofit respondents explained, initiated a number of new organisational practices that required attention to planning and resource allocation activities across all aspects of operations. Practical examples included practices such as operating to quarterly and annual work plans, alignments of plans to outputs and attention to staff deliverables and budget managements. For some, the adoption of business practices included the requirement of the Balanced Scorecard or Key Performance Indicators.

The adoption of business principles and practices outlined above is indicative of new, ‘bottom-line’ thinking that featured in the operations of organisations funded by philanthropy. Once established, these indicators provided the basis for interaction with funders around target-setting and progress, ultimately contributing to the development of what several respondents referred to as a ‘performance culture’ within the sector. Of the interviewees who spoke about review processes which involved quarterly, bi-annual and annual meetings with funders, there was a consistent view that such requirements introduced an element of discipline and rigour into organisational thinking. For example, one respondent conceded that without the need to account to an external source in such a fashion:

For me, if I didn't have that I don't know whether I would have had the same rigour about what we were doing. What they did bring was bring that sharp focus about having a strategic plan.(B7)

For the majority of beneficiary organisations, the emphasis on accountability and performance required operational or system changes in the area of data management. One respondent described how data was needed to facilitate a level of information generation that had been lacking in the organisation:

we're still struggling with the data management piece so yes, that whole culture has impacted hugely, not only on the systems but in the planning systems, how we actually develop our annual plan, how we account for it on an annual basis, how we capture that information and then how we report on it. (B9)

The introduction of systems to track organisational performance and enhance effectiveness is characteristic of high performance organisations. For respondents in this study, such changes necessitated a cultural shift that recognised the importance of managing information in order to function effectively. For one service provider, this had considerable value in improving the process needed to impact client outcomes.

We've developed an evaluation system from the programme data management system from the very beginning so we've real live data management so this morning I can tell you how many young people we're seeing in Offaly for example. We can chart that and manage that. That's the way we're structured.(B2)

Foundations representatives perceived a number of deficits in the organisations serving children and young people including a need for greater focus and to streamline elements of their operation in order to function effectively. In a constrained economic environment, wherein statutory funding streams were reducing, philanthropic funders spoke of the importance of equipping organisations with skills to manage shrinking resources. For the respondent below, organisations that survive would be those that exhibited:

A stronger capacity which we're seeing at the moment now to actually navigate how to cut strategically when budgets are reducing... so having strong internal capacity enables organisations even when they have to go through really retrenchment to do that strategically, and that's where I think we've had the benefit. Our organisations have been through that because they actually know what really, really matters to them and they've really thought about how they make management decisions.

This was contrasted with the approach of a different beneficiary that the funder

criticised for operating in a manner perceived as ineffective:

....they never made the hard decisions early enough and they resisted making those changes and they tried to keep everything going and therefore all that happened is that the government effectively takes advantage of that and has projects open that you know, there's half a worker there, and it's the organisation themselves which suffer and their staff who suffer because they are, as far as anyone else says, they're keeping the show on the road. (PT4)

The characteristics outlined above, willingness to operate on limited budgets; to keep all services going and failing to ask the tough questions reflected a critical view of the nonprofit sector that emerged in the perceptions of both statutory and philanthropic funders.

For philanthropy, part of the commitment to strengthening organisations involved investment in organisational leadership. Particularly among the larger nonprofit organisations, foundation and beneficiary respondents spoke of the importance accorded to having in place the 'right' leader in whom investors had confidence. PT5 outlined the rationale, emanating in venture philanthropy, as follows:

what you're doing is basically seeing does an organisation have the people and capability to generate that kind of a return. I think what people actually don't realise, when you are a venture capitalist, you don't buy ideas, you buy people. Ideas are all over the place. People have brilliant ideas. You are trying to identify people who can make it happen.

Prior to the availability of dedicated funding streams, the concept of investing in people would not have featured as a priority for the nonprofit organisations interviewed. The view of the foundation representative below acknowledged that believing in people is not always valued:

but obviously that's considered the soft thing so often that's not what gets resources when the government are thinking about change (PT4)

The goal of capacity building is generally associated with the objective of creating larger and stronger organisations. In Ireland, achieving this metric was perceived to be problematic by foundations representatives who queried whether growth in size was always the best indicator of influence. As recalled by PT3 at the end of a five-year phase of investments:

None of our organisations are larger, but all of them I would hope would have

a stronger capacity in order to influence policy, and that would be a significant piece. (PT3)

Organisational capacity building by nature can only be for a sustained period of time, after which the funder has a natural progression to move on. For philanthropy, any investment, even long-term commitments, involve an exit strategy. As outlined below:

And that's the challenge, philanthropy can only be in a certain space and you need to be very cognisant of what is the exit there, especially if you're growing something, obviously if you're building capacity in an organisation it's less, some of that can actually be in and out money as opposed to necessarily the ongoing operational costs but there's a... I have a sense that if we build the capacity of organisations that there'll be a legacy, it'll last for a while but they're going to need an injection of something at some point and I just don't know how that's going to work. (PT4)

Any infusion of philanthropic investment, even multi-year commitments is predicated on the assumption that strengthening nonprofit capacity will ultimately lead to organisational sustainability lessening dependency on the donor. This issue is discussed in the following section.

### **6.2.3 Resource and income generation capacity**

A key challenge facing organisations interviewed in this study related to decreasing sources of income with significant cuts in statutory funding to the sector compounding the problem of the imminent need to replace philanthropic funding following the planned exit of Atlantic and One Foundation in 2016. Among philanthropic funders concerned with strengthening organisations, the importance of promoting the capacity of recipients to acquire further resources is a critical yet often neglected function (Mandeville, 2007). It recognises that an efficient nonprofit organisation, poised for the long-term, must have access to financial and capital resources outside of the original investor. This argument for self-sufficiency is also advanced as part of the debate on scale within venture philanthropy. Efforts to 'scale up' interventions, after refining a service model that is fully developed and tested, seek to expand the model to multiple sites. Venture philanthropy posits that nonprofit organisations need to focus more on designing and developing services that can be delivered to clients as a source of earned income. This franchise-based or earned income approach to scaling up is considered controversial as it dilutes the mission of the organisation (Frumkin, 2003).

Despite acknowledging the benefits of strategic planning and resourcing outlined in 6.2.2 above, respondents were pessimistic about the potential for long-term investment in human resources and access to the kind of in-house or external expertise required to keep these skill sets active. The short term reality of most organisations, especially in the youth sector reflected an environment dominated by concerns over staff retention. In the five years up to 2012, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs funding to the youth work sector decreased by 22% (NYCA, 2012). One youth organisation estimated 2014 State funding levels to be 50% of 2007. Before the onset of philanthropy, organisations interviewed were heavily reliant on statutory funding (up to 95% in the case of one organisation featured). On average, nonprofit respondents anticipated that post-philanthropy levels of funding would stabilise at 75%, leaving 25% to be generated from other sources.

Interviewees appeared resigned to a culture of diminishing State funding streams and a sense of reality that significant resources would have to be generated from outside the current philanthropic pool. However, options for replacing philanthropic funds appeared limited. There was general consensus from all categories of interviewee that expectations for home-grown or indigenous philanthropy, anticipated at the height of Ireland's economic boom in the mid-2000s, had not materialised. Most nonprofit respondents reported no new activity or little engagement with Irish philanthropy. Apart from the two primary foundations, the remaining philanthropic entities, small-scale and family foundations themselves, had their endowments impacted by the economic recession.

Nonprofit organisations reported an increased emphasis on fundraising with a number indicating that, in 2013, the activity was consuming senior management more than ever before. Heightened attention to fundraising necessitated a review of communications; three of the ten beneficiary organisations indicated that they had engaged consultants to rebrand their message with a view to becoming more relevant to a broader fundraising base. Forays into corporate fundraising were limited; corporate funders, according to beneficiaries, are by nature risk adverse, preferring to fund services with direct benefit, in other words, they “play safe.” For organisations seeking funds for



advocacy activities in particular, difficulties arose in making the case for support; as one CEO commented “service delivery is easier to understand.” (B4).

Given the limited size of the Irish fundraising sector, few opportunities existed to specialise in developing relationships with a particular strand of philanthropy or orientation. Rather, respondents reported undertaking a diversity of fundraising strategies typified in the following response:

For the first time we've started gift giving, we're doing door to door, sign-ups supporting the organisation. We're organising our alumni which we reckon is about two or three hundred thousand and start to develop that, but we're also looking for major campaign around high net individuals and corporates around supporting the organisation (B1)

The organisation quoted went from having no fundraising staff to having four fulltime fundraising staff in the organisation. Among CEOs interviewed, all reported an increase in their focus on fundraising.

In exploring options for funding outside of statutory and philanthropic sources, some organisations considered the option of introducing fee-based services. This related to charging for elements of programmes delivered as indicated below:

there's an example where we have started to charge fees for the delivery of a teacher classroom management programme so we would charge for our time, standard corporate rates and we do that more and more, something that would have been unheard of 5 years ago. (B10)

Other aspects of income generation reported by beneficiaries included outsourcing expertise in areas built up through their own programme evaluation activities such as partnership development or research as well as delivering programmes outside of Ireland. However, levels of earned income activities were modest and limited to specific elements or training as described above. The option of commercialisation or franchising programmes did not appear as a feasible option for the majority of participants. Only one of ten beneficiaries reported exploring the route of commercialising programmes. The view of the respondent below typified the discomfort that organisations experienced in making a shift to income generation models:

If we're only doing things that make money then we're not meeting that other mission as well. So it's how do you balance the two? and that's what we're looking at the moment. (B3)

#### **6.2.4 Summary**

For beneficiaries interviewed in this study, the introduction of unprecedented investment in their organisational development provided the opportunity to address aspects of strategy and operations that heretofore had not been given institutional priority. In enabling recipients of funding to devote attention to their high-end goals, this represented a move away from 'historic inattention to capacity-building' in which both funders and nonprofits focus their efforts on developing project-based activities with scant attention to administrative and operational elements of organisational functioning (McKinsey and Co., 2001). The priorities adopted by philanthropic funders reflected their belief that deficiencies in infrastructure hampered nonprofit organisations' ability to be effective. This included a lack of human or financial resources necessary to influence policy at the national or local level as well as inadequate internal governance structures required for resource management and efficiency; all were deficiencies noted in the Irish nonprofit sector (Daly, 2008, p. 163).

From a beneficiary perspective, the extensive strategic planning processes and monitoring required as part of philanthropic investment were resource-intensive. The experience of 'active' philanthropy involved levels of engagement with funders in beneficiaries' internal management and operations which introduced new, sometimes uncomfortable dynamics into the relationship. Nonetheless, the majority of interviewees acknowledged that the discipline imposed by external partners called for systematic and consistent rigour that maintained organisational focus. For most beneficiaries however, the difference that philanthropic investment had made to organisational development was tempered by concerns about sustainability in a constricted economic environment. Such levels of investment in organisational infrastructure would require significant resources following the exit of the One Foundation and Atlantic. The expectation that indigenous philanthropy would be able to support organisations to sustain such activities appeared unrealistic.

## **6.3 Assessing impact: Approaches to measurement and evaluation**

### **6.3.1 Overview**

As discussed above, philanthropic investment in the children and youth sector prioritised the importance of supporting well-managed organisations that can demonstrate meaningful impact. This section examines foundation investment in the capacity of organisations to evaluate and assess their work. The requirement to demonstrate impact calls for processes and tools for collecting data to show how social impact is being measured. A number of social impact frameworks designed to measure, track, and distil successful programme elements in ways that make sense in a social context have become part of the nonprofit landscape (McKinsey & Co, 2009). Elements of these approaches can be traced to social entrepreneurship models focused on quantifying results that ask questions about the social benefits of interventions. As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, bringing effective programme to scale is a fundamental objective of strategic philanthropy. This goal has led to the demand for rigorous evidence of impact; programmes ‘go to scale’ only if they can demonstrate results.

The attention to impact also elevates the role of evidence in determining the extent to which programmes are considered successful. Social impact assessment approaches favoured by foundations for quantifying the effect of programmes such as Randomised Controlled Trials or logic models have introduced new concepts that have become part of the terminology of nonprofit organisations. In addition, foundations with social impact goals attach a high priority to utilising the results of evaluation, increasing the body of knowledge about ‘what works’ and the sharing of knowledge with a field. The operation of these evidence-based models accompanied by highly structured materials and processes for rigorous implementation represents what Canavan, et al., call an approach to service development where the overriding influence in the intervention success is ‘tested programme content delivered to specification’ (2009, p.384).

This section examines the experiences of participants in working with ‘proven’ ‘best practice’ and ‘evidence-based’ programme models championed by philanthropy. For many of the nonprofits featured in this study, evaluation and measurement represented a new activity. The data demonstrates participants’ experience in utilising a broad

range of mechanisms to indicate the impact of their investments. Two particular aspects, firstly, the use of RCTs, and secondly, the predominance of an ‘outcomes over outputs’ discourse are explored in detail in the two sections below.

### **6.3.2 Using Randomised Control Trials (RCTs)**

The introduction of Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) into the social sciences represented a new direction for services in Ireland. Fundamentally, the methodology asks questions about the social benefit of interventions. Funding from Atlantic Philanthropies enabled or required organisations to invest in the methodology with 18 RCTs taking place over the course of the decade (CES, 2013). While RCTs are considered to be the ‘gold standard’ of evaluation, they have been criticised as being inappropriate for evaluating social interventions (Morrison, 2001; Ghate, 2008; Stewart-Brown et al. 2011).

Five of the beneficiary organisations featured in this study participated in RCTs. The views presented below are those of representatives from the three stakeholder categories that had direct experience in the funding, implementation and management of RCTs. While participants not funded to undertake RCTs had views on their value, these were not included in the analysis as the purpose of this chapter is to understand the experience of participants in implementing philanthropically funded programmes. These perspectives identified a number of considerations raised by beneficiaries including pressure to undertake the RCTs, internal organisational costs as well as ethical and value for money considerations. Statutory representatives’ concerns included the potential for raised expectations that could not be met and the complexity associated with the RCT research methodologies.

Some organisations reported experiencing pressure to accept involvement in this methodology as part of the investment in the services in question. B2 stated that “Definitely we were put under pressure to make the call, if you don’t decide to do the RCT, well there will be no programme.” Participating in RCTs, the data highlighted, involved significant costs to organisations as it required investing in operational issues, and, in some cases, a re-orientation of staff and resources. Across organisations, the decision to participate raised questions about the relative value placed on research and

spawned debates that, for some respondents, posed hurdles at the level of board and staff. The sense pervaded, as stated by a number of respondents that “the research was setting the agenda”. One provider described overcoming this by bringing in external consultants from the US to make the case to the board of directors of the benefits of participating in an RCT.

Undertaking research and evaluation brought providers into close proximity with research teams at universities. The process took some time to be established and required changes in the ways that staff interacted with different kinds of professionals. Reservations related to the amount of time required to dedicate to data collection and validation, which required allocating resources and skills to research and evaluation, diverting staff from delivering services. Undertaking an RCT necessitated investment of time in operational issues including extensive documentation and paperwork. This re-orientation of resources proved challenging for staff used to more direct engagement with clients. Describing his experience one director explained:

Staff would have been terribly resistant initially because we’re doing phenomenal record keeping and they fought me for the first year saying ‘this is a waste of time’ why do we have to do this, we should be out working with the families, and I must say our researchers have been really good with that because they don’t take opinion they just take facts and staff have realised it doesn’t really matter what you think, it’s what’s black and white that’ll be counted at the end of the day, nobody is going to come back in 20 years’ time and say what is your opinion of that? (B11)

The concerns expressed above highlighted the newness of using a methodology that appeared to some as a distraction in a culture that concentrated resources on the delivery of services. A significant number of participants expressed a view that agreeing to engage on an RCT required something of a “leap of faith”. This perspective was confirmed by a funder reflecting on the initial reception to RCTs among nonprofit recipients:

I think there was some resistance to the evaluation work and the whole randomised control type thing about this, it’s kind of social engineering, this kind of intervention and the control group, that it was taking a model that you’d use in medical trials and applying it to communities and communities are different, they are more complex etc so there would have been some resistance to that.(PT1)

For some service providers, decisions to participate in RCTs raised ethical considerations. In the example below, a community development organisation (local partnership) providing a parenting programme described how, after being approached by the university evaluation partner charged with implementing the RCT, participating in the trial posed the following difficulties:

I think that under our general funding that we had to meet the needs of everyone that emerged in front of us and we made a strong maybe controversial decision at the time to say that we couldn't implement it because it meant we would have to postpone some people getting parent programmes because we could not guarantee they would come back after 6 months and be in a place to do a parent programme again. (B10)

Instead, the organisation, while acknowledging the benefit of RCTs, set up an alternative research and evaluation system for the programme that assessed the impact based on a longitudinal study tracking the progress of children and parents at three points. The evaluation, also undertaken with a university partner required the provider to source external funding from a different (philanthropic) investor. Ultimately, the participant believed;

that's why we got a high retention rate we believe and we got a high involvement of parents in disadvantaged areas, disadvantaged communities that we felt we wouldn't have got with an RCT. (B10)

Investment in RCTs required funding of unprecedented levels into the children and youth sector. A significant number of beneficiaries expressed reticence about whether they represented the best option as value for money. The justification for expending large sums of money on RCTs was predicated on the assumption that they (if effective) would lead to widespread adoption elsewhere. In the absence of resources being available for further programme expansion, the respondent below queried whether money spent on the RCT was actually justified:

I would think very carefully about the cost of rigorous evaluation and that's not to say I wouldn't do it, it does have its own validity but if you are going to invest that much you are going to want to be very sure that as soon as it works that you can then fund it otherwise you are sort of thinking ...now I'm not saying it wasn't of value and benefit to the children but it's a lot of money isn't it? I'm still hopeful we will get something in the future but it's not running at the moment. (B7)

Among service providers, the experience of participating in RCTs generated positive responses about the value of evidence-based practice. Organisations grappled with the

problem of how to sustain a commitment to research and evaluation in the aftermath of target funding to these activities. A number of respondents, realistic as to the likelihood of significant sums of money being available in the future, instead called for alternative evaluation methodologies. As highlighted below this involved the use of approaches that relied less on external resources (human and financial) and that could be incorporated into practice:

We also wanted it to be done as part of business as usual as opposed to it being about this can only be done if we have a million or whatever. So we think that changing practice within existing organisations is more important than having a lot of new money. You need some money to change things obviously because certainly you need to buy that facilitation piece and coordination piece. (B3)

.....so if you said to me going back would I do the same programme again, I think we'd have to think about the costs so I think the way we would really begin to think about it is saying when you're developing a programme and we're doing this now in anything new that we develop is to do it in a way so you are not setting up something that is actually very expensive to run (B7)

Statutory representatives interviewed also articulated concerns about the dedication of such large-scale resources to evaluation. As expressed below, in the context of the €36 million Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programme, which the participant acknowledged to be a once off investment and that “even if they worked brilliantly you were always going to have to say is it worth the investment”?

I mean look at the cost of the evaluation of the three sites alone, not to mind all of the others, it was massive. If you said to somebody well we're giving them €5 million and €1 million is going to be spent on evaluation they'd say 'What? Are you all mad? How many more kids could you give a service to?' (PM5)

The idea of RCTs is based on reason and a particular brand of scientific rationality. Yet, the data revealed a number of concerns as to whether such scientific arguments represented the best mechanism for convincing policymakers. The view of a philanthropic advisor who worked closely with government acted as a reminder that rationality is not the only factor in decision-making when targeting donors (private and public) to invest in particular programmes:

Now my colleagues are really anxious for me to build the case for philanthropy on the evidence but I need to be able to tell a story, I don't need  $a + b = c$ . Evidence is far less important in convincing government to try or do something than people think. Now, it's very useful to have it. But you need to be careful that you don't make it your be all and end all. (PT5)

Rather, the participant elaborated:

I think if you can persuade government that you are delivering good outcomes you don't need a huge amount of detail if you can show the results. I think what government does have a problem with is getting involved in something where you don't see a result. But I think people can get hung up on tools and techniques to the exclusion of basics.

Interestingly, whilst much of the enthusiasm for new forms of proven programmes appeared grounded in the long-term aspiration that government would adopt successful models, policymakers interviewed expressed reservations about taking on proven programmes evidenced by RCTs. Concerns related primarily to the highly technical nature of the findings which caused difficulties in interpretation and comparison across projects, and a sense of apprehension that the State would be inundated with requests to fund successful programmes. The view expressed below outlines the perspective of a statutory representative who described a typical response to a request for additional funding on behalf of a well-known preventative programmes that had been subject to RCTs:

it can't be you just keep giving more money; because you can't run for example Incredible Years in every disadvantaged school and every disadvantaged community in Ireland. You can't run Big Brother, Big Sister all over the country even though it would be fantastic so...but if you're saying this is strategic and it'll save you money elsewhere or it'll spend the money you're spending better, that's the only thing government can be interested in, (PM5)

For some policymakers, the complexity of research methodology associated with RCTs emerged as a concern. Asked what had been learned from the evaluations of the PEI sites, a senior policymaker characterised the learning as modest and “a little bit oversold”. Statutory interviewees cited examples of evaluations where the technical nature and complexity of the data presented made it impossible to make comparisons across programmes and sites, a key learning objective that was not believed to have been met. For example, in the criticism of RCTs below the participant expressed a perception that they missed a critical step in providing basic categories of evaluation data that policymakers need to access:

So you can do an RCT and you can do it on a hundred and you can come up with very provable things over thirty or forty years; here's the benefits, and the investment's huge. Or you can have something which shows that at somewhat lower cost, people are getting quite a decent range of benefits. Being frank with



you, some of the evaluations don't answer even the question, how many people benefit? the characteristics of the people who benefit, the costs of the activity, all of that would be significant for quality benefit. Sometimes the kind of research methodologies are almost obscuring the fact that you don't have that basic foundational knowledge.

Reflecting on whether such studies were ultimately useful, the policymaker concluded:

So you sit at the centre now and they all arrive back in and you go, ok, well how will I compare? Can't. Can I trust and rely on? No I have to use my own discernment (PM3).

Such findings concur with those of the UK experience in using RCTs as a methodology in preventative programmes for children and families which raised the issue of whether the outcomes reported, in the form of average level of change, are always helpful to policymakers (Stewart-Brown et al. 2011 p. 230).

### **6.3.3 Outcomes over outputs**

While RCTs represented the highest standard of evaluation, philanthropic intervention required beneficiaries to demonstrate evidence of impact at some level. This section presents the views of stakeholders across all beneficiary organisations on their experiences in reporting and assessing progress as required by funders. The theme of 'outcomes over outputs' emerged as a key discourse in the children and youth field with stakeholders in all categories honed in the language and metrics outcome-oriented working. In practical terms, this meant a change from "doing what you say you do" to "showing the difference what you are doing makes."

A number of respondents contextualised the trend for outcomes-focused thinking as part of an environment in which a number of systems, including external funding from the EU and changes in public sector thinking, were moving toward requirements for greater accountability. Philanthropic funding enabled organisations to designate considerable resources (financial and human) to the task. From the mid-2000s onwards, the availability of dedicated resources heightened expectations as to levels of and standards of evidence acceptable in the field. Fundamental changes identified by participants over the course of the decade included a new rigour on the part of funders in interpreting evidence and a sense that "soft evidence" would no longer suffice in attracting funding.

The shift in standards was to some extent attributed to the PEI initiative that raised government expectations as to the benchmark for evidence. According to one beneficiary of the programme:

...other programmes that I've been involved in over the years have got funding on precious little evidence and got roll over funding and yet, because the whole area of prevention and early intervention suddenly the government were demanding much more rigorous standards. (B2)

The issue of rigour was especially prevalent in the views of statutory representatives. A number of policymakers spoke about becoming more demanding in “interrogating” programmes and how, as a by-product of co-investing with philanthropy, they subjected current and future requests for funding to more robust questioning than previously. One participant described this as a discipline that involved the following elements:

forcing people to really set out very clearly what they were trying to achieve, what their outcomes were, how they were going to do it, what their evidence was, if this would work in doing it and demonstrating that they had the ability to pull it off in terms of local partnership and local players. So it has changed the way in which we are assessing future investment (PM5)

The example above illustrates how the policymaker felt skilled-up to take a more proactive approach in relation to assessing projects. Therefore in relation to the fundamental question asked of all programmes, the respondent stated:

We actually want to know if it's making a difference for children, not just that we all enjoy doing it, particularly professionals often enjoy delivering programs but that doesn't really tell us a lot ....

A number of beneficiaries reported that the increased focus on outcomes required organisations to produce different metrics from those that in the past had sufficed to meet project reporting requirements. Such changes were described as having permeated the entire field of statutory and private providers alike. In the words of B6 “every funding we get now has a full section of evaluation, using the words outcomes and outputs which was never there previously”. Reflecting on a twenty year career working in services for children and youth, the respondent below characterised the changes taking place on the ground:

I've seen a significant change in the language certainly in my work for most of my working career it was all about numbers, it was all about outputs, how many

children did you work with? How many youth did you work with? And that was sufficient.

As a result of a shift to outcomes however, interactions with statutory funders had changed:

so it's no longer saying you worked with a thousand young people, they want to know what impact did you have on them, what change have you seen in them and that's the language of that last 5 years and I think central to that has been Atlantic Philanthropies' external funding (B10)

Similar experiences were shared by the participant below who linked the fundamental reappraisal of the indicators for measuring impact to the need for accountability systems to be incorporated into internal programme management:

anyone working in a community setting can no longer say 'we ran a youth group' ...well who did you run it with, why did you run it? What came out of it and you have to be able to account for all of that (B8)

Among nonprofit beneficiaries the importance attached to 'proven programmes' raised questions about the relative value placed on "hard" and "soft" evidence. In this regard, respondents reported that anecdotal evidence could no longer be relied upon. Operationally, particularly at the larger organisations, this concern translated into the need for 'quality assurance' in one instance leading to the establishment of a best practice unit:

We had loads of qualitative evidence of the work we did but very little quantitative, scientifically measured work as such and that was always a bit of a stress and a strain. And then of course as more money started coming into the sector more questions started getting asked about well 'how do you know XYZ is working?' and that kind of stuff. So we started thinking in those terms about proving what we were doing and also starting to look at planning systems and being more strategic, developing a strategy as such. (B1)

The need for "hard evidence" was perceived as providing a benefit to the field in terms of credibility:

One of the things actually I learned early on was the power in having proven programs. You could argue, up to a number of years ago youth work would have been fairly woolly. It was all about feelings and relationships and all about soft evidence. That's not good enough. If we are confident about the impact we're having on young people and I absolutely am, then that should be able to stand up to vigorous evaluation (B11)

Examples of the tools and frameworks preferred in the field included theory of change and logic models, instruments that beneficiaries acknowledged were not in use prior to the significant investment from philanthropy. In practical terms, the logic model provided the instrument in which to transition into outcome-related operations. For some, the discipline attached to the use of the model changed the way in which the organisation planned, measured and evaluated its work. As outlined below:

The thing about logic modelling, about actually developing programs around, basing it on that logic model looking at the outcomes for young people and clearly being able to trace back what we were doing and how we were doing it, why we were we doing it, what the outputs were, the activities and the outputs and all of that. So there was a lot of work went into the organisation, restructuring the organisation to do this.(B1)

Initiated by the requirements of philanthropic investment, the majority of beneficiaries reported introducing theory of change approaches into programme and organisational planning. They highlighted the value of this approach in identifying one set of measurable yet discrete outcomes for all areas of work and which enabled staff to monitor progress. While the theory of change approach was undertaken to enable assessment of impact, some respondents cited benefits including using the model to ‘make the case’ to all funders and facilitating communication to external audiences about the organisation’s activities. Most organisations availed of training from external providers in using these models:

we needed a lot of training in using the logic model because the whole basis of it is that you start from the outcomes and you work backwards so again that was a fresh, new way of thinking for us and we needed help (B5)

A common problem reported by beneficiaries related to developing realisable outcomes. For example, as described below:

a number of expert advisors who helped us to figure out what’s realistic to expect because we would have set outcomes that were way beyond our capacity to achieve (B8)

The process, proved useful in differentiating between types of outcomes for instance strategic outcomes, internal outcomes, final outcomes and policy outcomes.

Despite the pressure to demonstrate successful outcomes, the use of more rigorous evaluation prompted discussion among respondents on the importance of accepting and

documenting failure. The following quote, commenting on reaction to a programme that was discontinued demonstrates the contribution that this kind of learning enabled:

...just this week landed on my desk was the report from the Childhood Initiative Development (CDI) in Tallaght where they had a pro-social behaviour initiative which failed. ....It failed and people were saying, my God, and I was saying but at the same time you need to know! And that kind of acceptance that we need to try things, we need to measure them rigorously, we need to be absolutely up front and honest and say 'no, actually, that didn't work' (B6)

Another beneficiary recognised that there is a need for honesty and transparency in programme results:

if we don't produce the goods and if our results at the end of the study don't show that we've made an impact and that's been our motto from the start that say's look, if we don't produce the goods then we should not be re-funded. (B1)

Alluding to one of the biggest quandaries in the field, one provider commented that from a policy point of view "what works" isn't that simple:

because just because something's proven to work doesn't mean it'll get funded. And I know we all know that. (PM5)

#### **6.3.4 Summary**

The two sections above have explored the experiences of participants in implementing a variety of performance measurement instruments that characterise a culture of evaluation operating in the children and youth field. Participants attested to engagement in evaluation and measurement activities on an unprecedented scale. This has entailed significant attention to training and education, with dedicated staff and funding lines required to support the level and volume of activity involved. Overall, the resulting advancement in knowledge of evaluation concepts and design appeared generally welcomed, with respondents reporting an increased ability to 'ask the right questions' about expectations for services delivered.

The findings reported in this section attested to changing standards in the children and youth field to reflect a culture of evaluation. This shift was accompanied by advancement in knowledge of evaluation concepts and design. Among funders it heightened their ability to interpret evidence and to become more demanding in their interrogation of programme results. For beneficiaries asked to measure what they were

doing, and in particular to demonstrate outcomes, it called for use of different metrics in order to address the requirement for “hard evidence”.

With regard to the use of RCTs, participants in this study voiced several practical considerations involved with implementing this methodology. These included a degree of hesitancy in taking up the model, although for the most part, initial reluctance was overcome. The response of policymakers, on the other hand, appeared somewhat muted. Policy makers in this study appeared unconvinced by the value of RCT evidence about particular programmes, both for practical reasons about the likelihood of further investment in proven programmes and from a desire to learn more about practices or aspects of elements of programmes that could be mainstreamed or adapted in service planning (as distinct from programme specific outcomes). The issue of value for money featured strongly, with respondents appearing largely unconvinced as to whether the cost is disproportionate to the intervention.

An overriding issue raised in the data related to the extent of economic recession that at the beginning of the investments had not been anticipated. In the face of long-term economic constraints, large scale adoption of proven programmes was unrealistic for government grappling with cutting services. Given that the rationale for investment was predicated on some form of adoption on a larger scale this posed a fundamental difficulty in assessing their capacity for impact.

## **6.4 Mainstreaming and ‘going to scale’**

### **6.4.1 Overview**

For strategic philanthropists, the process of identifying promising programmes and helping them expand is a primary consideration. Once a programme has demonstrated tangible results, the focus then becomes bringing them to a broader scale (Bishop & Green, 2008). As outlined in Chapter Two, the pinnacle of success for programme investments associated with strategic philanthropy, is the adoption by the state, or in other words, ‘going to scale’, a term used interchangeably with ‘mainstreaming’. The introduction of the ideas of scale and the associated concept of replicating innovations borrows from the practices of the for-profit sector that a proven idea can be reproduced

in multiple sites. The One Foundation adopted going to scale as a fundamental objective of its investments in children and families. At Atlantic's children and youth programme, a core priority involved 'testing innovative service models in the hope that the most effective ones would later be adopted widely by government and private agencies' (Proscio, 2010 p.4). Interviews sought the views of philanthropic representatives, beneficiaries and policymakers on their understanding of the concept of scaling up and the place of statutory funds in anticipated mainstreaming efforts.

Among the stakeholders for the sites selected for investment in Ireland, definitions of the term mainstreaming varied with interpretations ranging from replicating entire programmes nationally to incorporating learning from the programmes into informing current practice and thinking (Canavan, Coen, Ozan & Curtin, 2014). The DCYA defined mainstreaming as 'the process of integrating individual programmes and practices into existing (universal) services in education, health, social services etc.' (2013, p. 4). Not surprisingly, a more expansive interpretation can be found among the beneficiaries. Organisations in the PIE programme at Atlantic, for instance, identified three strategies for sustainability and scaling up: (1) obtaining government funds to continue delivering the services or programmes and to replicate them in a limited number of additional communities; (2) supporting mainstreaming of the programme within statutory services, as a replacement or new approach to existing services that are not as effective and (3) developing plans and tools for scaling up and replicating the programme on the island and internationally (providing training, accreditation, fidelity monitoring, and quality assurance). (Paulsell & Pickens Jewell, 2012).

#### **6.4.2 Conditions in the Irish context**

Respondents reported a number of challenges in working with mainstreaming and scaling models adopted from the United States in the Irish context. Questions arose as to whether the conditions for scaling up in the form of programme expansion, bringing services proven to be effective to more people, exist in Ireland. As outlined by the foundation representative below, the initial funding strategy at the organisation applied the metrics of venture philanthropy, namely, numbers of people affected as the barometer of success. However, the realities of multi-agency and multi-faceted models of service delivery in operation called for a reassessment of strategy:

Venture philanthropy is usually about scale and numbers and that's completely opposite to what we've done because we didn't go scale and numbers.....but actually if you look at the Irish market it's too fragmented, there's nothing to scale, how do you scale things because there's no infrastructure for it, everybody's an independent organisation, so actually the concept of scale like they have in the US is extremely difficult to do. (PT4)

In the example of PT4 above, the initial goals for making effective family support programmes available nationally included a commitment to investing in organisations that had proven programmes and supporting them to bring these programmes to scale. The respondent explained further that in the absence of a national infrastructure supporting services to children and a service delivery model to which the HSE committed, the viability of scaling up appeared untenable. Citing the example of parenting programme from the US, the respondent went on to explain the difficulties in adopting models given the hurdles in getting state alignment to its priorities and ultimately assuming funding:

.....how would you get parenting across the country? ....you just ended up stopping which is why our investment in the whole children space is a lot smaller than anticipated because you couldn't actually invest there because that's where the state is such the bigger player so they in a way have to lead where they want to go..(PT4)

Going on to explain the decision to move out of funding a service considered to be hugely successful, the respondent went on to articulate a view that the role of philanthropy was to innovate and demonstrate but not to deliver fundamental and necessary services:

But ultimately our view was that you had to, we shouldn't; philanthropy can only take it so far and if something is so integral to the way you deliver services ... that's not for private people to be funding, it's actually for the state to take over.

The limited routes for adopting successful programmes and the singular option of the State as the only commissioner to take on interventions initiated in the private sector emerged as what some characterised as an “infrastructural” deficit. Commenting on the limitations of the system one foundation representative reflected:

we don't have a broad philanthropic market here so it's not like, it's either is the government or it's not because we don't have an alternative...(PT8)

As described by philanthropic respondents, choices for programmatic investments were



not made in isolation, but rather in anticipation of government adoption. Most respondents acknowledged that plans for government adoption underwent significant revision largely due to changed economic circumstances. One beneficiary described the change in thinking about the investments as follows:

Now I think the question there, at one stage it might have been ‘let’s see what works and then we can take what works and we can roll it out everywhere’, that’s just not going to happen now for the economic reasons and maybe it wasn’t the right thing anyway. The critical question now is much more ‘what have we learned that works, that makes a difference and how do we embed that in our mainstream services?’ (B7)

In partnering with philanthropy, the government view indicated that key elements had to include embedding the knowledge and assimilation into existing service delivery. Commenting on the investment in the three PEI sites, a policymaker outlined the government perspective that included an acknowledgement of the unprecedented financial size of investment:

I think from governments point of view is that we agreed with Atlantic, and this was actually their aim, was not to sort out Tallaght, Ballymun and Darndale, and we were completely at one on this, that out of what we wanted to do the only value invested in that kind of money was great if we could do something for those kids at that point in time. But we were never going to get €18 million for every similar three sites around the country so there was no point in us creating some kind of a parallel universe that could never be replicated, from which we learned absolutely nothing. (PM5)

Given this reality, for practical reasons, agreement was reached with Atlantic that that investment took place alongside existing services:

So we insisted, and they very much supported us in this, that where we were running these kinds of arrangements that we did it in partnership with existing services. So either they were embedded in existing services, they were drawing on people from existing services or they were offering something to existing services, so that by the end of it you would have champions from the mainstreams saying ‘that actually really worked’, or ‘we’d love to be able to do that if we could reorient our service or whatever’ and that was actually quite critical because all of the time it kept our focus on the fact that, great, it worked in Tallaght and Ballymun and Darndale, but much more important: what would we know about what we wanted we to do about mainstream policy making and mainstream service delivery.

Evident in the rationale above is the perspective from the government that the most useful role philanthropy can occupy is in adding value to existing provision and not in

replacing or re-orienting services. In addition, the insistence on the learning aspects of the partnership investment provides a clear indication that from the perspective of both partners, the potential for replication lay not in programmes but in adapting principles and elements of the interventions. It is the applicability of evidence generated to broader learning that makes the investments significant.

Understandings of mainstreaming are nebulous for both funders and practitioners. In practice, while the attraction is there for both parties, a process of negotiation and clarification of expectation can take place before agreement is reached as the following example illustrates. In one example, a service provider delivering a parenting programme was approached by a philanthropic funder who wished to make a significant investment in the programme. Specifically, the funder was attracted by the evidence-based approach offered by the particular intervention and wished to fund one aspect, its adoption at preschool level. Two issues were critical prior to investment—the need to see impact and the ability of the service to be mainstreamed after initial investment. According to the Director of the service, with regard to mainstreaming “this is where a very interesting debate emerged in which the language started to change as we went along” ultimately, following negotiation with the funder:

What we agreed with them is that mainstreaming meant that at the end of the project that those preschools no longer needed funding and were fully operational and at the end of the three years, those people were trained, accredited ...(B10).

As part of the understanding reached, the service became fully integrated into the participating schools:

They had all the resources, training, accreditation and skills to continue to run the programme without any funding.

On the issue of sustainable mainstreaming and what it meant, the respondent reflected:

Well it is confusing because different people have different views of the language. I mean we agreed with our funder, this is what it meant and they were happy, now they still believe that because the model worked so well we’re still working with them on trying to replicate and they’ve actually extended their funding to replicate it into another area in the county

Although prominent in the goals and objectives of foundations, the experience in practice raised questions as to the viability of scaling up in an Irish context. For philanthropic funders, scaling up, understood to mean significant organisational growth judged by the metric of numbers, proved problematic. The goal of replication, namely the diffusion and adoption of model social programmes, underwent considerable reassessment; a factor attributed to the lack of an adequate infrastructure to promote widespread adoption and the need for statutory buy-in in order for this to work. Overall, expectations for State adoption of pilot or proven programmes were also revised in view of deteriorating economic conditions. The interviews revealed discrepancies as to the understanding of the concepts and expectations for scaling up among the different stakeholders. Statutory representatives expressed a view that adoption of successful programme elements into mainstream service delivery provided opportunities for transfer of successful elements. This version of scaling of innovations that Dees, Anderson & Wei-Skillern (2004) suggest frames the usefulness of replication in terms of *principles* – general guidelines and values about how to serve a given purpose.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Funders operating with social investment approaches place a fundamental priority on looking for results and with having an impact often in the short-term. The trend toward market-based norms and standards associated expected of nonprofits and the focus on measurable results has been characterised by Heyderman and Toepler as ‘legitimacy by efficiency’ (2006, p. 17). The authors caution that such an environment is not conducive to programmes or activities with risk of failure, where results are not easily measured or where long-term investment is required. Others, such as Frumkin (2006) question the emphasis on results given the systemic problems with which nonprofits are engaged in society. In this study, the brief timeframe in which strategic philanthropy operated and temporary nature of its engagement by two limited life foundation raised questions as to its future potential. At the same time, the extent to which results of proven programmes could be adopted into existing State provision appeared feasible at the level of principle rather than wholesale programme adoption.

Philanthropic investment provided the impetus for the emergence of core capacities in the children and youth sector. Among the challenges raised by respondents however,

the data revealed that the opportunities afforded by heightened organisational growth and development must be counterbalanced by the limitations of the funding infrastructure within the country. Moreover, the impending exit of the two primary philanthropic players at the same time and in a climate of reduced State funding levels threatens to undo the advances made within the sector.

Finally, the emphasis on ‘proven’ models brought about an unprecedented focus on developing a well-evidenced body of programmes and practices and the fostering of new research, data collection and evaluation competencies across the sector. The demonstration of effective practice, funders anticipated, would lead to policy reform alongside the development of sector capacity and infrastructure. The following chapter explores the perspective of interviewees as to the impact of these activities.

## **Chapter Seven: Emerging Discourses in Policy and Practice**

### **7.1 Introduction**

While the previous chapter explored the experiences of both funders and recipients in implementing strategic approaches to garner more effective, impact-driven operations and programmes, this chapter focuses on the views of stakeholders regarding the influence of these activities and their perspectives on the legacy of philanthropy. As the interviews elicited observations on perceived changes in the policy and practice systems in operation over a period beginning in the early 2000s, the responses are of a somewhat nuanced and reflective nature. The emphasis is on identifying philanthropy's 'added value' and on highlighting the areas where participants believed resources from philanthropic investments had made a difference. Accordingly, participants' views on key factors influencing the development of strategy and emerging frameworks for policy and practice are discussed in the light of philanthropic intervention. The interviews concluded by asking about the future and potential scale of philanthropy in Ireland. In this aspect of the research, questions about the level of intervention appropriate or effective for philanthropy, or concerning its viability as a form of social investment did not stimulate the degree of discussion anticipated at the outset of the study. .

**Section 7.2** describes the factors influencing resource allocation within the public system and the increasing role of knowledge and evidence as fundamental considerations in practice and policy. The nature of systems for policymaking in Ireland is outlined together with changes in the infrastructure for children and youth services. These developments are discussed in the context of a number of system deficiencies identified by respondents. Such deficits are important in understanding the culture into which philanthropy intervened, as well as providing opportunities for reform that could be meaningfully addressed. In **Section 7.3**, the emergence of a 'doctrinal shift' within the sector is discussed from the perspective of organisations delivering services.

The focus in **Section 7.4** is on policy learning. Policymakers identified a number of select areas in which learning from the prevention and early intervention investments could be adapted to influence policy. Changes in the system, in particular the commitment to outcome-focused, evidence based thinking impacted the way in which services are planned, assessed are prioritised and these are highlighted. In terms of the policy discourse in operation, a number of key messages emerged within the field and these are discussed in **Section 7.5**. The final part of the chapter, **Section 7.6** considers the how philanthropic foundations perceived their role in relation to policy implementation and outlines some of the inherent challenges and opportunities.

## **7.2 Public policy system**

### **7.2.1 How resources are allocated**

Participants identified deficiencies in the resource allocation practices of public funding streams as a key concern, particularly in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Of the ten beneficiary organisations featured in the study, six were in receipt of long-term funding from statutory sources. The other four were either created by philanthropy or had a shorter history with government funding. Across these organisations, the consensus view was that the State, as a funder, did not have a culture of evaluating programmes. Questions about the effectiveness of services were largely absent; grant recipients were rarely asked to account for or evaluate activities. Service providers spoke about reluctance on the part of government departments to discontinue programmes that were not required to demonstrate or failed to deliver results. This position, characterised as a lack of appetite among policymakers to terminate programmes, was summarised by one interviewee as:

For me, doing things without thinking whether it's the right or the wrong thing, is part of the problem, and a reluctance then to stop it because if you stop something then you'll have a lot of people, well, peeved or you'll end up with some sort of political backlash... (B3)

Another provider described a climate in which statutory funders demanded little and programmes were continued on the basis of being 'well-intentioned'.

Such experiences are reflective of a general lack of focus on evaluation and outcomes in social services in Ireland which only gradually began to change from the mid to late

1990s (Keenan, 2007). Financial resources for research and evaluation activities necessary to determine if interventions were effective were notably absent. The problem was compounded by the lack of an infrastructure for knowledge and support required by nonprofits wishing to adopt a more scientific approach to programme design and evaluation at the time. In this study, representatives of the larger service organisations recalled seeking out UK-based research organisations to assist in service design and evaluation.

Policymakers interviewed were themselves extremely critical of practices within the statutory system for the allocation of resources and identified a number of inherent deficiencies. In some instances, they expressed frustration with the latitude extended to the community and voluntary sector to undertake activities without adequate justification for their purpose or need. One interviewee, describing a lack of focus and a tendency to be “funding and not mission driven” among community and voluntary organisations, when probed further about whether the sources of such funding were attributable to philanthropic streams, responded:

No, it was much more state funding actually that padded things, and I don’t think we’ve done enough analysis of it. A lot of money was thrown at problems to solve problems, very little of it actually worked. (PM1)

This sense of unease was shared by the respondent below:

If you look at direct state provision and certainly the grant giving we’re doing, people don’t know what they were giving it for, they genuinely don’t. I mean there’s a massive amount of grant giving going on from the HSE to the voluntary community sector and some of it is very well invested and you have the confidence about the bigger services for example. (PM5)

The interviewee went on to differentiate their faith in one of the larger, national organisations with a sense of scepticism about the merit of making funds available to community projects that, as described below, were no longer viable:

there’s dozens upon dozens of local community initiatives, which at a point in time might have been brilliant but haven’t kept pace with thinking, the people have moved on, the quality of the training of the people coming in is questionable, so there’s a massive amount of money going out that nobody knows really what for...(PM5)

A number of policymakers attributed the culture of renewing funding without

subjecting recipients to accountability mechanisms to the availability of resources in favourable economic conditions. As recalled below:

If you look at our budgeting process, right up to the Celtic Tiger, we looked to probably add about 10% every year, but we forgot about the 90% that was just sitting there so we forgot about the core services looking at those, so we wanted more of the same, we kept adding more of the same, layer on top of layer, without really going back and having a look. (PM2)

In this regard, the economic downturn which began in 2007 was perceived as an opportunity to reassess spending priorities. The financial crisis, one respondent recalled, prompted an unprecedented series of assessments of services where “Looking back we needed to review them, and to be honest, we weren’t doing it; it was easier to keep going” (PM4)

In terms of expectations from statutory investment, a recurring theme related to the limited expectations of a system that measured inputs and outputs. In monitoring progress, the prevailing culture was described as one where everything was measured in inputs:

Progress was getting more staff, what the staff were doing or were capable of or what they achieved would never cross anybody’s mind.....So you know, get more teachers, more social workers, more everything and the professionals - they rarely get assessed or get measured. (PM2)

According to study participants, the introduction of language about effectiveness and evidence-informed services was introduced to state-led bodies considerably earlier than their contemporaries in the voluntary and community sectors. Beginning in the late 1990s, the introduction of a focus on outcomes in service delivery came through external pressure, specifically, as recalled by a senior policymaker, the experience of accessing and managing European Structural Funds which called for new kinds of accountability mechanisms. The respondent above believed that requirements to provide detailed plans and Key Performance Indicators in order to access European funding paved the way for the engagement with philanthropy that subsequently emerged in the early 2000s. Reflecting on translating the need to shift thinking in the voluntary sector to focus on outcomes, a statutory respondent outlined the difficulties involved:

...it was really hard to get organisations and the board to think strategically because they were really interested in ‘we need more resources’, more of this



and more of that, and when you asked the question ‘what for?’ or if there was another way of doing this, it was quite a difficult conversation (PM4)

Policymakers also identified inadequate data and monitoring capacity as a fundamental limitation of systems operating within nonprofit organisations. A statutory representative, critical of the inability for service providers to produce data to generate basic information on clients served for example, perceived this as a failing of accountability:

if they had the systems proper that they should have you should be able to tell you within 24 hours how much they are putting in instead of going out doing these three years of research to find out ... (PM3)

A number of participants characterised the major shortcoming of government funding for child and family services not, as might be expected, under-investment but rather, a lack of attention to outcomes for services supported. Perceived inefficiencies in the system, respondents noted, included a multiplicity of services that were not linked to effectiveness or assessment. This view was described in the following terms:

in an area where kids and families, where life hasn’t been as favourable to them we all pour in on top of them and nobody pays much attention to whether it’s effective or not. (PM2)

Commenting on the fact that despite the huge reserves of money going from state funds into disadvantaged communities, one philanthropic funder reflected:

Yet they don’t seem to be able to shift those kind of persistent difficulties of underachievement, poor family functioning, early school leaving, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, all those kind of things that feature in those communities. (PT3)

The expectation from the individual being, not that these kinds of intractable problems lent themselves to easy or facile solutions; but rather, that the system could benefit from a focus on outcomes.

### **7.2.2 Public Policy: Systems, infrastructure and orientation**

Respondents were asked about their views on the status of national policy for children and youth and the areas they believed required further policy development or reform. Interviews probed the extent to which participants considered current frameworks adequate for organisations dedicated to meeting the needs of children and young people and elicited views on changes in policy orientation and its impact on the sector.

Although responsibility for children and youth funding crosses a number of sources and government departments, the majority of the respondents reported on their interactions with officials in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) or prior to that with the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). The policymakers interviewed included representation from the highest level in the DCYA.

The data identified a number of difficulties arising from the nature of politics and policymaking in Ireland. In particular, the characterisation of policy-making as crisis driven and reactive emerged as a constant theme that pervaded the public systems. Describing how the National Children's Strategy came about, a policymaker attributed the importance of pressure from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child which criticised Ireland's poor performance in 1998 in influencing the government's commitment that year to the publication of a national strategy:

...the reason the National Children's Strategy was devised was because we went over to Strasbourg and got beaten up by the committee –you know the way each country when you sign up to the UN convention you have to do a report every few years so Ireland went and they got criticised .... (PM2)

Across all sectors interviewed, the value of having a national strategy for children was highlighted. The strategy provided a focal point, conveyed a sense of mission and purpose, and unified people around a commonly agreed agenda. Nevertheless, there was a perception that although it provided vision, at another level, the current strategy required focus to make for effective implementation:

If we look at the children's strategy, it was quite aspirational in its aim and it wasn't as focused ... but actually the Children's Rights Alliance did an analysis and they went through each action point and it actually delivered on quite a lot of its promises. So it gave focus and it gave people something to gather around and agree that these are the drivers for change and here's what we will look to seek...so it gave common purpose and that ...a strategy, can often just provide a focus for the intervention and it means people have to group around certain initiatives. (PM1)

Thus, while national policy was largely perceived as setting the correct goals and objectives for children and youth, the issue of implementation emerged as an area requiring attention. Several interviewees criticised the absence of clear guidelines for implementation. As the example below indicates, this led to inherent difficulties in practice settings:

Like, we've a broad idea of what we're supposed to do but there's a lot of

autonomy then at local level then as to how you go about it. And I mean there's a lot of making up stuff as well which people ...they are trying to do their best and they're doing what they think is best but in a lot of cases it's not. (B2)

The quote above summarised the need for greater direction and uniformity among those delivering services. One policymaker attributed the creation of a full Department for Children and Youth to the need for a focus on implementation:

Now the difficulty is and the reason I think the ministry was created is that we don't have a coherent policy on the delivery of services for children and young people so we've a lot of ad hoc arrangements some of which are really good but some are not giving the outcomes for children (PM6)

In the children and youth area, Ireland's infrastructure for the development of policy and services has undergone considerable transition in the decade beginning in the early 2000s. The appointment of a Junior Minister of State for Children in 1996 followed by the appointment for the first time of a Cabinet Minister with a portfolio for children in 2011 was viewed as hugely important within the sector. While the transition was welcomed, nevertheless, the changes caused some need for readjustment among organisations in developing relationships and in responding to shifting priorities:

One of the difficulties you have, including with children and young people at the moment is that we've had the Department of Health and Children, we've moved to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, we've moved now a further step with the Child and Family Agency and the worry you'd have is another change of government would change it to something else (S4).

The priority given to having a separate ministry for children and youth was viewed as hugely significant. A number of participants speculated on the influence of philanthropy in creating a Department of Children and Young People.

You could argue possibly that there mightn't be a single Department for Children with a Senior Minister had it not been for Atlantic, even for that matter – I don't know this for certain but I believe that Atlantic influenced the transformation of the original National Children's Office into the Office for the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs which then lead to the establishment of the Department (PT2)

As part of the infrastructure for policy development in Ireland, a perceived limitation related to the professional background of policymakers in a context where, ultimately, policy is devised by civil servants. As a career path, civil servants are assigned to diverse areas over their public service careers, and, while they acquire significant

expertise in one area over time, they may be allocated to different departments at short notice. At the same time, most senior positions are internal appointments from within governmental departments. The experience of one senior statutory representative, alluding to the lack of an applied knowledge element in the skills-set required for policymakers to be effective, contrasted the situation with other countries such as the UK for example:

In other countries a lot of the policy makers used be in services so I think that's why there was a dearth of well-informed policy because policy is devised by civil servants none of whom have professional qualifications in the area or experience of the front line....So they were able to bring out meaningful guidelines and guidance ...what my staff used to have to do was ring someone they knew in the HSE that they got friendly with! (PM2)

A similar perspective was shared by the participant below who related the issue to the lack of understanding of evidence-based thinking at statutory levels:

One of the reasons maybe why policy makers aren't as strong on the evidence based is that they haven't worked in the field. The problem is we've come through the administrative structure and a lot of the civil servants at the policy level have never met a client face to face. (PM6)

The nature of policymaking in which individuals hold a wealth of specialised knowledge that is lost to the department when they move was perceived as a flaw in the system:

But I mean it's very personal isn't it? (NAMES REMOVED) know in the morning like, what's going on, the minister doesn't have a policy advisor on family and children, that just seems to be real area where we're missing (PM2)

Another limitation of policy in the Irish context is participants' perspective that government did not favour long-term prevention and early intervention policies. The short-term nature of political decision-making emerged as a persistent criticism of government policy. With regard to 'making the case' for prevention and early intervention as a strategic orientation, participants identified several hurdles to be overcome in convincing government of the benefits. Primarily, prevention requires long-term commitment both for resources to be allocated and for results to be discernible. Governments, typically don't think in 15 or 20 year terms, the kinds of timeframes required for results; one respondent explained, rather 'they want something that's going to give us a result in three or four years and prevention, early intervention won't do it' (B2). As a strategy, the views of a majority of respondents in the

beneficiary category concurred, prevention and early intervention is unpopular with governments looking at their electability. Another problematic feature of the prevention debate identified in the data concerned the crisis-driven nature of policy-making, where as part of a systemic problem with policy, prevention in general can be seen as ‘light and fluffy’ and particularly vulnerable to cutbacks in an economic downturn.

### **7.2.3 Summary**

Up until the early 2000s, participants spoke of a culture in operation where statutory funding streams did not require a focus on outcomes. Overall, participants characterised a culture of limited expectations in which progress was measured in outputs; an environment further hampered by a lack of data monitoring systems and information. At the highest level, changes in statutory systems often come about as a result of external pressure. Timing emerged as a critical factor in facilitating change. The policy infrastructure in operation, including the creation of a dedicated government department and structures, provided opportunities for reform and for philanthropy to engage. Difficulties identified within the system included crisis-driven and reactive policymaking; a lack of focus on policy-implementation, the prevalence of short-term thinking and the dearth of applied knowledge held by or available to individual policymakers.

## **7.3 Changing mindsets in practice**

As experienced by key organisations delivering services to children and young people in this study, philanthropic investment brought about a number of fundamental changes in the way in which practitioners worked. Such findings concur with Frumkin’s (2006, p. 9) theory of scale as accepted doctrine which assigns a role to foundations in shifting the ways people think about and carry out programmes resulting in a re-orientation of a field’s standard operating practices and assumptions. In the findings presented here, nonprofit beneficiaries characterised this shift in terms of alterations in ‘mindset’ taking place within the sector. Such changes, encompassing the role of knowledge; engagement across difference professions; acquirement of new skills and the use of evidence in decision-making are discussed below:

*Knowledge generation:* Among practitioners interviewed, the consensus view was that the mass of knowledge generated about services for children and youth provided unprecedented opportunities for the sector. Above all, the interventions funded impacted people's lives.

I mean let us not forget as well there's been a huge impact for children and families and youth, you know, people's lives have been improved, there's no doubt and all that, while we've talked about the funding and the research lives have been changed and improved dramatically and we can do that so that gets lost in it. I think that's certainly the legacy ...the difficulty is I suppose when we can see that change and say well why can't we continue it? (B8)

The role of research and evaluation and the wealth of information available through manualised programmes resulted in a body of knowledge that respondents believed had significant potential for the sector. However, as raised in the quote above, retaining this expertise was perceived as problematic. The issue of sustainability was compounded by the exit of the two foundations in the same 2014-16 timeframe, a development about which a majority of interviewees expressed concern.

In this context, the lack of an infrastructure for disseminating, holding and ultimately ensuring sustainability of the knowledge amassed emerged as a deficit in the system. The role, many believed, would be best served by a nonprofit intermediary. Several respondents spoke of the need for technical assistance and structures to facilitate implementation in the future. This desire for implementation mechanisms was expressed in terms of a requirement for a repository for the knowledge as well as a resource or "go-to" place for assistance in utilising the information generated. The sample of quotes below is indicative of the frustration felt by respondents that the documentation effort which went into evaluation and manualisation of programmes yielded a set of resources ready to be harvested as part of a knowledge-transfer. Yet, such a transfer could not take place without resources:

...I think there was something like eighteen RCTs going on in and around the same period. I don't think we had any before. The tragedy would be if you never had any again because then what was the point? A very expensive lesson in 'yes we can do it' but never to be repeated. (B3)

... there has certainly been a legacy of the language and the ideas and the concept of evidence based logic but there is no central place you go to and say 'how do we implement this?' (B7)

I mean they've all got their manuals to help set this up but they're just sitting there and they say we don't have the ability to go on training you and support you doing it and that's one of the possible issues with philanthropy and AP that they have these service manuals, this is how you go do it, but obviously at the core of that is funding and resources.(B2)

Some respondents expressed the view that it is the function of the State to provide for and enhance capability for effective services and programme implementation.

So ...that is why it goes back to government policy, do they want to take on the programme, and do they want to put these things in place...I think there is a need for someone to oversee evaluation and effective services and programme implementation nationally. (B3)

For the most part, the gap in policy implementation was experienced at a practical level with assistance required in technical aspects of programme development and delivery through the provision of resources for training and skills that would strengthen practice "on the ground."

*Engaging across professions:* Participants spoke of the practice of professionals working together in new ways and in crossing traditional domains, for instance, as illustrated in the example below of a parenting programme delivered in schools whereby:

we've changed not only children's behaviours but we've changed professional practice in schools and preschools who are working with children and youth workers actually who've been involved in delivering parent programmes for us and you can't dilute that. (B10)

A foundations representative interviewed described the degree to which changed working practices had become embedded in the sector as follows:

One senior civil servant said to me 'It's not just about the programmes it's all these people now who've been skilled up to work in a different way, we don't want to lose them' And then if you talk to practitioners they will say to you, they will never go back to doing work the previous way ....so you've actually really changed the way people think about how they go about service development and service delivery so that they won't go back to doing the way things were done before, they've kind of moved on from there. (PT3)

The emphasis on evaluation called for a high degree of interaction between professionals that heretofore would have had little contact, including researchers at universities and practitioners. A service director reflecting on the mutual benefits of such engagement spoke of the initial reluctance among professionals to work together:

What we found was that we needed them and they needed us. They needed us to train them how to work with families, because the researchers have no experience of working with families, they also didn't know how to approach tricky family situations. We've trained them in dealing with all of that and they've trained us in the methodology.(B2)

*New skills:* At an operational level, the functions of having a service design team and research and advocacy departments, for instance, enabled organisations to undertake skills development and access expertise that participants indicated resulted in the professionalization of a new cadre of people in the sector. As summarised by one respondent, “the difference with the philanthropic money being available is that it created jobs that weren't there before” (B6). Philanthropic investment at this level provided the space to undertake development in traditionally underfunded roles that would not otherwise have been resourced, resulting in what one organisation described as “building up a kind of critical tipping point of change” (B8)

*Evidence in decision-making:* One fundamental manifestation of a shift in practice within the field concerns the use of evidence which became increasingly accepted as the standard or norm in making decisions. Interviewees described a change in thinking within the field that takes as a starting point the necessity to ask about evidence for programmes or services before taking the decision to invest. This tendency manifested in interactions with public funders also:

So even politicians are starting to think that way at the moment, that they want to check it out and see what evidence do you have before the funding. So I think AP has been great at that, they've brought a new way of thinking into the country, they've brought a group of people along (B2)

For many, introducing a scientific element into the process had the benefit of generating confidence that impact was in fact measurable. This sense of enhanced credibility experienced by practitioners is reflected below:

I think there has been the whole idea of evaluation with children and young people which for a long time we felt like we can't measure these changes and



that's changing, I think there's certainly now a belief that you can change things and you can measure them scientifically which is a good thing. (B10)

I think that they've helped to move things from beyond simply the opinion and I suppose the informed opinion of practitioners to a more scientific approach (B1)

Nonetheless, while the field benefitted from what some described as a 'convergence' of thinking and skills amongst staff that could 'ask the right questions', the advance was tempered by the need for sustainability:

I mean I do think the legacy is the building up of a group of organisations and individuals who understand outcomes, evidence, evaluation, prevention early intervention, the development of skills. I would say one of the things One did very well and AP did, maybe not quite so well but was about what they all call capacity building, building capacity within organisations and that in a sense means having skilled staff and teams and that kind of stuff but I would challenge them both on that they didn't either prompt or force their grantees to think through the sustainability piece early enough. (PT7)

In describing the infiltration into the mindset of evidence-based thinking one participant detected a transition in language from programmes to practice that began in 2012 and reflected a shift on the ground in adopting the methodologies of programmes rather than the programmes themselves:

And what's very interesting from my point of view, in the last 12 months the language is changing again from evidence based programmes which we used to have to this emergence now of talk about evidence-based practice. So what they're trying to do now as against fully proscribed programmes, don't deliver that, now they're saying well take the methodologies of these programmes and start to bring them into your practice so it's starting to shift without people even getting to the first stage of understanding what evidence based programmes were! (B10)

Key issues raised above concerned the role of knowledge, developing a body of specialised evidence, sharing that knowledge and accessing it for future planning. The data revealed evidence of a 'doctrinal shift' in the sector reflected in the working styles of professionals in the field. This included the facility of professionals to 'ask the right questions' as the primary criteria for justifying investment and the adoption of a more scientific approach serving to demonstrate that impact can and should be measurable. The development of a skill set in service design, research and evaluation as 'in-house' functions within service providing organisations greatly enhanced the capacity of the

sector. Overall however, the theme of sustainability pervaded the responses with participants expressing concern at a number of levels as to the need to maintain the momentum generated. As B3 warned without some plan to use the knowledge amassed “This could all be forgotten about in ten years with people coming back to where they were before.”

## **7.4 Policy learning**

As discussed in section 7.2 above, the policy environment in operation at the time reflected a move toward greater accountability and evidence. At the same time, national policy was increasingly being driven by an outcome-focused approach (DCYA, 2011). Statutory representatives interviewed characterised the influence of philanthropy as taking place within the confines of existing policy developments wherein the extraction of particular elements or aspects from foundation-funded programmes provided the ‘added value’ from philanthropy.

In a 2012 statement to the Oireachtas, the then Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald, referenced the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) sites in which she highlighted significant improvements in outcomes for children in a number of domains including:

- Positive impact of parenting programmes in tackling early onset of behavioural and emotional problems
- Improvements in school attendance and pro-social behaviour brought about by programmes supporting social and emotional understanding
- Value of locating therapeutic services in schools

Such aspects are indicative of the kind of learning generated that policymakers highlighted as relevant in informing policy. The 2012 DCYA *Statement of Strategy* indicated that evidence of effectiveness would be used to inform State funding and would provide the basis for services funded to be redesigned or reviewed (DCYA, 2012). According to the DCYA respondent quoted below, the lessons for policy that emerged from the three PEI sites related primarily to elements that might be adopted for universal application. Citing the example of a home-visiting mentor support service for pre-natal parents and children (0-3years) in Dublin, Preparing for Life, one of the

first experimental early childhood interventions in Ireland, the programme provided useful learning in particular aspects:

I think some of what we are beginning to see will be influential in understanding how you intervene with children and families and trying to make that either part of something that you scale or actually in as many instances part of how you change the current mainstream system. Like Darndale's a good example, the question of how people respond to visitors in their home, in their early parenting, we are going to have a very good Irish evidence around that (PM3)

In extricating the learning elements that emerged from the PEI investment policymakers interviewed highlighted their interest not in particular programmes but rather in principles that could be incorporated into policy and service frameworks. The feature highlighted, location and accessibility, is indicative of the kind of practical and programmatic learning distilled from the PEI programme as lessons for policy planning (CES, 2012). Other factors included the importance of relationships between practitioner and client, the need for non-school based learning and support, quality of training for practitioners and the value of placing therapeutic services in schools.

Policymakers interviewed spoke of the principle of evidence-based thinking as ingrained in the mindset of the DCYA. The co-funding experience with Atlantic, one policymaker reflected, had been informative in that it enabled evaluation to enter the mainstream of thinking about how services should be commissioned as well as providing the language and tools to do so:

it informed a number of other investments that were made even where we began to use the same types of methodologies in terms of forcing people to really set out very clearly what they were trying to achieve, what their outcomes were, how they were going to do it, what their evidence was, if this would work in doing it and demonstrating that they had the ability to pull it off in terms of local partnership and local players. So it has changed the way in which we are assessing future investment.(PM5)

Participants were also of the view that the evaluation culture that accompanied Atlantic's investments facilitated if not accelerated this change. Prefacing their remarks by cautioning against over attributing the role played by Atlantic in evaluation-based thinking, another respondent explained:

again it wasn't that nobody was doing it but it wasn't been done on a widespread basis to the same standard with a strategic investment in it and with a strategic

understanding of government so researchers might have been doing it but government wasn't totally capitalising on it and I didn't fully understand it so again I think they reengineered evaluation from governments point of view in terms of high quality, really rigorous evaluation ....(PM2)

The commitment to evidence, policymakers highlighted, had practical expression in a division dedicated to research on children's lives within the DCYA. The existence of such as unit recognised that the development, implementation and evaluation of policy needed good information (Brooks, Hanafin & Langford, 2010, p. 143). In working with philanthropy, statutory interviewees underscored, the commitment to evidence provided the basis for a shared agenda. The 'added value' factor from philanthropy in the opinion of the participant below related to the integration of applied knowledge from the field:

I think we were a very good match for them because we had a whole unit and a whole national goal around evidence and research and understanding children's lives so we got that and that was really helpful. So I think what they did do on the other hand was they made that very connected to actual frontline service delivery. We probably weren't there yet because our focus was on evidence for policy, and they were thinking of a more bottom-up evidence for policy, well both, but more bottom-up, but it was a good fit. (PM5)

Policymakers interviewed identified their overriding concern as seeking to understand how particular programmes relate to the key outcomes for children and youth that drive government policy. The five national outcomes for children include that they are healthy both physically and mentally; involved in active learning; safe from harm; economically secure and part of positive networks (DCYA, 2011). As outlined below, although sufficient data existed about children's lives, a dearth in knowledge on how service interventions relate to outcomes pervaded the sector - a gap which the learning from the prevention and early intervention sites was expected to fill:

So we've a lot of really good stuff on children's lives but we're only getting towards the point where we are getting to see well what are the interventions that relate to the outcomes and working back from there, partly that's just through data and it's starting to become available but I think partly it's the way we set it up was more about lives and outcomes than actual service interventions which philanthropy has done I think, would have introduced that into it. (PM5)

The participant went on to credit philanthropy with filling a gap between services on the ground and national policy both in terms of creating awareness of and connecting with issues:

I think in terms of prevention and early intervention, certainly there was lots happening but it was a lot of very local charismatic leadership and it wasn't coming from the centre it was coming bottom up and what they really tried to do was join up that bottom-up into something more tangible and more attractive from a government point of view but also to begin from the top down to say, to get that into our heads, where policy should be heading. And I think that's fair to them because government tends to be always, particularly I think in social care services we're always slightly behind because the state has never done these services, the community voluntary always had.

As perceived by a key stakeholder in the DCYA, the Atlantic funding was prompted by much more than "a few services that the money runs out for"; it was a legacy idea of the founder Chuck Feeney:

I think he wanted to really change the way government thinks and whether he's achieved it completely or to his own satisfaction I don't know...(PM2).

Another senior policymaker reflected on the experience of working with Atlantic in particular, the investment in time and effort into convincing government and forming a shared understanding of working together.

While it does get down to brass tacks in terms of 'how much are you putting on the table' as important for them is hearts and minds and getting some kind of reciprocal understanding and compatibility between the world views of government and Atlantic and they put a lot of time into that and were really patient with it.(PM3)

Figure 7.4 below summarises the elements for policy learning identified by statutory representatives as valuable contributions from philanthropy.

**Figure 7.4 Policy learning: philanthropy's added value**

<i>Trends in direction of policy</i>	<i>Philanthropy's added value</i>
Evidence and effectiveness	
=====	→ elements for application
Outcome-focused thinking	
=====	→ gaps in applied knowledge

## 7.5 Policy discourse: emerging messages

In addition to the debate on evidence, discussed above, participants identified a number of key messages that emerged in relation to the discourse taking place in children and youth policy. Among respondents the view prevailed that philanthropy has influenced thinking at government levels. As summarised by a key policymaker, this could be seen to the extent that in the “discourse of big government almost anything in the children and young people’s area will talk about evidence based, they’ll talk about research, they’ll talk about prevention” (PM2). These emergent discourses are outlined below:

*Prioritising investment:* As a ‘headline’ message, a policymaker interviewed emphasised the importance of acknowledging a fundamental change, observed over a twenty-year career, in the mindset of policymakers and how they value the overriding importance of investing in children and young people:

one of the prime issues I think that has emerged is the importance of investing in children, children and young people, period and then to invest earlier in children. We didn’t have that before and we didn’t think about it that way before. We of course had public systems to provide education. That’s very different than investing in children so that’s I think a huge shift and a positive shift. That’s maybe a more cultural mindset but one that influences ultimately the way people make policy and budgetary choices. (PM3)

The volume of Atlantic and One Foundation investments in prevention and early intervention programmes, for the most part, participants believed, meant that the ‘case’ for the importance of investing early had resonated with policymakers, even if it fell short on execution.

So I think the message that it makes more sense to spend money early has certainly gotten through. The mechanisms for that to happen haven’t been developed and that’s the kind of one that people say ‘oh well you know, the recession’ (B7)

In acknowledging the role of philanthropic funding in influencing the discourse, interviewees took care to contextualise developments within the broader international trend toward prevention and early intervention. However, philanthropy was perceived as having an influence in prioritising the issue at government levels. One funder described their assessment of impact in the following context:

Lots of countries are beginning to realise that if they want to tackle some of the

enduring difficulties that young people coming from disadvantaged areas have that the earlier they start the better. I think we would certainly say that we have helped raise the profile of prevention and early intervention in Ireland and that we have helped and supported key policy makers to get it higher up the government agenda.(PT3)

In this regard, the impact of funding was perceived by the respondent as facilitating incremental progress toward a set of goals that, while recognising the nature of the problems being addressed, nonetheless contained aspirations for change:

I think the big legacy is if you kind of view it as a needle [hand signal] and then you'd be kind of saying the needle has tilted more in favour of prevention and early intervention and you would over time begin to see better outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. If you could see some of those statistics that had been so stubborn such as the early school leaving rate or numbers of children in care reducing over time because families are more effective and that there's early intervention to prevent that. Now you'll never be able to totally prevent those things but could imagine when the UN comes in to kind of review Ireland's delivery against the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child that it's kind of recognised as a model of best practice ....

*Factoring economic considerations:* For policymakers, the message of early intervention resonated on an economic level. In a 2012 statement to Seanad Eireann *Early Years Strategy and the Economic Benefits of Early Intervention*, Frances Fitzgerald then Minister for Children and Youth Affairs cited research by economists indicating “the long-term returns on investment” associated with early years investment. Costs to society incurred through problems in cognitive capacity and social and emotional development for example, research indicated, could through early detection and intervention be avoided to save money in the long term. The introduction of social return on investment considerations into the discourse of policymaking for children and youth introduced a new economic rationale as a critical factor in the process of deciding how to use the resources.

Increasingly, the need for efficient use of available resources pervaded the policy choices of the DCYA. The *Statement of Strategy 2011-2014* acknowledged that “significant research evidence indicates that, in many cases, targeted interventions would result in improved outcomes” (DCYA, 2011, p. 4) and committed to adopting a focus on prevention and early intervention. The strategy cautioned however, that the implied “shift in balance from *short-term remedial* planning to *longer term prevention*

planning” is challenging in an economic climate of resource deficiencies and that the direction of policy would have to consider such financial and human resource constraints.

*Parenting:* A number of respondents spoke of the increased emphasis on parenting emerging as core learning from the PEIP investments. The participant below characterised this as having resonance for policymakers:

...in the context of a much wider understanding of childhood and where things go wrong for children and why they go wrong, being as much related to parental capacity and parental issues as it is to do with children themselves (S).

The sentiment expressed here attests to increasing government interest in promoting parent-based initiatives to improve the well-being of children. A key learning from the PEIP indicated that outcomes for children in the short term could be improved by working with and supporting parents (Rochford et al., 2014).

*Early intervention or early years:* While the message of early intervention seemed to resonate with policymakers, representatives from the youth sector interviewed in this study experienced a distinct sense of exclusion from government policy and priority setting. Some attributed this to a juxtaposition of ‘early intervention’ and ‘early years’ in the preferences of policymakers. This caused frustration for several participants from youth-serving organisations.

I see a lot of them are very influenced at the moment by the research coming through in early childhood and it's actually having a negative effect on the youth sector because of the way early intervention is being interpreted. (B8)

Another respondent spoke of the need to “change the conversation” in which early intervention had become synonymous with early years as follows:

I suppose where we are coming from is saying yes, early intervention is brilliant with very young children, that's your first chance, your first bite of the cherry, you get a second chance at in when they're in adolescence and also with the whole recovery model and I suppose a solution focused way that when any problem develops the earlier you intervene the better and it's about trying to help people to understand that ultimately big problems start small and how do we get to that. (B1)



Interviewees expressed a feeling of missed opportunity that policymakers failed to take into account or indeed appreciate the spectrum of early intervention as a principle within the DCYA:

Early intervention can be within the actual stage of life, they are preoccupied with early intervention up to the age of five as far as we can see. Everything's focused on that rather than actually looking within the stage of somebody's development, early intervention in relation to other issues may be at twelve, thirteen, fourteen. It's almost as they've written off any way of intervening effectively in positive development of young people, if it hasn't happened before five .....(B11)

As elaborated below, a sense prevailed that the nuances and importance of early onset of problems for young people was neither prioritised nor understood by departmental officials as a fundamental policy objective:

For me there's not a real understanding so they'll have in their head that early intervention is toddlers when in fact we know a lot of what youth work organisations are doing is early intervention. If we look at mental health it's early adolescence is the critical time for intervention, ... so this is where we need a strategy (B8)

The participant below, a foundation representative, while acknowledging the problem, offered an explanation that originated in the nature of funding and whether it emanated from statutory or voluntary provision:

I think there's also the challenge because within the children's space it is largely statutory responsibility around child welfare, child protection. There isn't a state responsibility towards young people, mental health or their resilience or their employment, yes, they have to keep them in school but it's not to keep them happily in school achieving. So there is a more direct sense I think often of responsibility and focus therefore around children and because the state is the key actor that has been the case and because in many ways youth is outsourced to the voluntaries there's a huge difference in terms of where it takes up their minds so that its just grants out, as opposed to activities that they are responsible for. (PT4)

The quote above is interesting in several respects. It points to the issue of vulnerability of children and young people and how statutory providers perceive their responsibility to act. It should also be seen in the context of historical association of the youth sector within different government departments than overseeing children and families and the different funding lines it accessed within the public system.

## **7.6 Philanthropic choices: Issues for consideration**

Choices selected for philanthropic investment reflected a fundamental goal to influence public policy. Representatives of philanthropic foundations perceived their role in relation to policy largely within the confines of existing provision and primarily as assisting with policy implementation which they identified as an area of need. The experiences of philanthropic participants in this regard are discussed below with reference to some of the key challenges encountered.

The routes selected for assisting government in implementing policy called for the identification of promising or proven programmes as well as resourcing organisations to be able to implement and ultimately scale them up. For Atlantic, this mostly took the form of investing in particular programmes, while the One Foundation focused on supporting the internal management capacity necessary for organisations to bring programmes to scale. These complementary functions in practice resulted in joint-funding by the two organisations with the goal of policy implementation at the core:

Because you see everything that Atlantic and One have been doing have been around the proven effect of programs and so Atlantic has developed along the programs, One's been developing the organisational capacity to be able to manage those programs and to grow them so they have been very synergistic in many senses. They're all the things that will make the government able to implement their current policy. (PT4)

Over time, both foundations altered their strategic orientation. At Atlantic Philanthropies, the first theory of change on which the prevention and early intervention programme was based contained an explicit reference to policy adoption. However, by the time of the revised programme evaluation in 2012, the objective was identified as a knowledge generation goal. To some extent, the focus on knowledge dissemination represented a step back from Atlantic Philanthropies' original goal to influence policy through proven programmes. This perception was recognised by a policymaker who commented:

... actually that was a bit of a push back that the best you can do is leave a legacy around, and knowledge and skill and expertise (PM6)

The grantmaking strategy in the final years of the foundation's existence prioritised ensuring that the learning harvested from its investments would be utilised to inform government thinking. It resulted in an increasing emphasis on learning and

dissemination objectives:

So we think there are opportunities now to kind of engage with government in our final years to kind of say look, here's all the learning that is emerging from all of the work that we're doing. Not just the three sites and how does this learning inform what you want to do in these policy priority areas that you have developed. I mean, family support, I mean our key organisations funded should be all over that taking the good practises and the good learning that they have acquired and sharing that with the wider child and family research field. (PT3)

In setting policy implementation as a goal, philanthropy, although an independent actor, operates in a context where it can only be effective if the state supports and indeed ultimately subsumes its agenda. As outlined in Chapter Four, the One Foundation's Children and Families programme specified good policy but failure on implementation as the primary issue at the core of the programme's theory of change. In addressing this issue, the foundation identified the development and testing of effective family support programmes and service models and the building of a 'distribution network' to every community in Ireland as a key goal. However, a decision was made to drop the particular focus and family support orientation for the reasons outlined below:

One of our goals, is goal five, which is make effective family support programs available nationally. We gave that up, that was just ditched, couldn't do it. Because a key part of that was around the infrastructure and the need for intermediaries and some of that would come through with children's services committees maybe, that infrastructure was beginning to be built up and if you bring the network of family resource centres in and all that, so some of the vision that we had behind goal five is happening but we had to ditch that.. (PT4)

In an assessment of impact, the foundation acknowledged failure to remove a structural barrier to scaling family support services in the lifetime of the foundation as a major impediment to achieving their objective (One Foundation, 2014). The foundation also cited the limited proportion of funding for children's services available compared to government expenditure as well as cuts to grantees from statutory sources as restricting factors that impacted their capacity to scale services. As an alternative strategy, in its last phase of funding, One Foundation opted to work more directly with statutory agencies through investing in the newly-forming Child and Family Agency.

Philanthropy has a tendency to fund the new and innovative (Anheier & Leat, 2005). Reflecting on the lack of investment in the statutory sector as a priority for philanthropy, some respondents believed that the emphasis on creating something new

resulted in under-investment in statutory services, a development which also potentially impacted the success. As observed above, projects will be constrained without endorsement from or some degree of engagement with the State. The real potential for long-term impact had to be within statutory service provision, a significant yet minority view expressed below:

a lot of philanthropy has spawned new organisations or substantive new bits of organisations as opposed to changing existing services and I do wonder about the wisdom of that now I actually think for some of them they changed that over the last number of years but sometimes creating a brand new thing alongside the old thing isn't the way to go.(PT7)

A related criticism noted that real or sustainable change needed to take place in statutory services:

if you're to really sustain things long term you need the traditional organisations shifting and as a group of philanthropic funders I'm not sure they've been particularly good at that piece. I do think that there was an opportunity lost to transform how the statutory sector provides services to children and young people and there are only a very small number of grantees that really grappled with that. (PT2)

Compared to public funding streams, philanthropic intervention can take place at an earlier point in the development of a new or emerging service model. Commenting on the impact of a decision to invest in an untested yet promising model with the intent to bring it to the point of readiness for state investment, the beneficiary below reflected on the freedom that philanthropic funders have to take risks:

they've allowed an organisation like us to be developed, to be able to test a model and a theory that by having a prevention and early intervention service can have an impact. They funded something that is in line with government policy but the reality was it wouldn't have got the funding so early on so they've tested something, they've brought that, as they would say 'to the market' and then the state can then invest in it, and that's the unique thing in terms of them being able to do it, they were able to take the risk.(B7)

However, from the perspective of policymakers, the experience of being presented with 'proven' programmes raised a number of issues. The participant below spoke of their experience in directly negotiating with foundations representatives and the pressure exerted to have "their" programmes continued:

what they wanted to do was to get their horses further and get them bigger, the only difficulty with that was...don't forget this was in a situation where funds were getting cut all over the place, where it was kind of 'cut anybody but don't

cut the ones we backed' now I'm not sure that that's properly grounded in evidence because you've only looked at the ones that you've funded, maybe the others have done something in the meantime that means they shouldn't be cut either ...(PM3)

Nonetheless the individual had a view as to the value of philanthropy as set out below:

I've certainly worked with philanthropy and will continue to do in seeing that they can be a bit braver and can get there quicker and so on and in some ways if you hark back to the old voluntary sector which was both fund raiser and service deliverer we kind of had that sense too, there would be an attitude in the public service that they should leave it to the public service and I never felt that way because I always felt they had a bit of innovation, ability to them so I think a blend of both in service delivery and also in funding is no bad thing but if you look at systems that produce outcomes internationally they're not 50:50 private and public, they're much closer to society has set out with some public investment that's closer to 80% and there's 20 filled in by the balance, whether that's people paying themselves or philanthropy. That's a little bit of a political judgement but....that would be my sense of it.

As articulated above, and resonant in the responses of statutory representatives, policymakers perceived a limited role for philanthropy that primarily valued its innovative function. For philanthropic funders focused on impact, their ability to be effective must be considered in the context of their opportunities (flexibility to innovate and take risks) and constraints (an operational environment that requires statutory adoption of their agenda). Moreover, given the finite nature of philanthropic resources, the question then becomes how philanthropy can best operate to use these limited resources for impact.

## **7.7 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the key practice and policy learning relating to children and young people during the period of philanthropic intervention. For the most part, this was identified as bringing about changes in the discourse and in the mindset of stakeholders in the field. A key shift related to a change in mindset to consider value in public service provision. Aligned with this re-orientation, the basis on which services were assessed and resources allocated began to change and the appearance of a commissioning-based model can be observed in the Irish statutory sector.

Philanthropic representatives neither sought nor believed that substantive policy change was required at the national level. Rather, their concern focused on the need for policy

implementation. Among policymakers who indicated a gap in policy informed ‘from the bottom up’, philanthropic investment served to meet this need by facilitating the generation of applied knowledge in the field. In utilising this learning, policymakers indicated a desire to incorporate only those elements that had universal application and reported coming under pressure to adopt particular programmes and projects. The message of early intervention resonated strongly and infiltrated the policy framework for children and young people. However, the data revealed a tension between organisations working with children and those in the youth field with the former perceived as having dominated both the debate and the resources.

The issue of sustainability was hugely important with interviewees expressing reservations about the feasibility of options for continuing models and services supported by philanthropy. The kind of social impact that foundations can be expected to achieve is shaped by a number of factors including the extent to which integration with prevailing structures and systems is possible. Policy influence is complicated when private income funds activities that rely on public monies in the long run. Anheier (2005, p. 323) raised the issue of the role foundations in “determining” public priorities in a modern democracy where the reality is that they ‘fund causes and organisations that may rely on state funding in the medium to long term’ a point that strongly resonated with policymakers.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

### **8.1 Overview**

This thesis set out to examine the experiences of a cohort of key informants who participated in a period of heightened philanthropic investment in children and young people in Ireland that, beginning in the early 2000s, peaked during the following decade before trailing off in anticipation of the planned closure of the two foundations involved by 2016. The ensuing engagement with strategic philanthropy, characterised by Anheier (2005) as investment in public goods aimed at innovation or increased effectiveness, and in practice, accompanied by impact driven, policy-oriented approaches, prompted new forms of interaction among stakeholders in the children and youth field. This concluding chapter presents an overall assessment of the opportunities, benefits and challenges encountered based on an understanding of strategic engagement that emerged in the study to identify the areas where foundations had the greatest capacity to be effective.

The purpose of this research has been to explore the operation of strategic philanthropy as a distinctive approach to investment in the children and youth field in Ireland and to consider stakeholder perspectives on how this engagement has been experienced by and impacted upon the sector. Underlying this core objective has been the intent to determine what elements of strategic philanthropy have resonance in the context of Ireland's children and youth sector and to consider the contribution and potential for impact of this style of philanthropy. The study did not seek to provide an independent assessment of the role of philanthropy in the domain of children and youth, but rather, to discern the perspectives of stakeholders in a field where different values, processes and pathways for the adoption of social policies and programmes exist. Thus, the question was addressed from a constructionist perspective focusing on the meanings ascribed to the specific circumstances, interpretations and activities of the study participants.

A number of sub-questions framed the exploration of strategic philanthropy with results from these separate, yet interlinked areas forming the basis of the preceding three chapters. These can be summarised as follows:

Research question 1: *What was the rationale adopted by philanthropy in identifying particular areas within the children and youth arena as the focus of their investment.*

Chapter Five examined the reasoning underlying the selection of policy engagement as the primary objective for philanthropic intervention. In elucidating participants' views on the role and relevance of foundation engagement in social programmes, the 'core legitimacy' attributed to such organisations, participants believed, related to their ability to facilitate the capacity of civil society to innovate, and through the creation of an alternative, independent funding stream to contribute to a pluralist society. In seeking to affect change in the public systems serving children and families, the goals adopted by foundations in this study prioritised the idea of service differentiation, namely, new ways of providing services as a key point of intervention for philanthropy.

Research question 2: *To explore how the approaches taken in implementing the strategic choices were experienced in the field.*

Chapter Six focused on the experiences of participants in implementing a number of social impact tools and instruments that greatly enhanced the capacity of organisations to evaluate and assess the impact of their work and facilitated the development of a number of core competencies within the children and youth sector. For organisations operating with systems change goals, the importance of access to diverse funding streams emerged as a critical factor in enabling nonprofits to advocate for reform. However, the opportunities afforded by the unprecedented investment in organisational capacity made possible by foundation funding were tempered by the lack of an indigenous culture of philanthropy with which to replace these funders.

Research question 3: *To determine the influence of investments on the policy discourse for children and youth.*

Chapter Seven outlined a number of changes in the discourse and in the 'mindset' of stakeholders in the field both in practice and policy. These included what could be termed a 'doctrinal shift' at the practice level involving different ways of working among professionals and a fundamental change among policymakers in considering factors such as value for money in the commissioning of services. Across all stakeholders, the use of evidence emerged as the norm in making decisions about services. While in no sense attributing these changes to philanthropic



intervention, the chapter focused on highlighting the ‘added value’ from philanthropic resources.

### *Contextualising the learning – contribution to knowledge*

In drawing together the overall study findings, this chapter presents a framework that, based on the empirical evidence generated in the research proffers a distinct interpretation of ‘strategic’ intervention as perceived by participants in the study (Figure 8.1). It suggests that foundations intervention into the infrastructure for developing and delivering services for children, youth and families is best understood as taking place on three levels related to defining, operationalising and framing system change. These areas, encompassing analysis of the social and political objectives associated with investments in the field, are based on a distillation of those elements where the greatest capacity for influence emerged in this study.

The study is informed by a number of theoretical frameworks on how to conceptualise and implement a strategic approach to philanthropy. In presenting the findings, it is anticipated that this research can contribute to the body of knowledge in a number of ways.

**Social and political objectives:** A key area where more research has been called for is in relation to the role of foundations in social and policy change, particularly in Europe (Anheier & Daly, 2006). In examining the social and policy objectives adopted by foundations in this study, the primary consideration has been to determine the extent to which these aspirations have proved meaningful in an Irish context. Across the realm of philanthropic intervention, the common, underlying objective has been a commitment to bringing about change in relation to public systems for children and families. Thus, the framework presented here focuses on a systems change orientation in order to extract the functions central to understanding the operation of strategic philanthropy in relation to social and political objectives and to consider how they translated into practice. It is also used to examine the relationship between nonprofit organisations and the State, thereby locating the study in the context of a growing body of literature in this area.

**Roles:** In keeping with studies in the nonprofit field, this framework utilises the lens of role attribution to explore the rationale for philanthropic intervention in society. Previous applications of an internationally-tested typology for foundation roles in society highlighted the characteristics of complementarity, innovation, and, to a lesser extent, social and policy change as resonant for Irish philanthropy (Anheier & Daly, 2007, Donoghue, 2004; 2007). However, these studies took place prior to the significant investments of Atlantic and One Foundation. Findings from this study suggest that the roles for philanthropy might be more meaningfully elaborated as set out in Figure 8.1. This categorisation identifies policy engagement, social innovation and convening as key functions associated with the strategic deployment of resources across the sector and presents a means by which the inherent opportunities and challenges can be framed.

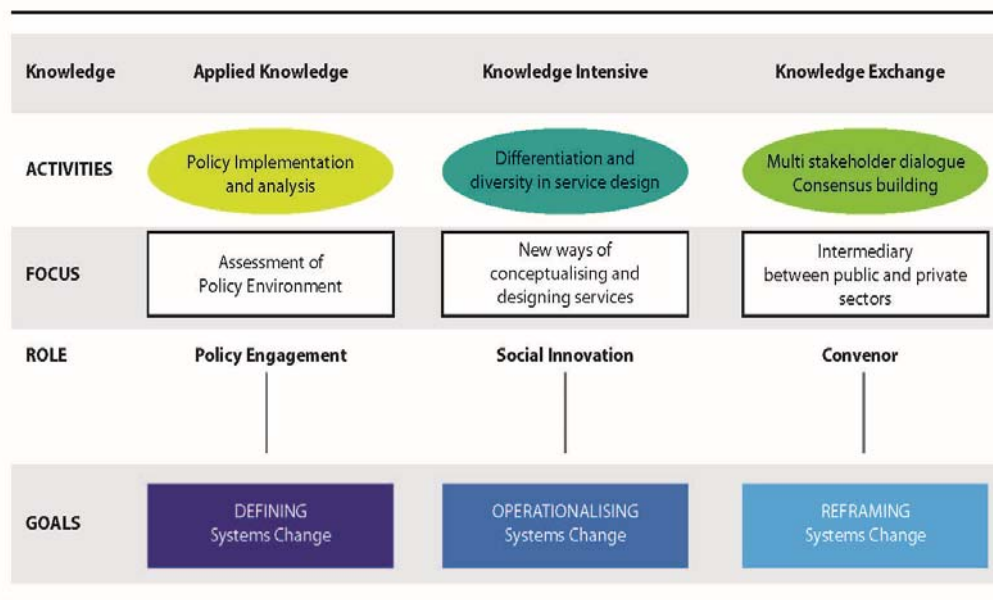
In putting together the framework, two other dimensions relevant to the study, legitimacy and leverage were important. Literature highlights that, for foundations, the ‘legitimacy question’ is intrinsically linked to ‘how they interact with societies, government, and markets’ (Heydemann & Toepler, 2006 p. 13). In this study, legitimacy emerged as a fundamental consideration in assessing and interpreting the potential for philanthropic intervention and its capacity for influence. The framework therefore draws from participants’ views as to where foundations can usefully contribute based on understanding as to what is considered legitimate intervention. In this regard, the study also contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the resonance of philanthropy in Ireland.

Frumkin (2006) identified leverage as the means by which foundations can maximise their contribution to achieve greatest impact. Identifying points of leverage, sometimes called points of intervention, is a critical factor in affecting change within a system. Sandfort (2008) suggests that the development of foundation strategy in relation to public systems should target change at particular points of intervention including macro (national systems); mezze (field development) and micro (organisational) levels. Figure 8.1 incorporates the points of intervention where philanthropic contribution is considered to be effective based on understandings of the value of foundations as the most suitable organisations to provide functions that cannot be provided by the State or

other actors in the nonprofit sector. Finally, the role of knowledge is a critical one for foundations with policy objectives. This aspect encompasses the application of knowledge for societal benefit and the creation of networks of knowledge. The framework therefore incorporates the knowledge function as an element of foundations' role in society.

The understanding of strategic philanthropy presented here is intended to provide a structure for discussing what foundations aspire to in a given social and political context and to assist stakeholders to clarify the implicit or explicit goals, assumptions and challenges that accompany philanthropic intervention. The remainder of the chapter is organised around a discussion of foundations' experience in defining, operationalising and reframing systems change. Section 8.2 reviews the role of foundations in policy engagement and explores what systems change goals meant in practice. Section 8.3 highlights their social innovation role in relation to changes taking place in the service delivery systems in operation in Ireland. In section 8.4, the function of foundations as intermediaries and their role in reframing systems change are discussed.

**Figure 8.1 A framework for understanding philanthropic intervention**



## **8.2 Defining systems change: Policy engagement**

### **8.2.1 Rationale for engagement: working within the system**

In Ireland, given the predominance of the State as a provider of resources and the lack of an embedded culture of philanthropy, the question as to whether policy engagement can be viewed as a legitimate area for philanthropic intervention is a valid one, with unease about this function pervading the responses of participants in this study. Philanthropic representatives acknowledged that democratic systems operating in Ireland pre-empted any role other than one that involved close alignment with State policy. As both a philosophical and pragmatic orientation, therefore, representatives of philanthropy framed their policy aspirations as ‘working within the system’. This accords with the view of Sandfort (2008) that foundation efficacy is based on a strategic awareness of their role in relation to government. Nonetheless, the conscious adoption of a proactive role in relation to public services represented a move away from the complementary role that had previously characterised foundation- state relationships in Ireland (Donoghue, 2007; Anheier & Daly, 2007).

The system change goals adopted by foundations in this study emanated from an assessment of the policy environment that identified a number of deficits in the systems and services for children and young people. A fundamental concern related to the need for implementation rather than policy change. Based on the accounts presented in this study, while national policy for children and young people was viewed favourably by foundation and nonprofit representatives, the lack of resources for implementation represented a system deficiency. The policy goals set by philanthropy reflected perceived opportunities for intervention to improve public service provision for children and young people.

Strategies adopted in pursuit of these goals targeted macro and mezzo levels of change. In both, the use of ‘ideas philanthropy’ is acknowledged as having the potential to shape public priorities through the production of new paradigms that can re-orient entire fields (Frumkin, 2006). Characteristic of approaches associated with strategic or ‘data driven’ philanthropy, this required increasing prioritisation of data and applied knowledge functions. At the macro level, in Ireland, prevention and early intervention was selected as a primary point of intervention. As a system change goal, it represented a

fundamental shift from a reactive to a preventative mode in children and family services. As acknowledged by participants in the study, while the idea of prevention and early intervention was well recognised in research and policy, it needed to filter down to civil servant and ministerial levels. A critical step in this ‘political advocacy’ is identifying who has influence on policy in a specific area and developing relationships with these individuals. The strategies used to influence policy reflected what Stachowiak (2013) classified as the ‘power elites’ theory of advocacy, an understanding that as power to influence policy is concentrated in the hands of the few, change is best achieved through relationship development with key decision makers.

In seeking a transformation of the service delivery system for children and youth, philanthropy directed the bulk of its resources to service development and programme delivery in Ireland. The priority given to funding services took place in a context where the focus was on distilling the knowledge and evaluation components to emerge from the funding. Funding services is not a priority for strategic philanthropy. This is especially so in a context where the State is viewed as the primary resource provider, and any attempt to fund services would be seen as inconsistent with the ethos of the democratic state. For philanthropy, the strategic aspect of funding of services is best interpreted as a ‘field level’ change objective to develop learning and to use research and evidence to bring about change. Consistent with the knowledge development goal, the use of well-evidenced programmes and evaluation required unprecedented attention to research, evaluation and data collection capabilities among beneficiaries.

### **8.2.2 Policy engagement as experienced in the field**

In seeking to influence public policy, the research findings point to divergences of opinion among stakeholders as to the appropriate level of intervention for philanthropy. The identification of policy implementation, as distinct from policy change as the primary system deficiency that required redress, while not overtly interfering in policy-making, nonetheless involved seeking to determine where resources would be allocated. Among foundations, Prewitt (2006b) argues, policy influence can have implicit or explicit goals. Foundations in the present study tended toward the former; through evidence-based approaches, philanthropy focused on changing systems and

policies on the basis of 'what works' manifested through investment in proven programmes and services.

The philanthropists interviewed were reluctant to acknowledge that they played a role in prescribing programmes, perhaps in response to sensing that the legitimacy of this was questionable. Nonetheless, among nonprofit beneficiaries, investments in a proven programme were perceived as an endorsement of that particular programme. Statutory representatives, faced with a volume of investments in selected programmes and the inherent support of validated models by philanthropy, expressed reservations about whether such an interjection into the determination of government policy was appropriate. As outlined throughout the research, policymakers resisted a role for philanthropy in policy influence. Rather than espousing a policy or political objective, statutory representatives characterised appropriate philanthropic intervention as reflecting a more generic expression of supporting civil society's capacity to innovate and an acknowledgement of the constraints on innovation experienced by government.

Questions arose regarding the adoption of proven programmes in an Irish context. Demonstrating 'what works' comes with certain expectations. However, the assumptions upon which expectations are based can differ greatly between societies. In the United States, the 'what works' terminology is part of the rhetoric of social investment (Roob & Bradach, 2009). It includes an overt recognition that the logic of social programmes, evaluated in scientifically rigorous studies, defines effectiveness. The adoption of programmes under a Congressional Top Tier of Evidence, a validated resource used to assist policy officials in identifying interventions that meet an evidence standard, defined in legislation as 'well-designed randomized controlled trials [showing] sizeable, sustained effects on important outcomes' provides the benchmark for state endorsement (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy). In Ireland, the rationale for philanthropic funding of services, many of which were US models, did not include explicit pathways for State adoption. Thus, the experiences and expectations of stakeholders must be interpreted in a different cultural context, one that was unlikely to adopt individual programmes.

Part of the tension over adoption expectations can be attributed to fundamentally divergent priorities within sectors that operate with different goals. Government

priorities are informed by the need to allocate resources through the 'distribution criteria' of equity and social justice (Anheier, 2005). As suggested in the literature, government agencies, focused on citizens, must be indiscriminate in who they serve and operate with complex, ambitious goals. Nonprofits, on the other hand, are focused on serving and maximising benefit for their client groups. Such differences in 'goal specificity' were evident in this study and particularly in relation to pressures applied to the DCYA by foundation representatives to adopt successful programmes. As elaborated by statutory representatives, the suggestion that a programme with 'bells and whistles' should simply be adopted was seen as an over-simplification and also unrealistic.

In Ireland, the concept of leveraging money was central to the logic of foundations in undertaking selected investments in children and youth. Leveraging resources from other funders is an acknowledged part of the 'adding value' role attributed to philanthropy. The findings in this study raise questions about the relative value placed on leveraging. The majority of philanthropic investments contained some degree of expectation that the organisations or programmes funded would be able to leverage additional income in order to become sustainable or self-sufficient over time, thereby lessening dependency on their main (private) funder. However, leveraging is problematic in a context where alternatives do not exist in the form of other private foundations and where the organisations are primarily funded by the State.

Leveraging had an explicit manifestation in the PEIP co-partnership with the State. The use of area or site-based demonstration projects is a common strategy among foundations working with evidence-based and proven models. In order for the initiative to materialise, access to 'policy entrepreneurs' within the system and persuasion at the highest level of government was required. However, the co-investing model, while attractive to philanthropy, proved problematic for statutory partners in several respects. The area-based focus raised concerns about optics and required policymakers to provide justification for a high cost model in particular communities. Co-investing also introduced the idea of shared responsibility for a project or programme. Among statutory representatives, the opportunities afforded by the partnership appeared to be counterbalanced by a sense of unease about future resourcing and the degree of

expectation created in the children and youth field that funding would be continued after the exit of private investors. This contributed to a feeling of coercion among statutory representatives who expressed their concern in terms of private sector interference in the democratic process.

In this study, the small scale of the sector, together with the visibility of key individuals within it, while it provided access to policymakers, also produced resentment regarding what was perceived as a highly prescriptive approach from philanthropy. The close association and relationships developed between philanthropy and the State, some believed, created an element of over-influence with participants contextualising such a view in terms of the limited size of the Irish philanthropic sector. Harvey (2012, p. 21), commenting on a trend for the relationship between the State and civil society to be increasingly defined around services, saw in the PEIP ‘a convergence of the agendas of the government and the philanthropic sector’. The partnership, while enabling important work to be done, he cautioned, had implications that philanthropy sector would be ‘captured by the state and any agenda that challenged the state would be therefore isolated and marginalised’ (Harvey, 2012, p. 31). As demonstrated in the accounts of stakeholders in the present study, however, the agenda for prevention and early intervention was largely pre-determined by philanthropy.

### *Scaling and Mainstreaming*

As outlined above, the assumption that the testing of innovative service models on the assumption that effective ones would be adopted widely by other agencies or by the State emerged as somewhat unrealistic. As outlined in Chapter Four, this aspiration for ‘scaling up’ or mainstreaming was explicit in the theory of change adopted by the One Foundation and more implicit in that of the Atlantic Philanthropies with both organisations prioritising prevention and early intervention as the lens through which the adoption of models was anticipated.

The findings revealed conflicting perceptions about the meaning of mainstreaming and scaling with differences in interpretation and understanding of these concepts evident among stakeholders. Among the policymaker group, mainstreaming (rather than scaling) referred to the integration of programmatic elements and practices into existing



universal, services. Outside of the statutory sector, initial expectations centered around obtaining government funds to continue delivering or to replicate existing programmes. Over time, and in light of the economic recession, beneficiary organisations emphasised the need for mainstreaming to take place through no-cost integration into statutory provision including the replacement of or incorporation of new approaches to existing services. One element of meaning of scale identified in the literature, that of franchising or commercialisation of services, did not resonate with participants in the study.

Traditionally, the concept of scale had been associated with supporting nonprofit beneficiaries to replicate their programmes and grow their organisations to serve more people. Frumkin's (2006, p. 205) conceptualisation of scale as programme expansion in which the primary element refers to bringing services to greater numbers of clients assumes that 'a good programme can never service enough people'. While part of the strategic orientation for initial investment, such a model presented challenges in the Irish context. As the experiences of One Foundation suggest, the infrastructure did not exist for a planned 'distribution network' for proven parenting and family support programmes initially selected for investment; realising such an objective would have entailed a prior agreement with the State. At the same time, the foundation's reassessment of strategy that prioritised advocacy as a more effective route included an admission that 'scale as numbers' did not fundamentally address the problem (O'Carroll, 2014).

Frumkin's characterisation of scale as programme expansion highlights the benefits to nonprofit recipients as it ensures financial stability. For philanthropic funders also, the model represents a low risk investment as it calls for further investment in doing more of what has proved to work. Frumkin does not consider the implications for public funders however, with whom the model is more problematic. At the same time, the idea of taking a successful programme to the market works in other societies where a multitude of investors (individuals, corporate and private philanthropies) operate and indeed compete. In Ireland, the limited size of the sector makes the State the only potential source for adoption.

In cases where the State did engage with its philanthropic partners in pre-investment negotiation, as in the instance of the Atlantic co-investment in the PEIP sites,

expectations were clarified expectations from the outset. The primary concern of statutory representatives was that new investments be undertaken in association with and through assimilation into existing service provision. Inherent in this goal was an aspiration that statutory providers become champions for change. As described by key stakeholders, this concept of ‘change from within’ and its application to broader learning formed the basis of an understanding between the State with philanthropy. Another important principle of mainstreaming, and a priority for state investors, was that integration take place at no cost. From the perspective of statutory representatives, the ‘added value’ related to existing provision and in the applicability of evidence generated to broader learning. This conformed with the understanding of scale developed by Rees et al. (2004) in which some innovations are framed in terms of the adaption potential of general guidelines and values about how to serve a given purpose.

Recent literature on scale and impact for philanthropic foundations calls for a reassessment of programme expansion as the barometer of success. Learning from some of the leading funders of children and youth in the United States such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation suggest that for foundations working with public systems, scaling or replication has to be done in a way that changes how existing resources are used rather than requiring new funding streams, thereby making them vulnerable to budget cuts (McCarthy, 2014, p. 13). Programme expansion, McCarthy suggests, should not be confused with population-level scale. Rather, it can be about ‘moving the needle’ toward better outcomes with the learning from evidence resulting in common principles of effective service delivery that can guide changes in public systems (2014, p. 13).

Similarly, the experiences of a dedicated body, Grantmakers for Effective Organisations, suggests that the narrower goal of replication through organisational or programme growth needs to be reassessed to recognise the various approaches to spreading impact (Enright, 2014, p. 4.). Growing impact, the study suggests, is less about the size of a program or organisation and more about leveraging resources and relationships to achieve better results through a variety of strategies, including policy advocacy or networking and facilitating collaborative relationships.

### **8.2.3 Implications for future engagement**

Strategic philanthropy seeks involvement and visibility in policymaking. Also prioritised are autonomy and a desire to create impact. Such aspirations, as discussed above, come with heightened expectations that have been questioned as unrealistic. This research has illustrated the complex dynamics that occur when stakeholders operate outside the parameters of traditional forms of engagement and where different types of institutional logic, culture and values affect the relationship. Studies that have examined the relationships between private foundations and government in the development of social policies and programmes highlight the pitfalls associated with partnerships that do not take into account the extent to which differences in perception can impact their potential for success (Almog-Bar & Zychlinski, 2012).

Acceptance of a role for philanthropy in policy influence is new; it requires a significant departure from the traditional perception of foundations as solely providers of resources and requires government authorities to shift their perspectives. In this study, investments were rooted in the culture of relationships between government and the nonprofit sector in Ireland, where historically, the State has been slow to acknowledge nonprofits as autonomous entities. At the same time, foundations had not carved out their own distinct identity as actors within the nonprofit sector. Foundation legitimacy, therefore, had not been established with the requisite change in mindset required appearing premature for statutory participants in the study. To some extent, this can be attributed to the newness of institutional philanthropy in Ireland and the unprecedented nature of collaborations between the State and foundations. Literature in relation to cross-sector collaboration highlights that, in addition to the partnership experience itself, critical factors affecting their success includes prior relationships or existing networks, the degree to which relationships among key stakeholders are structurally embedded, and positive pre-existing sectoral attitudes (Bryson, 2006, Gazley & Brudney, 2007). Such elements are essential in building trust and a sense of shared purpose.

In working together for future collaboration, this study suggests that partners would benefit from greater clarity as to the purpose and value of the relationship from the beginning. Bryson et al's (2006, p. 46) definition of cross-sector collaboration focuses

on this idea of added value whereby ‘the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately.’ The definition encompasses a perception of social problems as requiring action from sectors other than the State and one that involves accepting philanthropy as a legitimate partner in devising solutions. Among foundations at the same time, recent research underscores that the desire for autonomy should not preclude partnership in their planning, as well as the execution of programmes. In this regard, Almog-Bar & Zychlinski (2012) suggest that for philanthropic-state partnerships, defining the purpose and mission in formal or informal agreements is important for clarifying roles, responsibilities and decision-making.

### **8.3 Operationalising systems change: Social innovation**

#### **8.3.1 Developing a societal role**

Within the literature, classifications of foundation roles, for the most part, understand the societal objective as involving structural or deep-rooted change. As outlined in Chapter Five, the view of philanthropy as an agent of social change had little resonance among study participants. Rather than social change, the concept of social innovation, characterised by Frumkin (2006) as new ways of conceptualising, responding to and addressing social problems, offers a more useful construct with which to assess the capacity for change proffered by philanthropic intervention. The role that foundations play in promoting ideological diversity and service differentiation is also seen as a contribution to pluralism that legitimises their role in society (Prewitt, 2006a). This function, manifested in social experimentation, is often contrasted with the constraints put upon the State as a service provider in its obligation to provide a uniformity of services to all qualifying citizens as well as the pressures on the market to be as viable to as many customers as possible.

The innovation role is one that, for the majority of stakeholders in this study, represented a legitimate philanthropic function as well as an area that presented the most opportunity for impact. The findings attest to the emergence of new ways of conceptualising and designing services within the children and youth field. At the level of operationalisation, a number of changes took place in the discourse surrounding

the delivery of public systems. These can be observed across a range of aspects including greater diversity and differentiation in services as well as rationalisation and value in public service provision.

### 8.3.2 Rethinking services: efficiencies and rationalisation

As highlighted in Chapter Seven, a number of changing discourses emerged in the children and youth sector that affected the way in which services were delivered. As summarised in Table 8.3.2, these found expression in three areas pertaining to key criteria for the assessment, the planning and the rationalisation of public services. Across all, the importance of value for money emerged as a central component in the decision-making systems.

**Table 8.3.2 Changing discourse: Public service systems and services**

<i>How services are...</i>		<i>Changes in Discourse</i>
<b>Assessed</b>		Outputs > Outcomes Well-intentioned > Well evidenced Multiple > Integrated services Accountability, measurement, logic models, TOC
<b>Informed</b>	<b>Philanthropy</b> Data Rich Applied Knowledge Monitoring systems	Area-based demonstration Community Focus Joined Up Developmental Approach
<b>Rationalised/ Justified</b>		Economically sound Hard evidence No cost additionally

**How services are assessed:** In the present study, from the mid-2000s onward participants witnessed change at the level of priority-setting for the allocation of resources within the systems serving children and young people. Both service providers and statutory commissioners perceived inefficiencies in the system for resource allocation and testified to a prevailing culture, in which, up to the early 2000s, services had received continued funding on the basis of programmes being well-

intentioned. In a culture moving toward increased accountability and higher performance measurement standards, the data indicated, a system based on inputs and outputs no longer sufficed. As reported in Chapter Six, philanthropy as social investing requires the use of a particular set of practices and tools with indicators for showing impact that heightened an ‘outputs to outcomes’ transition within the field. Demonstrating results requires organisations to use measurement tools and evaluation frameworks to document and monitor activities. Providing the required data on outcomes called for investment in monitoring systems that philanthropy could and did provide.

Among the beneficiary group interviewed, the importance of business skills, entrepreneurial and market approaches, while taking place at the micro level of organisations, appeared to have infiltrated the field. For most organisations in this study, an outcomes-oriented approach to planning and delivering services had become accepted practice with participants skilled in the language of accountability, measurement and the use of evidence-based models. The requirements of investors called for operational changes in the area of data management and performance systems; the emphasis on impact required organisations to develop systems and information to report progress in the form of demonstrable outcomes. Hence, reporting and accountability requirements by external partners, while burdensome to some extent, introduced a ‘performance culture’ that participants acknowledged required a degree of focus and rigour that had not been present in the sector.

A fundamental change reported in the sector included a new rigour on the part of statutory funders in interpreting and interrogating evidence. Nonprofit organisations reported that “soft” evidence would no longer suffice to attract State funding. Requests for funding were subjected to robust questioning as policymakers exhibited more skill and became proactive in assessing programmes though greater capacity to “ask the right questions”. In making decisions about which services merited renewal, commissioners of services from the statutory sector spoke of a perceived change in mindset as they demonstrated a newfound familiarity with metrics. Equipped with the language and tools of measurement, a senior civil servant described a change in discourse in which a response to a common request from service providers that “We need more resources”

became “What do you need them for?” thus changing the dynamics of interaction to focus on effectiveness and on outcomes in service delivery.

***How services are informed:*** Respondents identified a number of changes in the principles and practices underpinning how services are planned. In this study, philanthropic investment provided opportunities for new models of funding including a site-based demonstration model; community-focused partnership in planning and a developmental approach in communities. These embody the core characteristics of scale as comprehensiveness including bringing together an integrated set of interventions often in the form of comprehensive community initiatives with an emphasis on integration, programme linkages and grassroots support (Frumkin, 2006). This type of investment emerged as an antidote to project funding and is represented in the strategies of several of the largest foundations in the United States, for instance the Ford Foundation and WK Kellogg Foundations (Knott & McCarthy, 2007). In prioritising more efficient public systems, the principle of ‘joined up’ services is often raised. In this study, private funding served to initiate what was referred to as a ‘quasi-private sector’ mentality, putting pressure on statutory services to ‘join up’ and, in some instances, calling for collaboration across providers rather than new programmes. In an environment where pooled or shared responsibility of resources or budgets was rare, this was perceived as a positive pressure.

As a process, participants in this study perceived community engagement and consultation as both new and worthwhile. The focus on community, systematic addressing of needs and the devising of services to meet those needs, followed by the rigorous programme evaluation represented a significant departure in the systems for planning services in Ireland. Nonetheless, to some extent, the community engagement mechanism suffered from what has been identified as a criticism of strategic philanthropy, that of bringing partners to the table ‘either so early in the process that the discussion is necessarily general or so late in the process that the strategy is fully formed and only grantee agreement is sought’ (Patrizi & Thompson, 2011, p. 55).

***How services are justified:*** Increasingly, over the course of the period under study, nonprofit organisations reported that economic considerations dominated the discourse

with policymakers. Given the overriding need for efficient use of available resources, arguments for investment had to be economically sound as well as socially responsible. Across the children and youth sector, organisations reported focusing considerable effort on advocating for the protection of resources and, as the economic recession progressed, to protecting services against further encroachment. To do this involved advocates becoming skilled in conducting arguments in economic terms. In the youth work area for instance, ‘hard’ evidence that youth work represented value for money was required in order to protect the drain on resources that saw funding cuts of 30% on average. With prevention and early intervention, the rationale that savings could be incurred through protecting the future well-being of the country served to advance the argument with policymakers. The introduction of such social return on investment approaches, in which the impact of investment can be demonstrated by showing the money saved emerged as a notable feature of the changing basis on which decisions were made in the children and youth sector.

The experience with RCTs raised a number of value for money considerations. Despite being presented as the gold standard of evidence, the reception among policymakers to RCT evidence appeared muted, even sceptical. An interesting issue, posed as an ethical consideration, related to the investment in RCTs as an expense that could only be justified if the prospects for future adoption could be realised. Policymakers in this study appeared largely unconvinced by the value of RCT evidence both for practical reasons about the likelihood of further investment in proven programmes, and, from a preference to learn more about practices or aspects of programmes that could be mainstreamed or adapted in service planning (as distinct from programme specific outcomes).

### **8.3.3 Innovation**

In this study, the concept of innovation emerged as central to understanding both the rationale for philanthropic intervention as well as its potential for social impact. Foundations’ capacity for innovation is largely understood in the literature as encompassing the freedom to develop new approaches, to be creative and to take risks (Anheier, 2005; Anheier & Leat, 2006). At the same time, innovation is an important characteristic of their nonprofit beneficiaries who are in a unique position to undertake



activities outside of the financial constraints of the for-profit sector or the considerations of politics or public opinion that face government (Moulton & Eckerd, 2012).

The study findings point to a widespread recognition that foundations can be particularly effective in fostering new ways of working. Respondents, including statutory representatives, highlighted their capacity for facilitating solutions and the development of new approaches to existing social problems. Examples of foundations' contribution to the functioning of public systems included early stage identification of problems; the freedom to move quickly or to change direction (given the slow moving nature of statutory provision) and the ability to unblock rigidities as appropriate. Implicit in 'added value' contributions of this nature is the assumption that state actors cannot accommodate new or timely system change (Prewitt, 2006). In this regard, philanthropy's capacity for innovation acts as a mitigating factor in an environment that discourages risk. This element resonated strongly with all stakeholders in the present study where the evidence suggested that the existence of external pressure to make something happen can provide the much-needed impetus for change.

While the presence of foundations is considered critical to benefitting democratic civil society, it also serves the vital function of enabling benefactors of philanthropy to exercise their potential to enhance the public good. This study highlighted foundations' role in facilitating the capacity for innovation among key organisations serving children and young people. The role that nonprofits play not just in delivering services but in transforming them has been noted in an Irish context where advocacy undertaken by service providers is seen as important in fostering innovation and adaptation in public sector service provision (Keenan & Montague, 2010. p. 47). In this study, the primary goal of nonprofit organisations related to the need for changes in the ways services were provided to children and families. Although distinctions were initially made between advocacy and services as separate strands of philanthropic investment programmes, in practice, beneficiary organisations targeted system change through service differentiation.

In Ireland, while policy moved toward an increasing recognition of the innovation role occupied by nonprofits in society, the introduction of more formalised structures and processes associated with statutory funding streams made for an environment with little room for the kinds of activities that one participant described as the ‘advocacy’ space. As is common internationally, resource dependency is a prominent feature of the Irish nonprofit landscape. The question of whether resource dependent organisations can be innovative is an important one in this context. For organisations reliant on statutory funding streams, the provision of philanthropic resources facilitated a degree of autonomy and independence. Undertaking systems change, the responses of nonprofits underscored, cannot be undertaken from ‘within the system’. In order for nonprofit organisations to challenge statutory practice or to have the freedom to explore alternatives, philanthropic funding proved critical. As indicated in Chapter Five, a fundamental belief in the importance of philanthropy in funding independent civil society emerged as a key feature in legitimising a role for foundations.

For nonprofit organisations, their potential for social impact depends on multi-level engagement at which organisations must operate across a range of core capacities (McKinsey & Co., 2009). Support for advocacy functions include aspects of organisational development identified by Mandeville (2007) as management and government, resource acquisition (income generation) and research and communication capacities. Few, if any, of these functions are prioritised by statutory funding streams, a finding borne out in this study where the experiences of beneficiaries interviewed confirmed that statutory funders do not support advocacy activities.

The study highlighted a number of unique ways for foundations to embrace their capacity for innovation. A corollary of foundation taking risks is an openness to failure. As largely protected institutions (Prewitt, 2006b), foundations are among the least likely organisations in society to experience repercussions for failure. This aspect featured among the examples of opportunities for foundations to act innovatively cited by study participants. The discourse around failure is an important one that introduces a new element into the debate about public service effectiveness. Constructive failure ‘adds value by helping us to understand what went wrong and adding to the reservoir of understanding across the field’ (Frumkin, 2006, p. 67). A constructive failure is

when a grant is delivered or a programme carried out by an independent organisation reveals that the programme had no positive or significant impact; unconstructive failure is where the information is not shared beyond the foundation. This objective is at odds with the reality of beneficiaries who are under pressure to demonstrate impact. In this regard, the effort of documenting and reporting results comes with the inherent expectation that such results will be positive. The emergence of negative findings, an issue raised by study participants, can be problematic for organisations anticipating further investment. Nonetheless, it introduced an important element into the discourse.

While innovation is often associated in the literature with identifying new social needs, other research points to the contribution of innovation as supporting existing ideas. Leat (2005) in examining the experiences of the UK, notes that innovation is linked to *practices* as well as activities. In this study, foundation representatives acknowledged the capacity for entrepreneurialism and innovation as existing within the beneficiary organisations, taking care to distinguish the role of philanthropy as that of an enabler or facilitator. This position is consistent with recent interpretations of social investment goals in the literature. According to Enright (2014, p. 4), an important function of philanthropy is in providing the resources for spreading strategies and ideas already in existence rather than coming up with new initiatives.

Core characteristics of innovative or creative funding include the development of knowledge on new ways to address social needs and reaching across established boundaries in organisations or fields (Anheier & Daly, 2007; Leat, 2005). In this sense, philanthropy can be credited with facilitating strategic partnerships. For instance, a number of beneficiaries spoke about the process of engaging in soliciting funds or managing programmes funded in partnership with joint recipients as requiring elements of community engagement and consultation that had not been present in the sector and which forced agencies to work together and to come out of their 'silos'. Other innovative aspects cited included the experience or process or partnership. Representatives of organisations delivering services characterised the consultation with communities required by funders as innovative. Without philanthropy and the requirement of bringing people together to talk about service coordination, for instance, respondents believed this may not have happened.

Murray, Caulier-Grace, & Mulgan (2010, p. 3) define social innovation as ‘new ideas (products, services, models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships and collaboration’. Unlike the business field, innovation in the social sphere, the authors contend, comes from networks and cross-sectoral collaboration. Systemic innovation ‘involves changes to concepts or mindsets’ a recognition that systems only change when people think and see in new ways. The elements required to make this happen require coalitions that bring together different partners, intensive processes to achieve shared visions, a critical mass of practical examples, training professionals and practitioners with new skills and accessing professional expertise in evaluation (Murray et al, 2010). The potential for foundations to contribute to a field by recognising and directing resources at social innovation activities of this kind provides a unique opportunity with which to act as critical enablers of system change.

#### **8.4 Convenor of change: Reframing systems**

This study has elicited a number of ways in which philanthropy has promoted different ways of viewing problems, addressing issues and delivering services for children and young people. In the process, it has contributed to the emergence of new principles informing policy development that have reframed the way in which debate is taking place in the sector. All of these developments occur in a complex system that depends on the interaction of multiple and changing dynamics in which attributing change to any one factor or actor is difficult. Nonetheless, a common theme from the data relates to the importance of philanthropy in facilitating change through occupying a role of convenor.

The value of foundations in convening or bringing diverse groups of people together or acting as ‘knowledge brokers’ can include ‘questioning the conventional wisdoms, making the connections, thinking and working outside the box’.(Leat, 2005 p. 10).

The creation of an infrastructure for spreading ideas is evident in the children and youth field in Ireland where a myriad of networks for dialogue and policy reform now exist. Over time, the foundations in this study moved toward the knowledge-broker role. In

the case of Atlantic Philanthropies, a marked shift took place in its goals from adopting proven programmes to a focus on knowledge generation.

By drawing together a set of stakeholders from multiple areas to address public priorities, the role of philanthropy both in initiating and funding multi-stakeholder dialogue is critical. The provision of a forum for dialogue with policymakers includes an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of non-statutory actors in devising responses to social problems. Acting as a convenor, enhancing democracy and stimulating debate is an important and feasible role for foundations that Leat (2008) and others view as a unique contribution that philanthropy can make to public policy processes. In Europe, the critical function of foundations as convenors is recognised whereby ‘Such organisations fulfil the important function of providing an interface between the sector and public authorities’ (European Commission, 1997, p. 2). The social legitimacy of foundations, some European observers contend, rests upon the space they occupy as facilitators of informed decision-making and the provision of a mutual platform for discussion, informed debate and consensus building, often on highly charged issues (Tayart de Borms, 2005, p. 10).

Through acting as knowledge brokers, foundations can facilitate a critical exchange of information across boundaries. Frumkin’s (2006) notion of scale as doctrinal shift highlights the capacity for change in the conceptual frame surrounding a particular field, what he characterises as a wholesale re-evaluation of standard operating procedures and assumptions. As discussed in Chapter Seven, perceptible changes in practice in the children and youth field observed in this study included professionals working together in different ways and a reassessment of a number of standard operating practises and assumptions. The capacity to hire service design, research and evaluation professionals had an impact on future practice, especially the increasing acceptance of evidence as the standard in making decisions. Policymakers perceived the value of philanthropic investment as a contribution to applied knowledge in the field. In seeking to utilise this knowledge, they highlighted the importance of distilling elements or principles that can be harvested in the commissioning and evaluating of services for universal application.

The role of advocacy organisations in restructuring a field can be central to a ‘reconceptualising’ of services. In the United States, Scott, Deschenes, Hopkins et al, (2006 p. 693) credited advocacy activities as ‘ultimately changing the way public policy addresses youth needs’ by promoting new ways of viewing young people, of addressing youth issues and ultimately, delivering services. This reframing, the ‘assembling and dispensing’ of new ideas about working with youth, the authors found, can manifest itself in the infiltration of new principles to inform policy development or it may be aligned with the function of dissemination and knowledge development (2006, p. 699).

Assessments of the capacity of foundations for social impact highlight the importance of concentrating resources on spreading ideas and on amplifying the efforts of others. Bateau et al., (2009) suggest that the best way for foundations to maximise social impact on organisations, communities or fields may be less in creating new projects and more with duplicating the activities of others or collaborating with them (Bateau et al, 2009, p. 4). In 2014, Rockefeller Foundation President Judith Rodkin described the shift in the foundation’s strategy from one where it sought to develop new initiatives to one where “Today, the foundation’s resources are most useful in rewiring connections between existing players within activities that are already under way... taking advantage of changes that are already in motion” (Quoted in Kania et al, 2014, p. 30).

Recent research suggests that, in its preoccupation with impact, strategic philanthropy has been too inflexible given the nature of the complex problems with which it engages as well as the exigencies of the external environment. Kania et al. (2014, p. 29) propose a realignment of thinking to ‘move from a predictive model of foundation strategy to an emergent model that better fits the complexity of social change’. In emergent strategy models, the ability of a system to adapt and ultimately reach its goals depends on the overall ‘fitness’ of the system. Accordingly, ‘system fitness’ the authors believe, is an area where philanthropy can occupy a useful function. Emergent strategy moves foundations away from constructing responses to social problems to focus on strengthening the systems and relationships that can generate solutions, with an emphasis on improving the knowledge, effectiveness and resilience of all participants as the most powerful way to effect change. In Ireland, as demonstrated throughout this

study, system fitness is an area where the presence of philanthropic foundations offered potential to enhance the children and youth sector.

## **8.5 Concluding remarks**

The particular form of philanthropy examined in this study gives rise to a number of reflections on the nature and longer term implications of this style of engagement both for the children and youth sector and the future of philanthropy in Ireland.

### ***Implications for the child and youth sector***

In general, literature on the nature of philanthropy, while acknowledging that its influence may be benign or malign, tends to emphasise its positive or pro-social aspects (Harrow, 2010). Consequently, the costs to beneficiary organisations in undertaking programmes and priorities that align with the routes preferred by philanthropy are often overlooked. As this study is a point in time exercise, it remains to be seen how the changes attributed to philanthropic intervention, including increased specialisation and the operation of more business oriented approaches have impacted the children and youth field. Moreover, the longer-term implications of these developments, both for the organisations themselves, and critically, for the recipients of their services, have yet to be determined.

Understandings of ‘business-like’ behaviour in a nonprofit organisational context typically refer to a restructuring of service delivery to include more efficient, more measurably effective, narrower and more focused services (Dart, 2004, p. 298). As a result of resources generated by philanthropic funding, a number of perceptible changes fitting the profile of Frumkin’s (2006) ‘doctrinal shift’ took place at the mezze level of field operationalisation among organisations serving Ireland’s children and youth. Systemic changes in standard operating practices and assumptions included the heightened role of knowledge, adherence to the principle of evidence in decision-making and greater interaction across professions. Nonprofits featured in this study, for the most part, acknowledged as beneficial a range of improvements in their internal systems and core capacities. Organisations reported a concentration of activity on the development of their strategic goals as well as the introduction of business skills and market-based theory into their planning and organisational structures. The related

emphasis on goal-setting and delivery required a dedication of resources to evaluate and assess programmes, generating new levels of expertise in processes and tools for data collection and validation as well as skills in evaluation concepts and service design. Taken together, these developments resulted in the production of a knowledge-intensive phase for the sector and the beginning of what could be described as an ‘industry’ of specialised staff and professionals honed in the discourse of research and evaluation. The extent to which children and youth have, as a result, benefited in the form of improved services is not known, nor indeed much questioned and represents an area of future research.

In relation to strategic philanthropy, the expansion of market-based approaches to address social problems has, to a large extent, defined foundation effectiveness in terms of the measurable impact of foundation money. However, the assumption that efficiency is the best criteria for assessing the value of nonprofit endeavours is increasingly viewed as a questionable aspect of this style of philanthropy. Its inherent preoccupation with what Heydemann and Toepler (2006, p. 17) call ‘legitimacy by efficiency’ puts pressure on both foundation staff and beneficiaries to demonstrate impact. Among the implications is a temptation to preference projects that have potential for short-term impact over longer-term initiatives where results are not easily measured. At a broader level, the emphasis on results is questionable given the systematic problems that philanthropy set out to tackle in society (Frumkin, 2006). Anheier and Leat are highly critical of strategic philanthropy arguing that for foundations and their beneficiary organisations it is important to recognise that ‘social change is a negotiated, contested, political process not simply a matter of better management’ (2006, p. 2).

In this study, organisations in receipt of foundation funding were selected by invitation only with the understanding that preparing for investment would include planning and programme development to align with the high end goals adopted by philanthropy. Primarily, these goals focused on demonstrating effectiveness of prevention and early intervention, supporting service models for replication and scaling, and producing a well-evidenced body of programmes and practices. In terms of their organisational priorities, beneficiaries spoke of re-positioning themselves and adopting particular



models and programmes in order to attain funding. The ‘particularist’ approach characterised by Donnelly-Cox and Cannon (2010, p. 343) as a ‘specialist response to a social need’ required of organisations in receipt of philanthropic funding in Ireland, called for models of service delivery narrowly focused to specific client groups and founded on the delivering organisation’s core competencies. However, for beneficiaries, such a concentration, and in some cases, a re-orientation of resources took place at a cost to other, equally viable programme alternatives. The long-term impact on the values, overall ethos, and potentially the ‘mission drift’ of participating organisations is yet to be determined. Finally, while this targeted niche-area approach suited the investment model associated with strategic philanthropy, it was not a sustainable source of funding. In the absence of an ongoing presence of institutional philanthropy in Ireland, nonprofits spoke of having to rebrand their overall fundraising approach in order to become relevant to a broader funding base in light of the exit of Atlantic and One Foundation.

As discussed above, the infusion of philanthropic funding enabled organisations serving children and families to offer a portfolio of specialised, targeted services that, previously unavailable, served to meet identified areas of need within particular communities. From the perspective of service users, these interventions abruptly came to an end with the withdrawal of philanthropic funding brought about by the exit of the two foundations in Ireland. Expectations about future service provision had to be managed, and in many instances, curtailed with questions such as the negative consequences for users of services largely ignored. The assumption that statutory funding streams would replace philanthropic investment provided the basis on which recipient organisations engaged with philanthropy from the outset. It also served to justify the organisational investment in research and evaluation for such programmes. The ‘failure’ of statutory funding streams to adopt these programmes begs the question whether beneficiary organisations would have agreed to participate again in similar style philanthropic investment and whether the terms of engagement would have changed.

The introduction of a performance culture associated with the large-scale philanthropic investments in the field of children and youth, in many respects, paved the way for a

key shift in mindset toward rationalisation and value in public service provision and the appearance of a commissioning-based model in the sector. As discussed in this study, the discourse surrounding the delivery of services for children and families included changes in the criteria used for the planning and assessment of services to include outcome-oriented, cost considerations. Prior to the 2000s, representatives from all stakeholders groups noted the prevailing culture of continuing funding for programmes and activities, attributing this practice to the lack of pressure within the broader system for demonstrable evidence of impact. The introduction by philanthropy of ‘investment’ over grants terminology into the lexicon of children and youth funding provided the basis for a cultural shift in which the demonstration of results and performance occupied a central place in the rationale for awarding and renewal of funding. The *DCYA Statement of Strategy, 2011-2014* referred to the need for research evidence that would inform the review, redesign or curtailment of programmes and services. The first overarching national policy framework for children and young people stipulated that the agency responsible for child and family welfare, Tusla, must introduce the commissioning of services ‘by moving away from a grants system to outcome-based contracts, and offer support to build capacity within the children and youth sector to respond to this new approach’ (DCYA, 2014, p. 69). The subsequent commissioning model adopted by Tusla prioritised the use of evidence in making decisions.

In reflecting on the influence and potential legacy of philanthropic investment in the children and youth sector, the role of foundations in funding advocacy is perhaps the area where the exit of philanthropy has the most potentially negative consequences. The provision of independent funding formed part of a strategy to enable actors in the sector to influence government policy through providing the autonomy required to critique policy, increase credibility and develop relationships with policymakers. It reflected a history of underinvestment in any infrastructure for advocacy in Ireland. As a result, organisations reported unprecedented opportunities for direct engagement with the political process and incorporation into structures for dialogue; key factors influencing the way decisions were made at the top. However, the ability of organisations to maintain these activities and to retain the skilled staff required is uncertain. The capacity of the nonprofit sector to simultaneously develop roles in advocacy and in service delivery has been questioned (Donnelly-Cox, Reid, Begley,

Finn & Harmon, 2012, p. 3). In a climate of shrinking resources, the authors query whether Irish nonprofits can effectively discharge their advocacy role while under pressure ‘to maintain stable quality services with diminished resources, thus making it difficult for them to be an energetic authentic advocate in the political process.’ These observations are all the more pertinent in an environment without alternative sources of advocacy funding. With the withdrawal of philanthropic funding by 2016, the future of organisations with advocacy as core to their mission is uncertain. The experience of the two foundations, one of which moved away from and the other embraced advocacy as a strategy, points to the complexities associated with this style of funding and the challenges associated with understanding its longer-term capacity for impact.

### ***Implications for philanthropy in Ireland***

The study-design was cross-sectional and made for a snapshot of philanthropic intervention. While it has been possible to draw a number of conclusions on the engagement with strategic philanthropy, further longitudinal work is required to assess the experiences of stakeholders over an extended period of time. In the course of undertaking the study, a number of observations were made that may have implications for the practice of philanthropy and for future research.

As demonstrated in this study, inter-personal relationships are key in accessing decision-makers as well as in creating willingness in the political system to initiate partnerships between philanthropy and the State. However, the nature of policy in which senior civil servants rotate between different government departments points to the need for developing a new dialogue that depends less on relationships with individual policymakers and is instead grounded in understanding of the mutual benefits of foundation-state engagement. This is a core consideration for the development of the philanthropic sector in Ireland and one that calls for a supportive framework to facilitate discourse within and across government departments.

As outlined earlier, in conducting the research, the responses failed to generate the anticipated level of discussion about the viability of philanthropy as a form of social investment in Ireland. Unfamiliarity with the term ‘philanthropy’, evident in the study, suggests that considerably greater debate is needed on the capacity for philanthropy to

address social needs. It also suggests that a rush to embrace models of social impact investing may be premature in the absence of better understanding and education as to their benefit. Perhaps related to this, ingrained in the responses of the majority of stakeholders was the consensus that if something is working, private philanthropy should not be funding it. The idea that charitable organisations should not be providing mainstream functions conveyed a feeling that to do so would be letting that State “off the hook”. At another level, it implies a deep-seated political belief in the ethos of the welfare state and raised questions about the true potential for philanthropy to affect public systems.

While Ireland is a country with high levels of charitable giving, the prevailing culture has favoured unplanned, informal mechanisms, primarily individual donations. As demonstrated in the research, in communicating with donors outside the field of institutional philanthropy, nonprofit organisations faced considerable challenges in replacing funding for aspects of service delivery or for research and evaluation that had been the focus of Atlantic and One Foundation’s targeted programmes. The question of whether such activities resonate with the philanthropic culture in operation is an area for further inquiry as is that of the scope for social investment models advocated by the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising (2012). Finally, and related to the above, the issue of the impact of philanthropic funding on the organisational culture of nonprofits in receipt of targeted investments including the extent to which it may have compromised their distinctive functions and characteristics represents a further area for exploration.

## Appendices

## Appendix One



### UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway

#### Research on investing in children and young people

#### Participant Information Sheet

**Title:** *A study of the investments in children and youth programmes in Ireland (2000 to present) focusing on the role of philanthropy in influencing options for children and young people.*

**What this Study is About:** This study examines the forms of service provision available to children and young people in Ireland following a decade of significant investment and policy development in the area. In particular, it will examine the role of philanthropy in introducing pioneering or experiential options for working with children and young people and the response of service providers and policymakers. The study seeks to understand the broad infrastructure in which forms of social investment for children and young people are developed and the interrelationships between that various agencies (statutory and voluntary) in this process.

It draws on the nonprofit sector literature with an emphasis on the type of philanthropy known as “strategic” or creative investment which highlights the unique role of philanthropy in social experimentation. Models for understanding the distinct roles of nonprofit organizations in relation to government that scholars are increasingly analyzing as complementary, supplementary or adversarial in nature (Anheier and Daly 2007, Sandfort 2008) will be explored and adopted to the Irish context.

This research aims to cover a wide range of perspectives and to explore the process for strategy development and the selection of policy alternatives for children and young people from the viewpoints of philanthropists (organizations, individuals and advisors); voluntary agencies delivering services and Government actors with responsibility in the area.

It is also hoped that the research will produce some broader findings in relation to the policy framework for children and young people in Ireland, the role of philanthropy in Irish society and interactions between the State and the voluntary sector.

**Who is Doing this Research:** This research is being carried out by Aileen Shaw as part of a doctoral thesis undertaken at the Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway, under the supervision of Professor Pat Dolan, Director and UNESCO Chair.

**Why do we Need this Research:** From the late 1990s, the visibility of children and youth in Irish state policy underwent a fundamental shift with policy and legislative changes calling for greater attention to children's rights, participation and need for quality services. Alongside this new forms of social investment in children has impacted the field affecting delivery of services, creating a research and evaluation culture and introducing youth development interventions based on strengths-based models. The Irish experience is capturing the attention of researchers, policymakers and practitioners and it acknowledges philanthropy as having a pivotal role in pioneering initiatives and in advocating experiential options. Yet the question of how philanthropy operates within the voluntary sector as part of a broader system of children and youth actors has received less attention. Importantly, the issue of public/private sector partnerships in a specific domain such as children and youth has not been explored. These issues are particularly relevant given the small scale of philanthropy in Ireland and the increasing attention scholars are giving to philanthropy in Europe and its accommodation into the welfare state paradigm. (Schuyt 2010) This research will contribute to these debates and sets out to provide a balanced account of policy development in this sector and to understand the constraints of the various parties involved.

**Why are you being asked to Participate:** The study will consult with a range of individuals involved in delivering services and influencing policy for children and youth in Ireland. You are being asked because you both have the perspective of the statutory (or voluntary) sector.

**What are you being invited to do:** The interview may explore the process of priority-setting for children and young people, policy development and implementation (2000 to present) and the challenges and opportunities facing the sector in Ireland. Any suggestions you may have for improved outcomes would also be welcomed.

This interview will last ca. 45 minutes to 1 hour and I will ask permission to record it. If you do not wish it to be recorded, I can take notes. Again participation is completely voluntary and if at any stage during the interview you wish to withdraw, you can do so.

**How will the information you provide be used:** Any information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. The information collected in this research study will be stored in a way that protects your identity. The information provided will be reported in a manner which will not identify you in any way. The recordings will be transcribed and the electronic recordings will be destroyed immediately after transcription and the written transcripts will be stored securely for a period of five years in a way that protects your identity.

Confidentiality will be ensured by omitting or changing any identifiable information.. The geographic location or names of organizations of the interviewees will not be used either. All quotations will be anonymised and will not be used if they contain identifying information.

### **How can you consent to participate?**

If after reading this information sheet you agree to participate, you can send me an E-mail at [aileen.shaw@nuigalway.ie](mailto:aileen.shaw@nuigalway.ie) to arrange a time and venue for the interview. If you are unable to participate in a face to face interview, but would consider a different means of participation, this could also be arranged.

### **What should I do if I have any complaint or concern about the research or the way it is conducted?**

If you have any complaint or concern about the research, you can contact the researcher Aileen Shaw [aileen.shaw@nuigalway.ie](mailto:aileen.shaw@nuigalway.ie) or her supervisor Prof. Pat Dolan [pat.dolan@nuigalway.ie](mailto:pat.dolan@nuigalway.ie).

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

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**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. You will be given a copy of this information sheet and signed consent form to keep.**

### **References**

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## **Appendix Two**

### **INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT1: PHILANTHROPIC FUNDERS**

#### **Section 1: Strategy development and priorities**

How did the foundation identify the specific issues and challenges to address in within the children and young people (CYP) area?

What is the process internally by which the foundation selects priorities?

What is the rationale for the intervention(s) chosen?

- What values and priorities inform this area of grantmaking?
- Are the initiatives tied to analyses or ideas about broad social change?

What consultation takes place externally prior to selecting an initiative?

What strategies or interventions for funding internationally in this area influence the approach?

What is your view on current national policies for CYP?

Are there specific public policies the foundation seeks to change?

What would success in the area look like?

How does the programme in children and youth compare to state interventions in the area? Describe or contrast the approach to funding with how government funds youth programmes?

Does the role of philanthropy differ from that of State? Are there tasks not easily done within confined of state provision? Unique opportunities available to foundations for example?

#### **Section 2: Strategies and routes for investment 2000-Present**

##### **2a Implementing the strategy**

How has the particular strategy adopted served the Foundation in setting out to achieve its goals?

How has the grantee field responded?

Given the importance placed on to evidence-based models what have been the challenges in the Irish context? How receptive have nonprofits been to implementing these programmes?

For “demonstration” projects – what benefits were they expected to produce? What would you say to critics?

How long can you give a project/grantee to prove itself?

How will you know when you (the funder) have succeeded?

What indicators will you use to measure effect?

What new or unanticipated challenges emerged for the CYP field as a whole?

## 2.b Relationship with Government

Describe the nature of the foundation’s relationship partnership with Government? How did it come about?

How does it operate – formal or informal basis?

What has resulted from the partnership? What have been the key successes?

What barriers are encountered in working with government?

What future is there for such partnerships?

## **Section 3: Influence of philanthropy on the sector**

What changes have you observed in public systems that serve children and young people over the last decade? Has philanthropy played a role?

What are some of the wider lessons for policy that have emerged?

For funders interested in influencing public policy where are there efforts best focused? What strategies are most effective?

How are foundations viewed by Irish society in your opinion? What future does philanthropy have in Ireland?

What is role do you think foundations should play in society? What learning did the CYP investment tell you about the role of foundations in society?

What is the legacy for CYP philanthropy has left in the last decade

## **Appendix Three**

### **INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT: BENEFICIARY ORGANISATIONS**

#### **Section 1: Strategic Development and Priority Setting**

What are the key issues for children and young people your organisation seeks to address? How have they changed in the last decade?

How does the formulation of priority areas/strategy development take place within the organisation?

What are the current strategic priorities? How did they come about?

What areas for investment were selected by philanthropy? How did this come about?

What is your view on current national policies for children and young people?

Is there a commitment to public policy change in the organisation? Inputs into the policy process?

What level of engagement do you have with statutory officials? What are the key departments you have contact with?

#### **Section 2: Funding Structure and Operations**

Can you describe your funding base? How does it breakdown between philanthropy; government and fees or other income streams?

What changes has the organization experienced as a result of philanthropic investment?

Have priorities adjusted to meet the criteria of funders?

What opportunities/challenges have been encountered in organizational practice and operations? What key changes have taken place?

With evidence-based, outcome-focused programme models for working with young people introduced into Ireland, what has been your experience in implementing them? What are the challenges? Were these new concepts?

How has the culture of evaluation impacted on the organization?  
What lessons learned from evaluation for the organization?  
What changes will be implemented as a result?  
Do you plan to continue evaluation in the future?

Are funders active on your management and governance? How has this affected the organisation?

How will the organisation replace funds once foundations have exited? Can they be replaced by government? Are there other funding models or income generation strategies being explored?

Are there areas or functions in your organization that cannot be undertaken through statutory funding sources?

### **Section 3: Impact of philanthropy on the children and youth field**

What changes have taken place in public systems that serve young people over the past decade? Has philanthropy played a role?

What probability of successfully affecting policy or systems change was/is there? For funders interested in influencing public policy where are their efforts best focused? What strategies are most effective?

What role can philanthropy occupy in addressing social problems? How can philanthropic investment be most usefully deployed?

What is the legacy for CYP philanthropy has left in the last decade?

## **Appendix Four**

### **INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT: POLICYMAKER REPRESENTATIVES\***

#### **1. Public Policy and State Provision for children and young people (CYP)**

What key changes have taken place in public systems that serve CYP in the last decade?

What are the primary policy issues for a) children and b) young people being integrated into new and/or emerging frameworks?

What are the characteristics of “strategic” investment in children and youth?

#### **2. Partnership Model: Co-funding prevention and early intervention**

Why was the prevention and early intervention strategy selected for the co-investment?

How important is evaluation evidence in making the case for prevention and early intervention?

How does the DCYA seek to use evidence to inform services/policy?

Can you comment on the scaling-up, mainstreaming or demonstration model expectations for the three sites –have they changed / were they realistic?

#### **3. Philanthropic Funding and Public Policy**

What are your observations on the role philanthropy can/should play in relation to government services and resource provision?

From your interactions with philanthropic organisations, how would you classify the role of the sector in relation to the state?

In your view, does philanthropic funding differ from government funding streams ie. can they take more risks, be “more entrepreneurial” as is claimed?

Has philanthropy impacted overall government policy and funding decisions?

How can philanthropy best partner with government?

What are some of the wider lessons for policy that have emerged from over a decade of private investment funding in the area?

**\*The sample interview instrument above was used in the case of a policymaker interviewed for their engagement with the Atlantic Philanthropies Prevention and Early Intervention Programme. The instrument was adapted to the circumstances of different policymaker interviewees as needed.**

## Appendix Five



### ***Research Consent Form***

***Title of Study: Investing in Children and Youth: Philanthropy in Ireland 2000 to Present***

**Name of Researcher: Aileen Shaw**

#### **DECLARATION:**

*Please Tick Boxes*

1. I have read this consent form and the attached Participant Information Sheet outlining the study
2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions.
3. I understand the information given and my role in this research.
4. I have had enough time to consider my participation in this research.
5. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.
6. I am aware that my participation in the study and the information I disclose will be treated in a confidential manner and that my name will not be used.
7. It has been explained to me that any audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription and written information gathered will be retained and stored securely for a period of five years.

8. I agree to take part in the interview

Participant

Date

Signature

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Researcher

Date

Signature

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Aileen Shaw  
NUI Galway



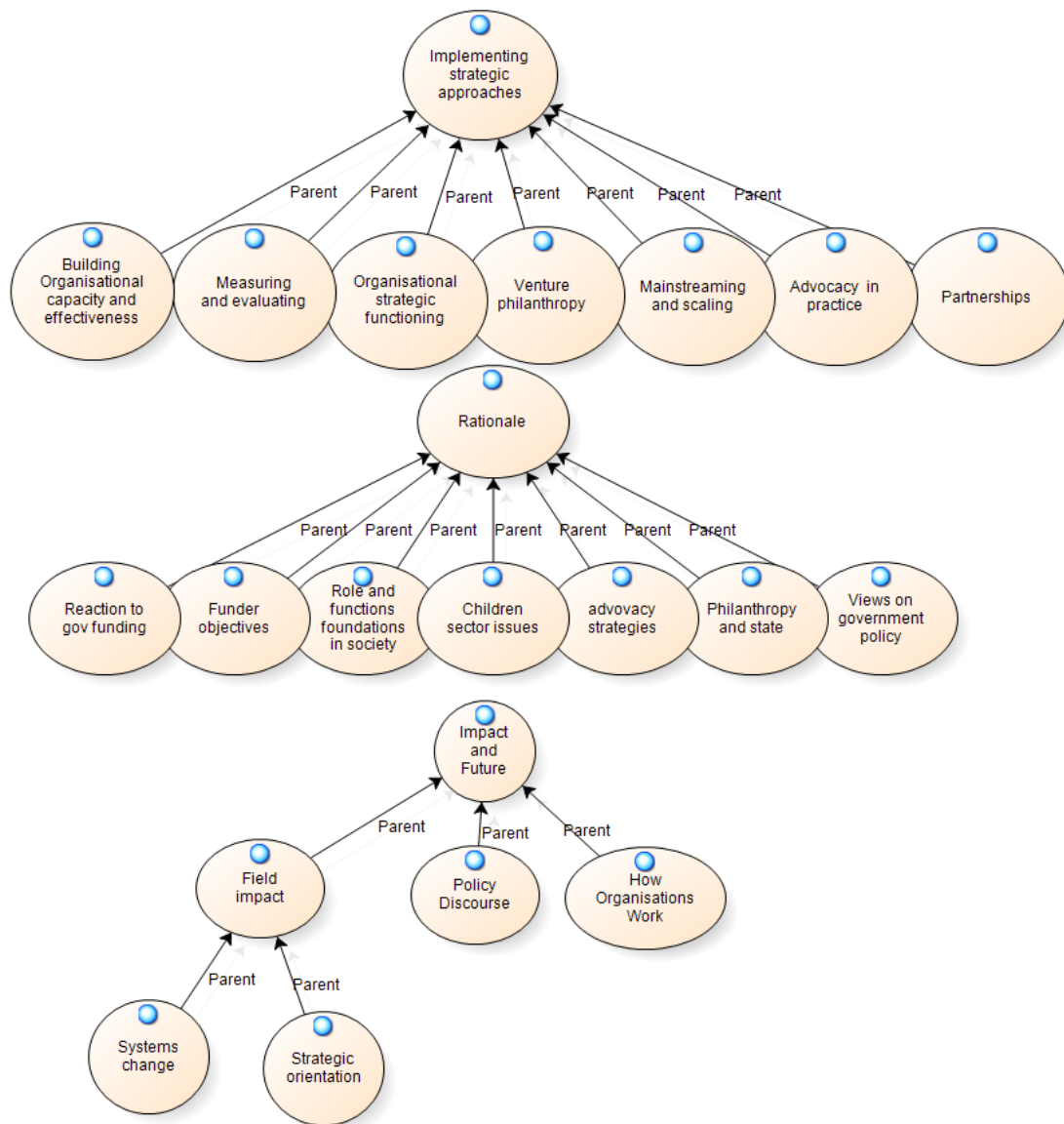
## Appendix Six

### Thematic Analysis: Coding and Tools

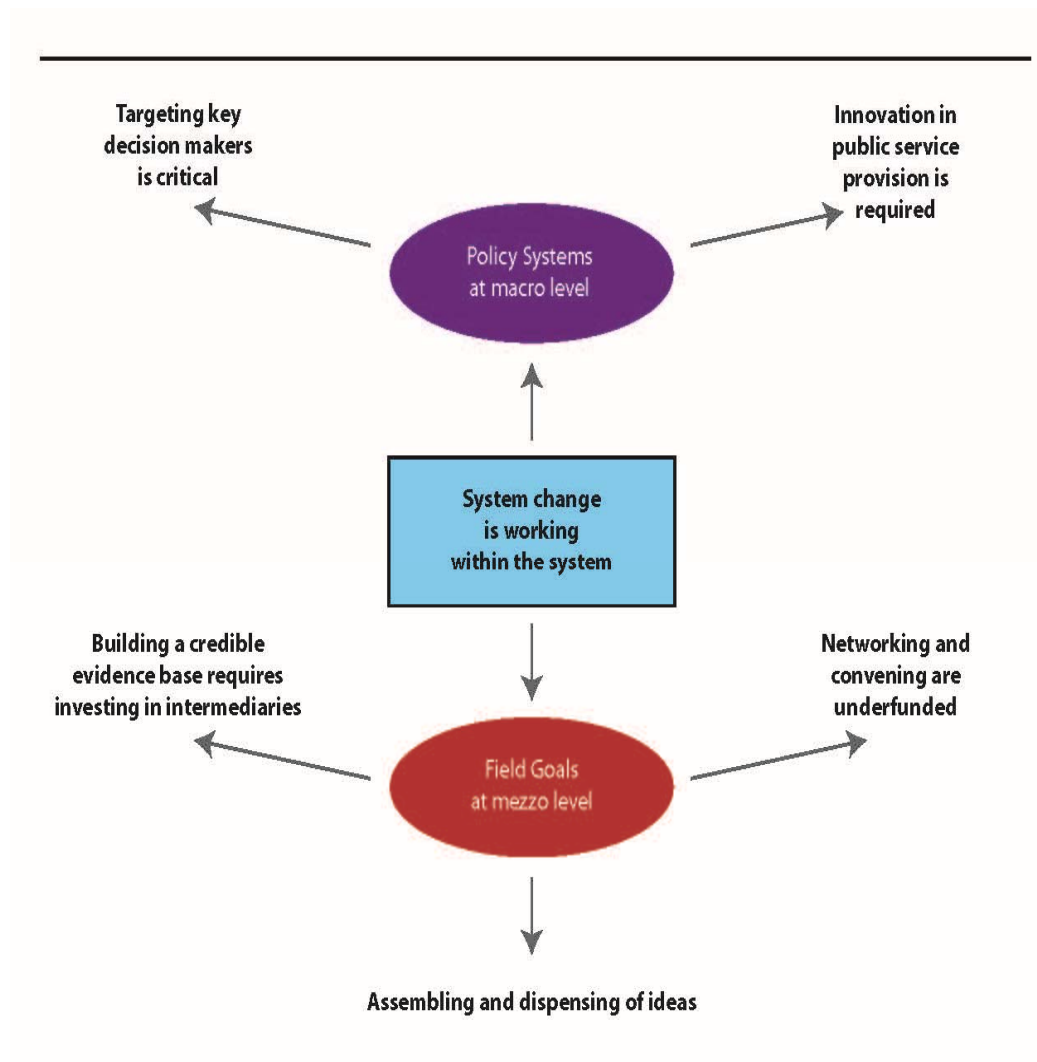
#### Phase 1: Basic Themes

Open Codes	Rules for Inclusion	Interviews	Unitised Text Segments
Follow Up info		7	12
3 sites		8	31
Advocacy	Understandings, interpretations, strategies associated	4	38
Atlantic Philanthropies	Experience of engagement with and effectiveness	11	34
Children issues	Pertaining specifically to children	6	28
Evaluation	Formal and informal methods and expectations	10	25
Evidence	Ideas on value, use, prevalence	6	17
Forum on Philanthropy	Formal mechanism and voice of field	3	7
Funding environment challenges	Economic conditions affecting organisations	12	57
Fundraising and communication strategies	Current and past practice	3	12
Future of philanthropy		7	15
Government & service provision	Issues and trends - priority activities funded	11	21
Impact on CYP issues	Overall influence of philanthropy	14	78
New income models	Experience using - examples	9	36
One Foundation	Experiences engaging with	7	25
Partnerships & Collaboration	Formal and informal	4	17
Policymakers & systems change	Views on need for	12	42
Rationale and TOC	Operating with theory of change	11	41
Role of foundations	What they can, should, achieve	5	30
Sector Characteristics	Size, scale, history and background to philanthropy in Ireland	7	28
Tools and techniques	Measurement and performance	6	21
Values	Culture associated with philanthropy	4	7
Venture, strategic philanthropy	Characterization of	3	11
Voluntary & community sector	Issues in history and culture in Ireland	5	16
Youth issues	Specific to sector	6	35

## Phase 2: Organising Themes



### Phase 3: Thematic Network



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