

Public consultation on the development of a national model of parenting support services

Fields marked with * are mandatory.



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Introduction

A collaborative working group set up by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is currently developing a draft national model of parenting support services.

As part of this work the group would like to hear your thoughts and ideas on the questions below.

Please note this survey will open to submissions until **April 16th**.

Consultation Scope

The aim of this consultation is to gather your thoughts and ideas on improving the development and delivery of parenting support services for all parents. Parenting support is the provision of information and services aimed at strengthening parents' knowledge, confidence and skills to help achieve the best outcomes for children and their families.

Parenting supports include parenting programmes, information sessions, one-to-one advice and support, group-based supports, parent mentoring, home visiting programmes, drop-in advice clinics, support helplines, online parenting supports and books and leaflets

Please note that wider family focused policies and supports such as financial supports, educational supports, housing, mental health services and children's services are outside the scope of this consultation.

Questionnaire

* 1(a). I am responding as a

- Parent
- Person who works with parents
- Member of the public
- Other (e.g. on behalf of an organisation)

1(b). If other, please specify

Alcohol Action Ireland

2. How can we ensure that all parents, regardless of where in Ireland they live, can access effective parenting supports when they need them?

1500 character(s) maximum

AAI acknowledges the government's commitment to & investment in children, families & prevention & early intervention. Supporting parents, & therefore children, should be seen as a national cross-departmental priority with the necessary infrastructure & resources in place.

Alcohol harm in Ireland is a significant issue with more than half of all drinkers doing so in a harmful manner. This has implications around parenting with at least 200,000 children living in homes with problem parental alcohol use. This is an issue across all social backgrounds so planning for supports in this area should be a key consideration for the development of any parenting policy.

DCEDIY should develop a national structure to plan, resource & manage the delivery of parenting supports nationally & locally. Parenting supports should be built around early years services and schools. Locally, each CYPSC should establish a Parenting Support Sub-group with representation from relevant state agencies & service providers. This group would be charged with overseeing a local strategy for the delivery of a continuum of services in their area based on need.

Parents should be facilitated in having their voices heard as key partners in supporting their children's health & wellbeing as well as in the design, delivery & review of services. The commitment in First 5 to support parents by placing importance on wellbeing & mental health strategies should be implemented without delay.

3. What needs to be considered when deciding what new or existing parenting to fund or provide?

1500 character(s) maximum

The needs of parents should be identified through regular needs assessments nationally & locally & from feedback from parents on the services they receive.

Services should be evidence-based & evaluated. They should work together on an integrated basis.

Specialist supports for parents should address needs such as when a child is suspected of having or has additional health, or developmental needs.

In order to address the needs of the 200,000 children living with problem parental alcohol use, there is a real need to develop properly resourced supports for such children. Innovative evidence-based programs must become more widely available in all communities.

Universal parenting supports should target expectant mothers & fathers & include education around the issue of pre-natal exposure to alcohol that can leave children neurobiologically compromised resulting in life-long problems. It is estimated that among children and youth in Ireland the prevalence of FASD is 47.5 per 1000 compared with a global average of 7.7 per 1000 – the third highest in the world. Education on this for professionals working with children & families should also be provided.

Research on childhood adversity in Ireland needs to be undertaken to inform gov policy & practitioners on the nature, prevalence & impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences to subsequently develop a national ACEs strategy that outlines the development of trauma-informed services & systems.

4. How can we raise awareness of the existing parenting support services and their benefits for parents and their children, both at a national and local level?

1500 character(s) maximum

National public awareness campaigns on the availability and arrangements to access parenting supports should take place through via national and local media outlets and on social media.

A national website should contain advice to parents and information on national services and supports and feature a “local services space” which will be kept up to date by each CYPSC.

Peer support networks should be encouraged and developed for parents to combat social isolation and to create a community support network to support parents when they end their engagement with formal services.

Awareness of problem parental alcohol use and its impact on young and adult children should be raised through information campaigns and training that targets healthcare, social care, early years, child protection, family support, education, and mental health sectors, as well as families and communities. Public health campaigns would not only inform the whole of population about these matters but also reach an adult cohort who perhaps have not yet recognised the underlying cause of their own problems.

The scars of living in a home where there is problem substance use can last long into adulthood causing untold harm. Intervening with young people by providing information, recognition and a support network can offset problems in later life.

5. How can barriers to accessing parenting supports be reduced?

1500 character(s) maximum

Seeking support must be destigmatized and normalised and not seen in terms of the family having a child protection issue. Public information campaigns would help in this regard.

A continuum of parenting supports should be provided on a consistent national basis and services must have the capacity to respond to demand in a timely manner.

Parents who may be reluctant to seek support should be engaged by offering outreach supports, choice and flexibility on the time that services are delivered and services should work in partnership with parents.

People with particular challenges such as literacy issues, not having English as a first language, those with disability, learning or mental health challenges, those who have a lack of transportation or childcare supports must be supported as much as possible if they wish to access a service.

All services should be “father-proofed” encouraging fathers’ participation in their children’s lives by ensuring that all services are designed to be father inclusive.

6. What parenting support services do you think should be prioritised and why?

1500 character(s) maximum

There is a requirement for a continuum of supports across the range of needs and across all ages from pre-pregnancy to adulthood. Supporting the wellbeing of the parent ensures that they can support the child’s development. Provision of universal supports should be offered to all parents and those who have greater needs receive greater supports. In terms of targeting specific cohorts, AAI believes that the prevalence of alcohol harm in Irish society, coupled with the great mental health need, is such that access to holistic family therapies that aim to counsel both child and parent together and/or separately should be a priority.

There is strong evidence for the impact of parenting interventions for substance misusing parents on their parenting practices and wider family functioning. Parents benefit most when the intervention begins with education in fundamental psychological processes such as emotional regulation mechanisms. AAI believes that providing psycho-education to parents where they and/or their children are in receipt of a service is hugely important in terms of helping parents to understand the significance of early years, the impact of toxic stress and issues in the home such as domestic abuse and problem parental substance use. (Operation Encompass, a UK early intervention to assist children where there is potential domestic abuse occurring, reports that although the topic is a sensitive one, they appreciate the intervention as a supportive measure.)

Contact

[Contact Form](#)

