

Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service Highlight Why Measures Matter!

Measuring school readiness, parenting styles, coping skills, resilience and more.

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone has today launched '**Why Measures Matter**', a report by The Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service (DoCCFS) compiled over two years, in collaboration with Trinity Research in Childhood Centre (TRICC), TCD.

The research measured the impact of our work in supporting children and families to reach their full potential and overcome adversity in their lives.

It measured progress in a number of areas in our Family Centres and Early Childhood Development Service (ECDS) such as school readiness, parenting styles, parental mental health, coping skills and resilience. Demographic information has also been gathered so that trends, changes in service user profile and risk indicators could also be factored into the work and service provision.

Trevor Spratt TCD *"One of the most thought-provoking findings was that those who are most in need of support show the most improvement and this is extremely encouraging in terms of measuring the effectiveness of the service provided by the DoCCFS"*

Other key findings include;

- Children and parents in receipt of DoCCFS services show benefits across a range of domains encompassing child socio –emotional and behavioural functioning, parental mental health, child parent relationship school readiness and children's coping response.
- Boys in the ECDS showed significant improvements at the end of the year with regard to levels of emotionality and hyperactivity.
- In the ECDS improvements were evident in relation to overall difficulties
- Parents with mental health difficulties benefitted from support with the early childhood services.
- Non Irish parents who reported significantly poorer mental health than their Irish counterparts showed significant improvements in overall wellbeing.
- ECDS children improved significantly over the school year with regard to their school readiness. Girls were significantly more school ready than boys but both groups made statistically significant improvements in the course of the preschool year.
- In the family centres when compared with children reported in the Growing Up in Ireland¹ study there were three times as many children coming from single parent homes , twice as many present with physical or mental health problems , five times as many children have experienced four or more stressful life events in their lives.
- Children attending family centres are on average experiencing greater problems with all aspects of social, emotional and behavioural functioning and twice as many having

¹ <https://www.esri.ie/growing-up-in-ireland/>

abnormal, high to very high difficulties. However after intervention the scores on total difficulties are more comparable with the nationally representative sample.

- Improvements were noted for parent’s mental health over the course of family centre intervention. Children reported more warmth and responsiveness from their parents following the family centre intervention and parents reported greater closeness and less conflict with their children.
- For adolescents there were significant reductions in their reported distress caused by problems they had encountered and their use of maladaptive coping responses.

Minister Katherine Zappone *“Only by persistently questioning whether we are using our resources in the best way can we ensure that Ireland becomes the best country in the world for children and young people to grow up. It is clear that the Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service are a leader in this area. As such, I am delighted to officially launch this report”*

Speaking at the launch of the report today, **Interim Director of Services, Tracey Monson** said

We are really encouraged by these findings which highlight the effectiveness of our work and the important role outcome measures play in informing a quality evidence based service for the children and families who attend our services.

This is in line with the goals of Better Outcomes Brighter Futures², (the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People) which highlights the importance of supporting parents, early intervention, ensuring quality services and supporting effective transitions.

“Developing a culture of research and measuring outcomes to ascertain the effectiveness of the work has been an important goal for the DoCCFS over the past number of years. It is hoped that from the results of these measures will inform service provision to ensure that there are positive outcomes for children and families both in our service and beyond”.

For further information and interviews

Tracey Monson – Interim Director of Services – 086 026 3327

Notes to Editor

The Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service (DoCCFS) is a not for profit public service organisation. We provide a range of therapeutic supportive services to children and families based in the greater Dublin region. The Service works in collaboration with TUSLA Child and Family Agency local areas in Dublin North East, City, Dublin Mid Leinster, Meath and Wicklow and with Probation Services in Dublin North East. Our Services include an Early Childhood Development Service (ECDS), Family Centre Service, Dublin Safer Families Service and Assessment Services. The Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service are committed to research and evaluation of our services. The information gathered helps us to improve and to provide high quality services to children and families.

² https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/cypp_framework/BetterOutcomesBetterFutureReport.pdf