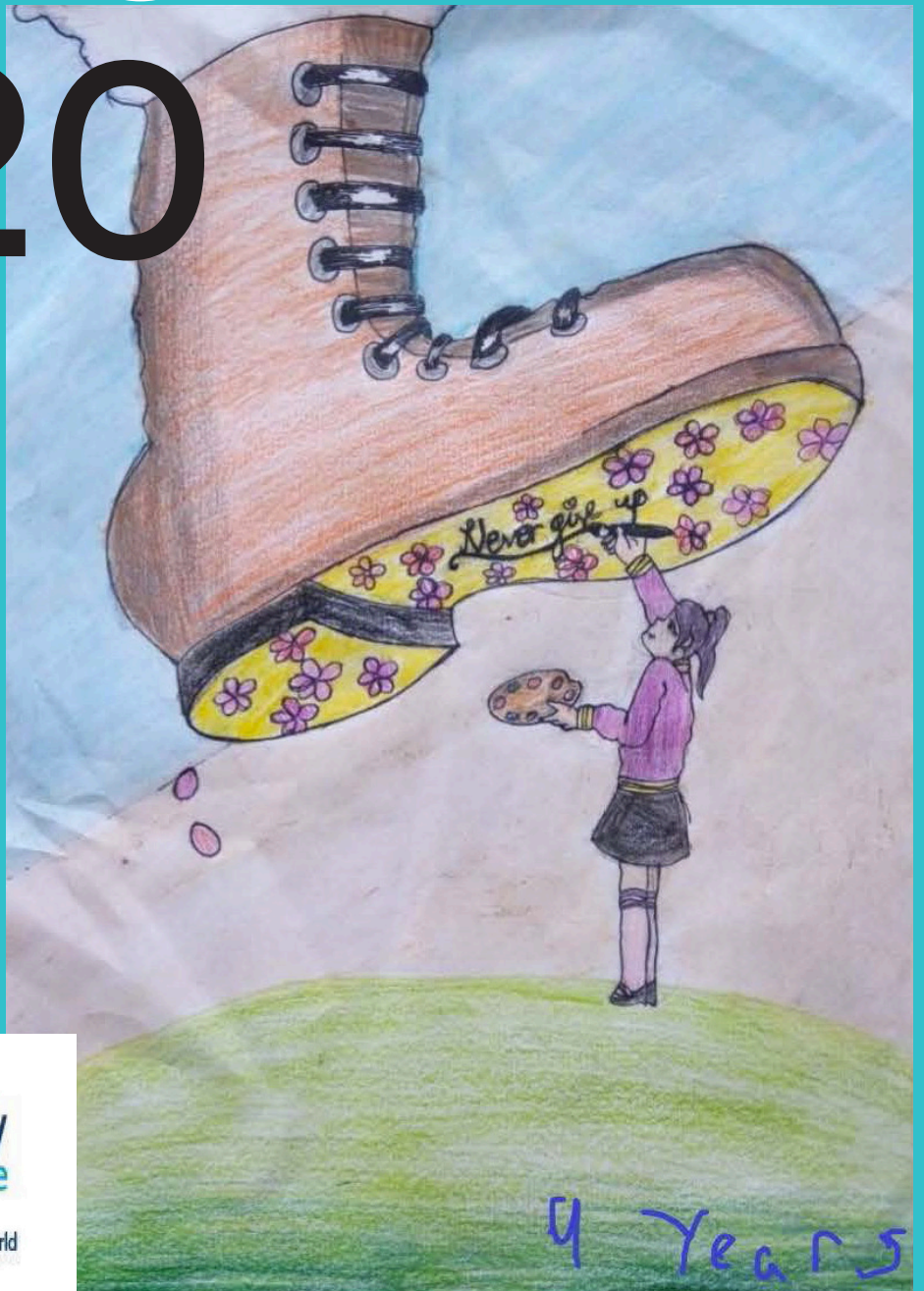


Annual Report 2020

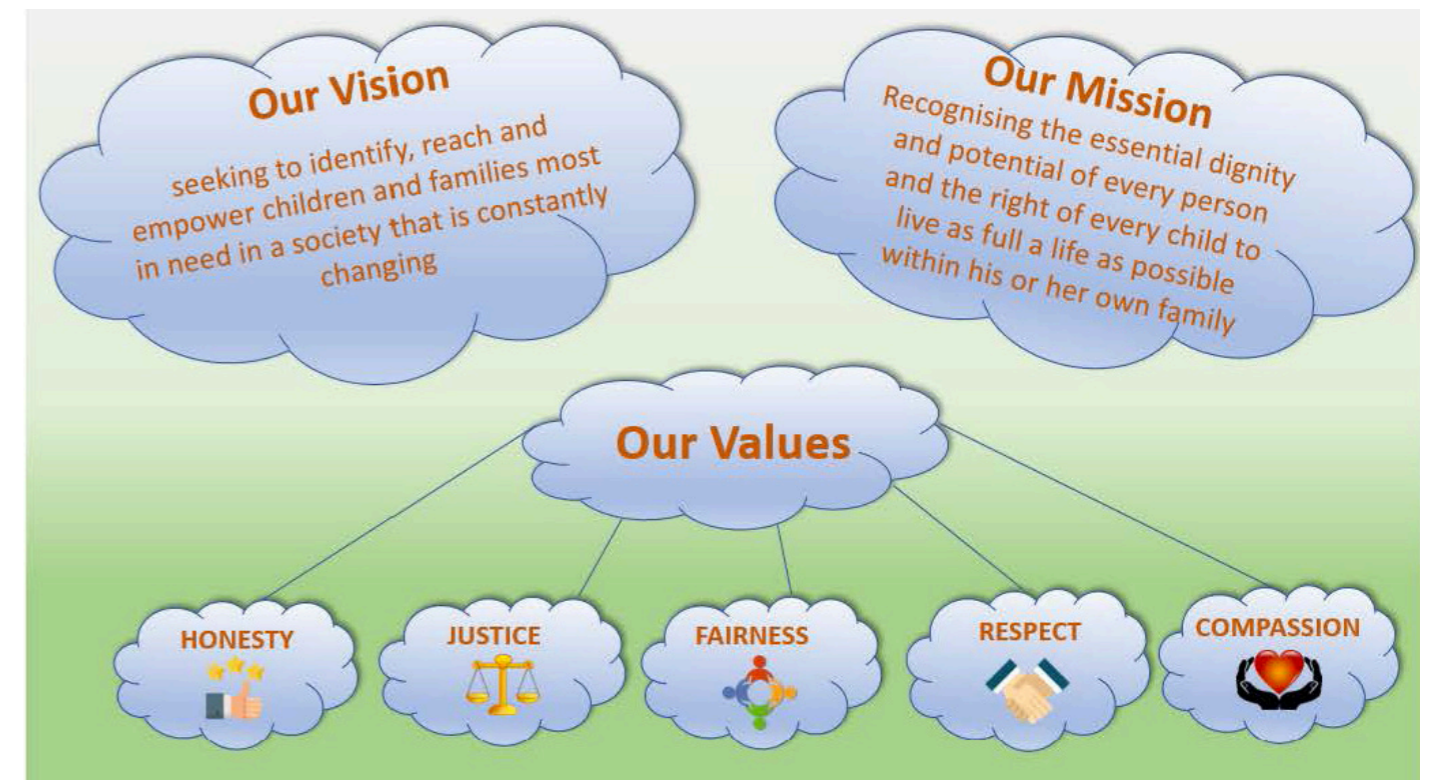


Meeting the needs of families in a constantly changing world

Meeting the needs of children and families in
a constantly changing world – Covid 19

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Vision

The Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service, inspired by the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, seeks to identify, reach, and empower children and families most in need in a society that is constantly changing.

Mission

The Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service recognising the essential dignity and potential of every person and the right of every child to live as full a life as possible within his or her own family, undertakes to deliver quality services to children at risk and families most in need.

Values

The values which underpin all the activities of the Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service are:

**Honesty,
Justice,
Fairness,
Respect and
Compassion**

Chair's Report 2020

I am privileged, as Chair of the Board of Directors, to welcome you to the Annual Report of the Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service.

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful work of our former Chair, the late Mr John Furey, who resigned from his post and from the Board of Directors in November 2020, following over 20 years involvement with the Service and with the Daughters of Charity. Sadly, John passed away early in 2021. The contribution and leadership that John gave to the Board and to the Daughters of Charity has been immense and his legacy will live on in all that we do.

I would like to extend our thanks to Sr Justine O'Brien who also retired from the Board this year, for her great work and commitment to the Service. I would like to welcome Sr Marian Harte and Mr Paul Harrison to the Board. The expertise and passion they bring will be of great benefit to the Board and to the Service.

2020 was a year like no other for the Daughters of Charity Child and Family Services. The emergence of the pandemic Covid 19 early in the year could have had the potential to significantly impact service delivery had it not been for the advancement of core objectives in service delivery, Staff Support and Wellbeing and Business Support Systems within our strategic plan 'Supporting Families, Changing Lives, 2019 – 2023'.

Adapting to change has been the bedrock of the work of the Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service and is embedded within our vision 'meeting the needs of children and families in a constantly changing world'. Due to the innovation, creativity and commitment of our staff and the leadership of our Board, the organisation responded well to the global pandemic.

A significant focus was on establishing systems, training, protocols and procedures in line with the governmental guidelines that emerged during the year. The focus at all times was on the safety of our staff and children and families and, while meeting their needs, how services could be delivered safely and effectively to the high-quality standards that were always in place.

Every effort was made to keep the same approach to service delivery, programmes and supports for children and families, to try and keep normality, structure, and certainty for families in an uncertain and challenging time.

The Board of Directors worked exceptionally hard in 2020, transitioning to a remote format which was beneficial in enabling more frequent meetings for Board and Committee sessions and to support the leadership team in their adapting of services during the pandemic. The Board were committed to ensuring that service delivery and staff support remained a core focus and provided great support and guidance during the past year.

Governance and Compliance was a core focus of our Board and Senior Leadership Team in 2020 and significant work was carried out on documentation with policies and procedures being developed and approved to ensure compliance with the charity regulator code of governance.

While COVID-19 challenged the organisation in many ways and required an unfailing commitment by everyone, the Service continued to deliver high quality services to meet a great need, a need that will continue to grow as the impact of the pandemic materialises in family's lives.

I would also like to thank Dr Tracey Monson and her Leadership Team and all of the Management and Staff of the Service who have worked tirelessly during 2020.

I would like to thank Tusla for the funding for the Service during the year without which we could not deliver our core services.

I would like to thank the Daughters of Charity Community for their ongoing financial support which enables the Service to continue to fund research with Trinity Research in Childhood Centre and supplements core services due to ongoing deficits in funds from the public authority.

The challenge for many Services like ourselves is the increased cost of compliance and of core service delivery. It is a priority for our Board to advocate for the core high quality services provided by the community and voluntary sector to receive the funding they require to meet ever increasing needs.

Mr Ciaran Roche
Chair

Governance

Number of Board Meetings	6
Number of Finance Committee Meetings	6
Governance meetings	8
Board Resources Committee	2



Board of Directors

Sr. Goretti Butler, Sr. Marian Harte, Sr. Sheila Ryan, Mr. John Tuffy, Mr. Michael Cleary, Ms. Carol Fawsitt, Mr. Ciaran Roche, Mr. Paul Harrison.

Memorial to John Furey



A word of appreciation

It was with great sadness that the Daughters of Charity Community and the Child and Family Services learned of the death of John Furey on the 19th March 2021.

John was a man much loved by all who had the privilege of knowing him and his longstanding commitment to the development of innovative services and high professional standards within the Child and Family Services was at the very core of his work as Chair.

All of us who mourn John, mourn the passing of a friend and wise mentor who was incapable of causing offence to anyone. He was always a gentleman in his dealings as Chair and in negotiations with funding and government agencies. He had a great interest in developing and being involved in the mission of the Daughters of Charity to the underprivileged in society and always counted himself as one of us! He was a living example of someone who lived the ethos and values of St. Louise and St.

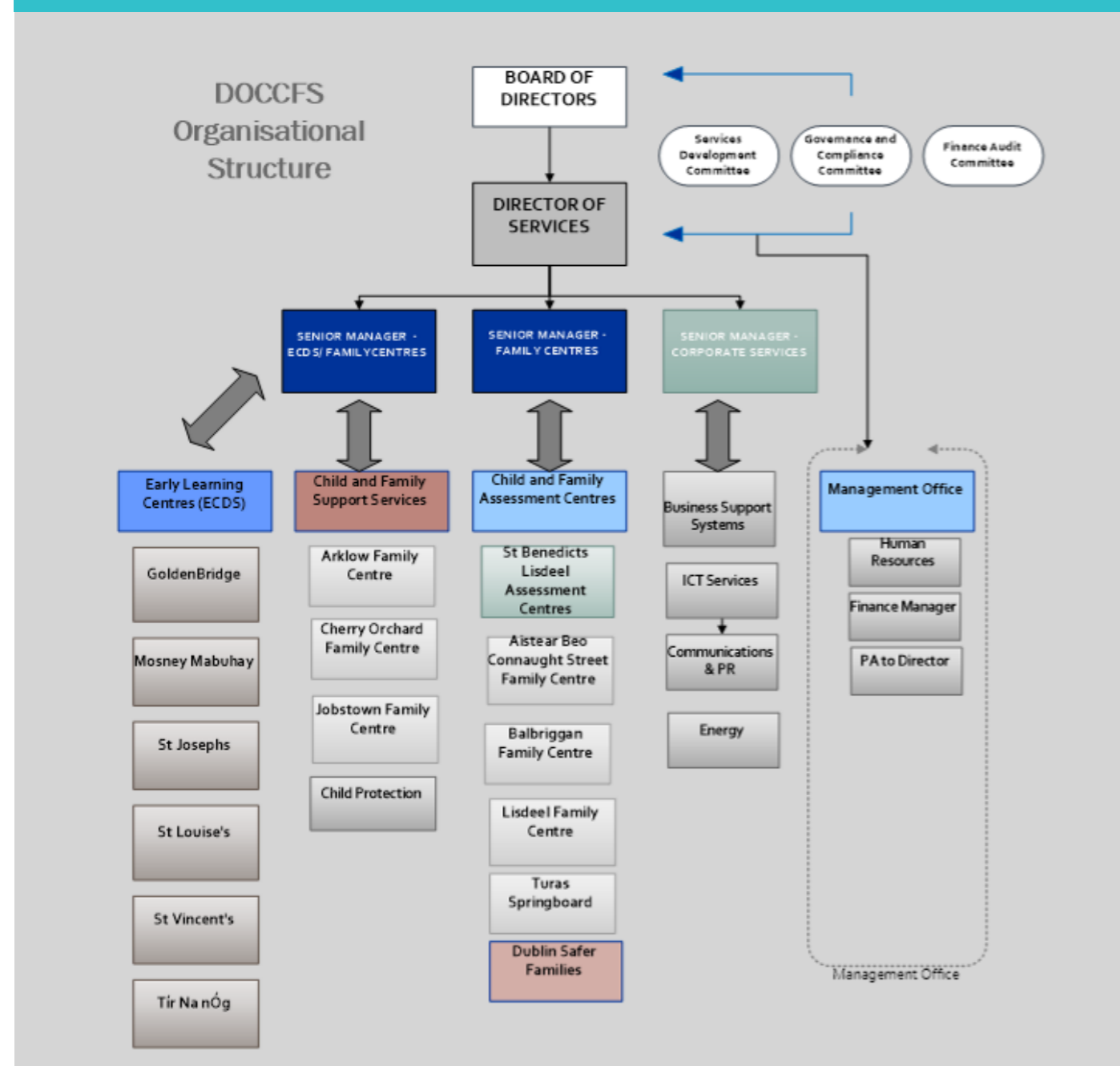
Vincent. He was a guiding influence on us all and has left an enduring legacy of humble service with a great commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility.

Since his retirement John had worked as an advisor to the Provincial Leadership team at our Provincial House in Blackrock where he made an immense contribution at so many levels. He had a great interest in people and was constantly sharing new ideas. John was blessed with a wonderful sense of humour. While we mourn the passing of John we know that this cannot compare with the loss felt by his family and wide circle of friends to whom we extend our sympathy and prayers.

May he rest in peace.

Board of Directors,
Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service

Organisational Structure



Director of Services Report

2020 has been a year like no other for the Service with the emergence of the Covid 19 global pandemic early in the year. Despite this challenging environment, the Annual Report highlights the achievements of the service in adapting to a new way of working in meeting the needs of children and families in an innovative way while providing a high-quality service, as evidenced by our ongoing work with Trinity Research in Childhood Centre, Trinity College, Dublin.

There was progress on the ongoing implementation of our Strategic Plan ‘Supporting Families, Changing Lives’ 2019 – 2023 under the key strategic pillars across all of our services, the development of our business support systems, advocacy, research and in staff wellbeing.

All the staff and management of the Service worked innovatively during 2020. While the focus always remained on the continuity of high-quality service provision, there was also a focus on supporting professionals and our colleagues in other agencies facing into working in this uncertain time. All centres began to develop and collect resources to support other professionals and our children and families, and these were made available on our website in a designated ‘Covid Hub’.

With the significant increase in domestic abuse cases coming to light during the pandemic, our Dublin Safer Families Service provided bespoke

training to Tusla social workers and other professionals to support them working in this area. In addition to the therapeutic case work carried out by the Service, 1085 hours of training were delivered to other professionals during 2020, a significant portion of which was delivered during the first lockdown period, March to June 2020.

Our work with children and families during the pandemic continued at the highest levels of output from all our staff. We supported 2227 children across all services and provided 23,217 sessions to children and families.

Not surprisingly, there was an increase in referrals to the service for emotional support in the areas of wellbeing, anxiety experienced by children, and in parenting and parenting support, comprising 60% of all referrals across our Service. Dublin safer families experienced a 73% increase in referrals, with coercive control identified as the main reason for referral.

Our ECDS preschools continued to operate during the pandemic and found new ways to provide early years education through the delivery of the early year’s curriculum online prior to reopening services in June 2020.

We were delighted to receive the Investing in Children Award for two of our centres, Arklow Springboard Family Centre, and Mabuhay Early Childhood Development Centre in Mosney who applied for and achieved this award

during the Covid 19 pandemic. This award was testament to the great work being delivered across the Service during a very challenging time.

Our Board-approved Information Communications Technology Roadmap enabled us to accelerate our business support functions specifically in Information Technology and the development of required Covid compliance health and safety policies and procedures to ensure that all staff could continue to provide a service safely.

Like many services, we experienced an increased focus on working in collaboration and in partnership with colleagues in Tusla, HSE, schools and education and across the community and voluntary sector. We are confident that this strong partnership will continue and are committed to building on this into the future.

While there has been much to celebrate within the Service during the past year, the pandemic has highlighted even more clearly that the challenges for many families remain. With the closure of schools and the removal of societal structures for support, many families struggled. Children at home due to school closures, isolation for children and their families, and increased financial pressures took their toll on many during the year. A real concern for the service was children remaining in situations of risk and parents struggling to cope with additional pressures at home. The service reported an increase in reports to Tusla for children at risk of harm in the Welfare and Emotional

Abuse categories. Overall, the risk of harm from Welfare and Emotional Abuse related to 74% of all notifications to TUSLA Social Work Departments during 2020.

Our work continued with Trinity Research in Childhood Centre (TRiCC) during 2020 and we were delighted that our work in the Service has now been published in academic capacity within the British Journal of Social Work. Ensuring that our services are underpinned and informed by research and contributing to new thinking remains a core focus of all our work and we are grateful to the Daughters of Charity Community for their ongoing funding of this critical research.

The Board provided great support and guidance to me and to the Service during this challenging year. The sudden passing of our former Chair, Mr John Furey, who resigned from the Board in November 2020 after many years' service and support to the organisation, will leave an unfillable void. His gentle wisdom, leadership and compassion was a beacon of light to us all and his legacy will have a lasting effect on shaping the Service into the future. We will all miss him greatly.

Our Leadership Team also underwent changes in 2020, with the appointment of Eve Leonard as Corporate Support Senior Manager and Paul Craven as a Senior Manager replacement for Mary Nicholson who left the Service at the end of 2019. The hard work, commitment, and dedication from Ger O Hara, Senior Manager, Paul Craven, Eve Leonard, and Alan Corcoran

HR in leading the Service and supporting me as Director of Services was immense. I would like to thank the Management Office Staff, and the Management, Staff, and Volunteers of the Centres for their commitment to our mission and values when providing services during this difficult year. Without their commitment and passion, we could not have completed the great work during the year.

I would also like to thank the Daughters of Charity for their financial support to the organisation on an ongoing basis. The financial assistance that they make available enables us to develop our services to meet the needs of children and families and to develop into the future.

Most importantly, our commitment to the children and families that seek our services is unfailing and we are dedicated to ensuring that our services meet your needs now and into the future.

Dr Tracey A Monson Director of Services

At a Glance

2227 Children supported across all Services.	
1244 Families supported by Family Centres, Dublin Safer Families, & Assessment Service.	
2019 sessions by phone, walk & talk, emergency home visits (5% increase)	Total - 22049
2020 sessions by phone, walk & talk, emergency home visits	Total - 23217
Covid period March to June 2019	Total - 17281
Covid period March to June 2020 (8% increase)	Total - 18600

What we do

Our Family Centres

Are welcoming and non-clinical and our professionally qualified staff work in partnership with parents and referrers to provide interventions that are evidenced and high-quality therapeutic support for children and families. Our aim is to provide a free, flexible support that can include individual sessions, family and group work, a drop-in facility, outreach sessions, and home visits. We welcome referrals from TUSLA, GP's, Health Services, An Garda Síochana, Law Courts, CAMHS (Child Adolescent Mental Health Services) Schools, and other professionals, and from Parents and Guardians.

The Early Childhood Development Service

Provides care and education to children between two and six years in our preschools. Using the High Scope programme, the focus of the work is to promote confident, social, inquisitive children who interact with and explore their environment. School readiness is a strong indicator of long-term learning success and we work with the children and parents so that the child can begin school happy and confident. Parents and carers are also supported and included through the provision of parenting programmes, educational talks, parents' advisory committees, family fun days, sports and open days. We welcome referrals from TUSLA, PHN, GPs, and other professionals, and from Parents and Guardians.

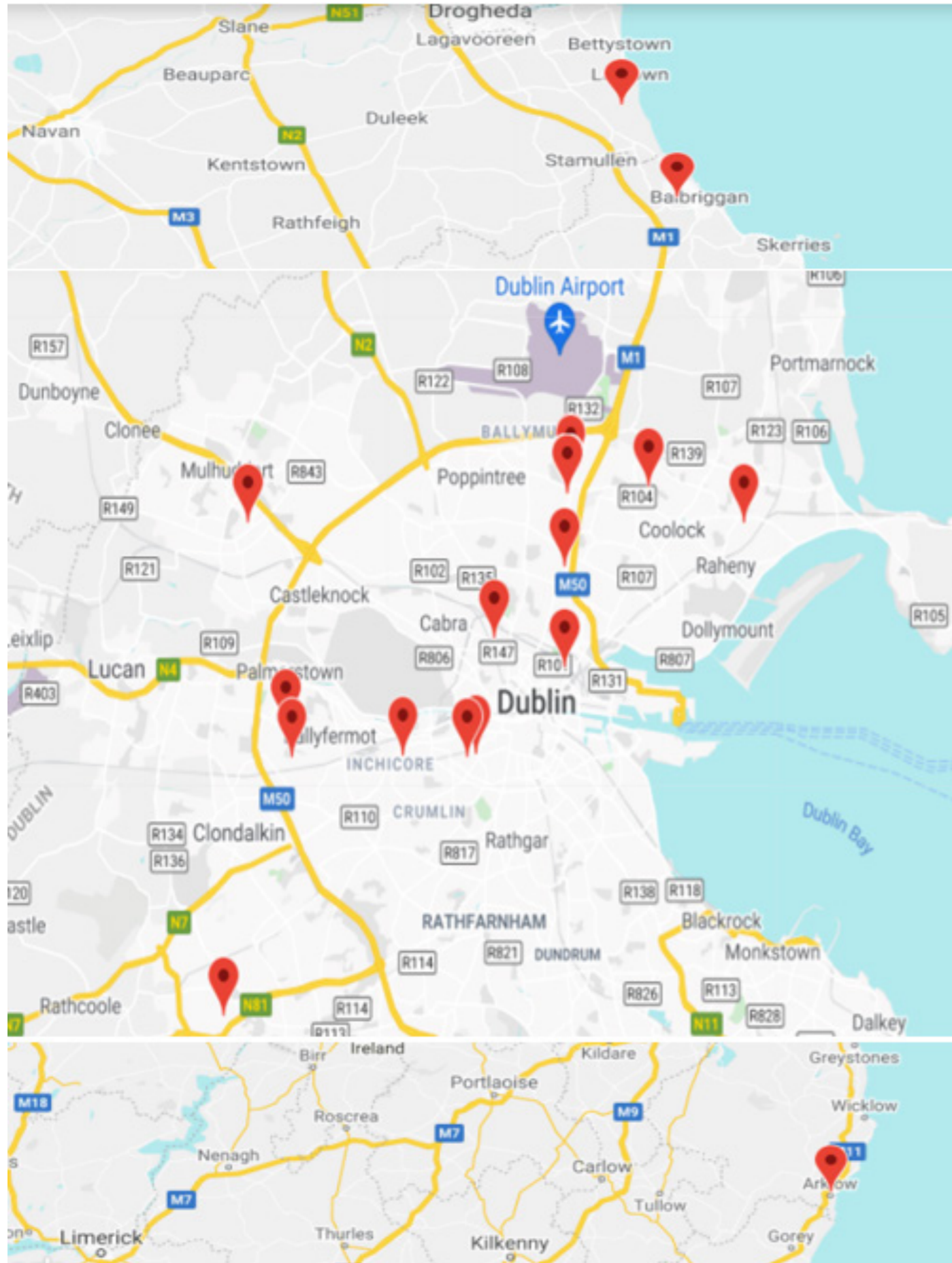
Dublin Safer Families Service

Is a Gender, Sexual and Domestic Abuse Service that work with parents and children to prevent and stop domestic abuse. A primary focus is to increase safety for the children in the family. DSF have adopted a systemic model and works separately with the identified victim, children and perpetrator. Individual sessions create both a listening and reflective space allows parents and children opportunities to explore and work through their experience of violence within their relationships. There is also the possibility, once safety for all has been established, to engage in joint sessions with family members. DSFS accepts referrals from TUSLA, the Dept of Justice, and the Probation Service.

Assessment Service

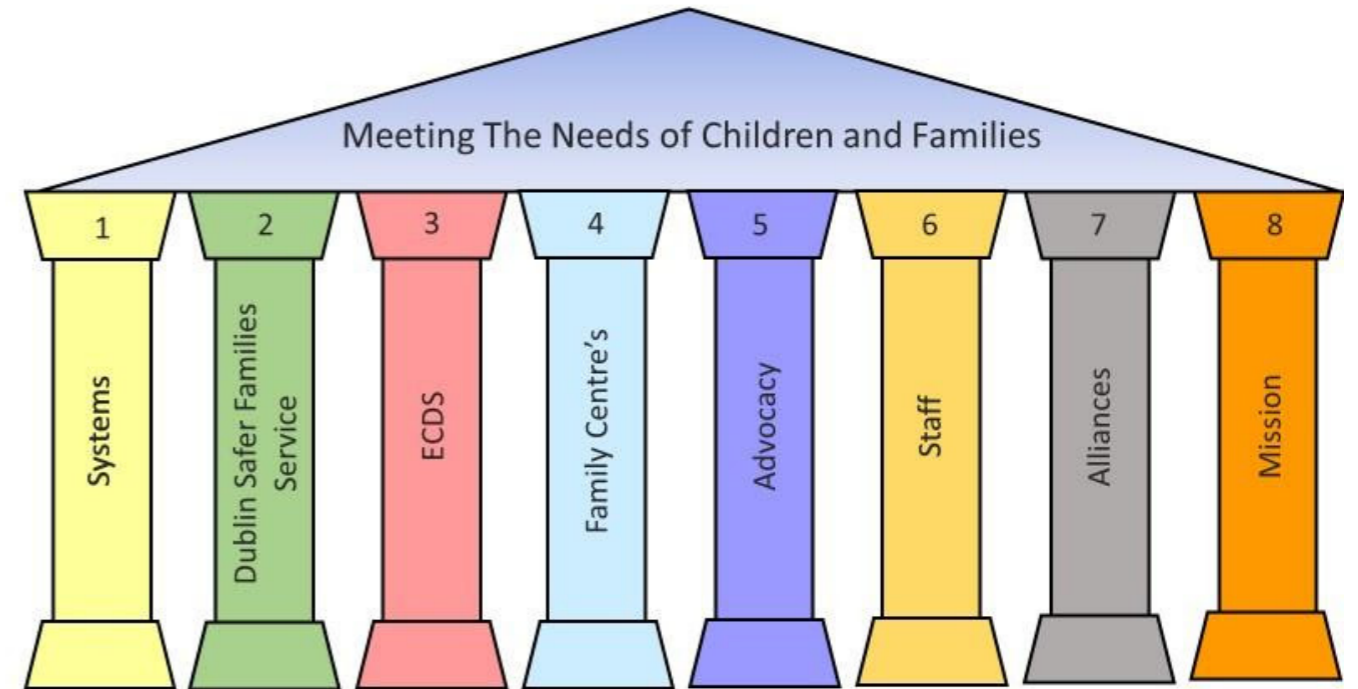
Our Assessment teams work in partnership with Tusla in Dublin North, and Dublin North City to carry out initial assessments with families where a report has been made that a child is at risk of harm. Our staff use TUSLA's national practice model, Signs of Safety, to carry out these initial assessments. Signs of Safety is a strengths-based, safety-organized approach to child protection that is grounded in partnership and collaboration with children, their families, and their wider network of supports. Our specialist assessment Service only accepts referrals from Tusla Social Work Departments.

Where we are



Our Strategic Plan

Supporting families, changing lives



Strategic Pillar 1	Build appropriate infrastructure and support systems
Strategic Pillar 2	Consolidate and Expand Dublin Safer Families Service
Strategic Pillar 3	Consolidate and Expand Early Childhood Development Services
Strategic Pillar 4	Develop and Expand Therapeutic Child and Family Support Services
Strategic Pillar 5	Develop and Integrate Communications and Advocacy Strategies
Strategic Pillar 6	Develop and Support Staff Wellbeing, Training and Development
Strategic Pillar 7	Develop and Build Appropriate Strategic Alliances
Strategic Pillar 8	Secure the sustainability of the Daughters of Charity Child and Family Services as a mission of the Daughters of Charity Innovation during

Innovation during Covid

The staff and management of the Service demonstrated great agility and innovation during 2020 which was supported by developments in ICT. All centres began to develop and collect resources to support other professionals and our children and families and these were made available on our website in the designated 'Covid hub' section as outlined below:

Professional Resources	Self-care for professionals, mental health at work, increasing safety for families during Covid, Capacitar Resources and Trauma related resources
Parenting Resources	Useful numbers, play activities for children, cyber safety & parenting tips
Children and Teen resources	What we do, you tube videos, CBT, Systemic Therapy, supports for teens and fun activities for teens)
Wellbeing Resources	Working from home, mental health and anxiety links and physical health to include yoga links for adults and kids

"I would not have got through it without the remote visits, phone calls and packs you gave us" (A parent)

"You have been a constant in our lives this year when I was at my lowest. Thank you from the bottom of my heart" (A parent)

Increasing safety for families during Covid 19

All of our Services continued working throughout the Pandemic and safety for families was of paramount importance. Remote working practices such as online meetings, phone sessions, text messages, Walk & Talk and other initiatives ensured we continued to meet the needs of children and families during the crisis.

From the start, DoCCFS deployed significant Health and Safety measures and PPE to all our Centres and ECDS. This included Hand Sanitising stations and signage in line with Government Guidelines, our Return to Work Policies and Planning and increased adherence to procedures and safeguards to protect both staff and Children and Families attending the Service.

A pod system was generated for ECDS and cleaning procedures were significantly increased across the Service. Buildings received regular and required anti-virus using a fogging and mist system while additional Policies, Guidance and Procedures such as monitoring checklists were regularly updated and rolled out to all staff.

Communications during Covid

As part of our Covid Response Plan, DoCCFS increased its External Communications across a number of platforms. This included the regular data reporting of the Service attendance figures as well as key outputs during the crisis being shared on Twitter and the DoCCFS page on LinkedIn.

Dublin Safer Families service developed an online, remote training for Professionals on Systematic Responses to Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control. The training looks at how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the dynamics of domestic abuse within families, how this impacts on children, and how we as professionals can support all members of the family in these challenging times.

Assessment Service

Strategic Pillar 4

At a Glance

2019	2020
463 Adults, 518 children supported	400 Adults, 567 children supported
205 Initial assessments completed	211 Initial assessments completed
Categories of risk at referral for Initial Assessment	
Emotional abuse 26%	Emotional abuse 25%
Physical abuse 28%	Physical abuse 27%
Neglect 17%	Neglect 10%
Welfare 29%	Welfare 38%

"It all worked out well because we have learned, implemented and grown as parents in every respect after the shock of the process. We appreciated guidance and help. Thank you." (Both Parents)

Signs of Safety – a different way of working.

Covid 19 brought a significant shift in the manner in which we completed our Initial Assessments with families. Gone were face to face meetings in our Centres, Health Centres, and Schools and in came zoom, WhatsApp, Video calls, and MS teams. It was a new world of communication, one in which we did not have reports from others who observe children in the normal course of a child's day, at school, activities, or playing with friends and neighbours. We grappled with new ways of working and overcame the challenges working alongside our partner organisation, TUSLA.

While initially the shift felt huge it quickly became apparent that our new ways of working and communicating were of benefit to families. They engaged more quickly in the assessments when able to speak with us from their homes online, and remotely. They no longer had to take mornings or afternoons off work or find babysitters to physically come and meet us. Gathering the child's support network, a crucial element of the Signs of Safety model, has occasionally proved challenging in the past. With the new ways of working remotely, we found networks easier to arrange and easier to gather. Working with children online, particularly young children, was a challenge and SoS tools such as 'My Three Houses and our own 'My Day' were adapted. These adapted tools lent themselves to remote

working and most children engaged well and quickly. With faster engagement by parents and the children's support network, and the ability to capture the child's voice online, we were able to complete Initial Assessments more quickly.

SoS is a model with a core focus on safety for children and we found families were happy to take part in safety focussed ways of working that allowed them to protect themselves from Covid 19. If a home visit was required, the Family Workers completed Covid questionnaires with the families by phone or online prior to the visit and this helped reduce everyone's fear of transmission and created a focus on staying safe. Seeing our focus on safety around the virus helped the families understand our work was always about helping them keep their children safe.

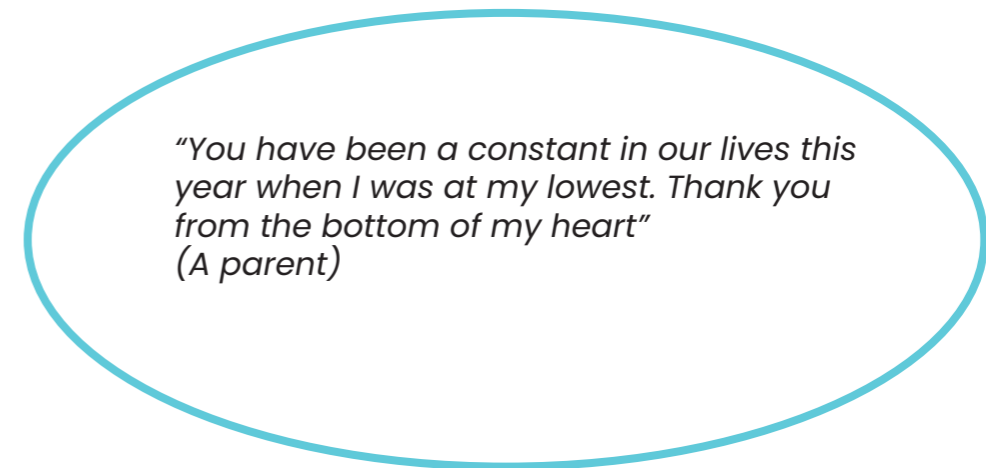
Adversity for children and families resulting in child protection reports

Child Protection and Welfare notifications to TUSLA from across the Service.

2019	2020
Total 274 Families – 429 children affected	Total 326 Families – 537 children affected
Categories of risk of harm to children	
Sexual abuse 8%	5%
Welfare 32%	39%
Emotional Abuse 27%	35%
Neglect 9%	7%
Physical abuse 24%	14%

Family adjustment to government regulations resulted in children at home due to school closures, isolation for children and their families, and increased financial pressures. Situations of poor and acrimonious relationships between parents and within families were further exaggerated and gave rise to an increase in reporting risk of harm in the Welfare and Emotional Abuse categories. These categories together accounted for 74% of all notifications to TUSLA Social Work Departments during 2020.

In addition to the notifications sent to TUSLA, our Centres internally recorded concerns for children whose situation was such that there might be future risk of harm and need for Social Work intervention. These children and families were closely monitored across our Services and our centres and staff provided appropriate supports to help ensure their safety and welfare. When necessary, these concerns were escalated to the Social Work Department in the form of a Child Protection and Welfare Report.



Dublin Safer families Service (DSFS)

Strategic Pillar 4

At a Glance

2019	2020
109 Families received a service, 218 adults, 84 children	125 Families received a service, 182 adults and 65 children.
Coercive control is primary reason for referral	Coercive control is primary reason for referral
1376 Sessions attended	1816 Sessions attended
73% increase in referrals during Covid 19	

“When we played games, I liked that I was able to be honest because no one else knew what I was talking about. I liked coming because she (Family Worker) is kind and I feel better now.” (A child)

Dublin Safer Families Service managing Safety during Covid 19

We have seen, throughout this Covid 19 Pandemic, our clients showing the most extraordinary resilience in the most difficult circumstances and how a little innovation and adaptability from professional services such as ourselves can make a difference to meeting their individual needs. Ensuring safety for family members, adult and child, where there is or has been domestic abuse, is of paramount importance in ensuring present and future welfare. As we witnessed Covid 19 magnify the impact of domestic abuse and increase the risk for victims, our Family Workers sought new ways to ensure safety was assessed and safety needs were met.

Lockdown meant victims could not easily escape from their abusers and for children this often meant staying in their bedrooms for prolonged periods of time without the relief of the usual outlets of schools, activities and clubs. Children feared being overheard talking to their Family Worker and that being overheard would lead to further abuse. Wearing face masks during sessions was difficult for some children as crying through the mask magnified their distress, nor could they see their Family Worker’s facial expressions. For these children and the adult victims in their family, Covid 19 meant feeling abandoned, isolated, anxious, and fearful and Family Workers sought and found new ways of supporting them. Family Workers stayed available out of hours and were even more flexible than usual about keeping in touch by whatever means possible,

whether phone, WhatsApp, Video calls, Zoom and so on. Sessions took place in bedrooms, cars, garages, bathrooms with the shower flowing, or walking to the shop or park. Anywhere the victim felt safe became a place for the Family Worker to meet, to check in, and to plan how to keep safe from their abuser.

Safety for every family member is always the main priority and focus of Dublin Safer Families Service. The impact of Covid 19 Pandemic meant work with adults and children had to be conducted via phone or Zoom resulting in a need to re-evaluate how we could best assure safety in these difficult times. Susanne (name changed for confidentiality) is a mother who is living with a violent husband and their three children. Her engagement during 2020 was typical of the difficulties that Covid presented.

The risk to Susanne was assessed as ‘Threat of Death’ and she had been attending weekly sessions and had reached a point where she had decided to leave with the children to ensure her and their safety. Susanne wanted her children to grow up in a home where they did not feel frightened, where they could feel safe and happy. Covid meant face to face sessions were no longer possible and it was also not safe for Susanne to have phone sessions in the house as her husband lived in the family home. Because her husband monitored her phone, the Family Worker would text

Susanne to check if she was okay and if she could talk (Susanne kept the phone on her person at all times on silent). Susanne often spoke with her Family Worker while sitting in her car in the supermarket car park before she did her shopping. These sessions varied in length but proved to be invaluable as they allowed Susanne to continue to be supported while she managed her safety and that of the children. Susanne said the sessions have helped by providing a different narrative to the controlling narrative she was used to from her husband and she felt that without the sessions her determination and resolve to leave would have lessened.

The outcome for Susanne and the children is that they were able to leave the home safely and begin to address the impact of the violence and abuse they suffered. The outcome for Susanne's husband and the children's father is that through his engagement with DSFS he is acknowledging that he is accountable for his violently abusive and coercive behaviour and his responsibilities as a father and husband.

1085.5 hours of training professionals in the sector
780.5 hours prior to Covid 19 and 305 hours delivered during the pandemic

DSFS are committed to interagency collaboration and provided training to agencies across the sector including Tusla, An Garda Síochána, Social Workers, Social Work Students, Public Health Nurse Students, Initial Assessment Workers, Family Support Teams, Academics and Students at Trinity College Dublin, and Barnardos Advisory Committee, Tipperary. Those who attended said they found the trainings really beneficial, especially around detailed safety planning and understanding the dynamics of coercive control.

"We use your service quite a lot, it is a pleasure dealing with you and your team when we have queries, or to discuss a potential new referral or indeed to have input from your team on various aspects of Domestic Violence." (Social Worker)

Early Childhood Development Service (ECDS)

Strategic Pillar 3

At a Glance

2019	2020
429 children attended	357 children attended
151 transitioned to National School	116 transitioned to National School
134 English was not their first language	121 English was not their first language
86 children with additional needs	106 children with additional needs

January to March

Government regulations implemented in response to Covid 19 resulted in our Preschools closing on the 12th of March 2020 and re-opening for mornings only in June. Throughout this first Covid lockdown our managers and staff continued to provide interventions for children and families through mobile phones and other devices, through distribution of art and craft supplies, and by distribution of food packs. Between March and June staff displayed great creativity and innovation in providing support.

Lockdown - What we did together though apart

School programmes went online, WhatsApp groups were established and we continued to support the children's development and successful transition to National School. Staff made recordings of themselves reading stories and demonstrating activities, doing nature walks, playing musical instruments, and singing songs. Exercise sessions were hosted on line to help keep children amused and active. The Preschool curriculum was moved online with children using the arts and crafts distributed to their homes by staff. Families and children continued to interact with our staff by sharing photos and videos of the children through social media. Every family was contacted, every child reached out to in creative and sometimes old-fashioned ways. Postcards and letters were written and children encouraged to reply. Certificates of achievement for washing hands, for staying indoors and for catching coughs and sneezes were created and awarded. Every child's Birthday was celebrated with a card and small present and throughout the lockdown the phones lines were constantly busy between staff and parents and staff and managers.

June to December

At the end of June, 2020, the provision of the ECDS services on-site posed challenges regarding the setting up of pod systems, additional cleaning, and strict adherence to all health and safety Covid Guidelines. Despite our efforts we had confirmed cases but these were few in number and our vigilance, continuous cleaning and personal responsibility procedures, meant we had no transmissions from the confirmed cases. 2020 was a year like no other but by Christmas we had become used to working differently and Santa visited the children in a socially distanced way.

"Thanks so much, I am so relieved as she has not been anywhere since all this began. We don't even go to play centres" (A mother)

Helping families who were isolated and struggling financially

Social Isolation became apparent for some families when parents explained how during these lockdowns their child had no other social interaction with their peers other than through the ECDS. Our Centres responded by continuing to enrol new children, giving them hope and linking with them even if it was remotely. For some parents social isolation led to mental health difficulties and staff were able to connect these parents with TUSLA's Family Support Services. For all parents, staff provided a listening ear and ongoing contact though phone and video calls while ECDS teachers encouraged physical exercises in online classes and provided ways for parents to engage in mindfulness and wellness activities. Funding from CYPSC was availed of to provide food parcels, and information on financial support was circulated. Some families experienced job losses and some went back to college to retrain in another skill and a mammy made us a "Buddy Bench" and we were extremely happy to support her local start up business.

Children with Additional Needs and where English was not their first language

An increased number of children presented with traits of Autistic Spectrum Disorder or significant Speech and Language difficulties. Early Intervention programmes for Psychology, Speech and Language, and Occupational Therapy Services ceased to operate during Covid 19, or wait-times were extended. In one centre, children who were waiting from Sept 2019 were still waiting for an initial meeting with Speech and Language in Dec 2020. The ECDS responded with increased urgency and advocacy for these children's needs to be met. Across the ECDS, and despite lockdown with parents who did not speak English, children where English was not their first language were helped by staff using language development programmes and most were fluent when they graduated to National School.

"She became more sociable and well-integrated with other children. I would like to thank all the staff very much for your attention, your patience, tolerance for my daughter." (A mother)

Family Centres Service (FC)

At a Glance

2019	2020
1046 Families supported	908 Families supported
1425 Children supported	1238 Children supported
825 Cases completed and closed	675 Cases completed and closed
22049 Sessions completed	23217 Sessions completed (5% increase)
First Five primary reasons for referral for both 2019 and 2020 making up 60% of all referrals received	
Emotional Wellbeing and Anxiety	
Emotional Support	
Parenting	
Behavioural Difficulties	
Parental Separation	

When Covid 19 governmental restrictions were introduced our Family Centres remained open online, over the phone, and with Walk and Talk sessions. The following are some examples of how therapeutic work continued in our Family Centres.

A Parent's Experience

I have truly benefitted from the help and advice from my Family Worker. She is a great listener and provided me with all the help I needed when I was feeling sometimes confused and overwhelmed. The walks and stops at the coffee shops have helped me form a routine to leave the house and enjoy things outside my home, a space where I can talk and be myself. All these have really helped me to make positive changes and decisions on the things that held me back, one day at a time. My children have also enjoyed going on walks and chatting. During Covid 19, the relaxation and breathing exercises introduced to me have truly helped to bring calm and reconnection with each other, the relaxation and breathing exercises helped me a lot with my anxiety and was something I always looked forward to. The girls have also enjoyed the relaxation and breathing exercise experience, they said it took their mind off school stress and their phones, which is good. They also said they enjoyed seeing me enjoy the moment and how much it has helped me, so they are willing to continue and possibly make it a family weekly time. The techniques have helped and are still helping me when I am feeling stressed and dealing with difficult issues from when I was a kid. I have enjoyed time with my Family Worker and she has helped me come a long way.

"A great service for helping families. A lovely caring environment which has provided brilliant help for our daughter in overcoming her anxieties"
 (A parent)

A case study of support for a child in care 9-year-old Simon (not his real name)

At the time of allocation of a Family Worker for Simon, the country was in a Level 3 lockdown due to Covid 19. The foster carers were very happy to receive support as they had lots of questions and concerns about Simon's social and emotional development. They were offered immediate parenting support and Simon was offered individual therapeutic sessions to follow.

Play Therapy was requested to help Simon understand and explore his anger and manage his emotions and this was agreed despite the difficulties of using an online forum. Through games and activities, the work has focused on processing Simon's experience of foster care, helped him explore his feelings about his early childhood experiences, built his social skills, and supported his emotional regulation strategies and techniques. Sessions were also held where the Family Worker and Simon just played games and this has promoted positive, playful and joyful interactions for him to experience. Practicing breathing exercises and boxing a punch bag were skills that Simon developed to help reduce his anger and stress, while puppet and imaginary play helped him process his early experiences by exploring themes of family relationships, good versus bad,

conflict resolution, and acceptance. The therapeutic relationship is hugely important and fundamental for the support to be effective and for the child's healing. The Family Worker was unsure how it would go as it was a new way of working for everyone. Three parenting sessions, twenty individual sessions and three review meetings later we are happy to report that it is working and working well and Simon and his Family Worker have established a positive therapeutic relationship over the course of the work that is helping him progress.

Since starting the work, the foster carers have shown a greater understanding of the impact of Simon's early adverse childhood experiences and have learnt and implemented new ways of responding and supporting his emotional and behavioural needs. This, combined with the therapeutic sessions have enabled the foster carers to identify many positive changes in Simon's behaviour and both foster parents report that he is much happier, he is less angry, his relationship and interactions with his siblings on access are more positive and.....he plays more!

Walking and Talking

Staff showed creativity and innovation in delivering sessions and carried them out in a number of ways. Walk and Talk sessions were created and delivered to meet the needs of teenagers who found it challenging to engage via Zoom. Outdoor support sessions incorporating sports coaching and physical activity become an invaluable resource during lockdown. One teenage client acknowledged how his Family Worker exited normal work practices with ease and expressed his gratitude for the time given to him during the challenges posed by Covid.

While lower tempo and meditative methods have become popular of late, we have found that energy-based activities are very much needed for developing male teens. In between such activity, deep and meaningful conversations have been had that may not have occurred in a warm, quiet room. Going forward we will continue to bring this way of working into our practice. However, we will refrain from calling it Eco therapy with the teenagers.....instead it will be called Walk & Talk.

Emerging needs for Families during Covid 19

The greatest Pandemic of our time showed no boundaries, social class, gender, or race. Some families told us they were experiencing loneliness and anxiety, children were missing their friends, homes were places of isolation and fear of a virus that could kill. Parents found it hard to find a place to talk without their children wanting to join the online sessions. Some parents worried about family finances, children worried about their elderly relatives.

Some parents and children who, in the past, would have not engaged with our Service due to social anxiety, transportation difficulties, or confidence issues, suddenly began to engage in the safety of their own environment, building up their skills to overcome their difficulties along the way. Parents were thankful for the continued support provided by our staff and showed their appreciation by attending sessions in a 'new way' and trusting us to lead in relation to using technology to deliver this support.

"I find this service very helpful, I get bad thoughts and know someone is always there." (A child)

HR - Investing in Staff

Strategic Pillar 6



It is no exaggeration to say that 2020 was a year that brought a high degree of uncertainty, anxiety and unprecedented, fast-past change across our Services. Covid 19 had a significant impact on how the service was delivered but thankfully our staff were largely spared the most extreme effects of the virus. Our initial response to the Government guidelines was to move our Services to remote working and this continued, in some form or another, over the course of 2020. Our staff showed a great deal of resilience, innovation and creativity providing a fully remote, or later a hybrid, service to children and families. Staff engaged with various best practice training programmes to ensure that safety of colleagues and families was a priority. We implemented best practice training from various sources such as HSE LanD, Legal Island and from IBEC.

In addition to ensuring we adapted our premises, we met government safety guidelines by appointing a Lead Worker

Representative in each of the Centres.

There was comprehensive training and support in place for Lead Workers Representatives, and indeed for all staff, to ensure we were fully informed about the risks of Covid 19 and to ensure we implemented robust safety and control measures. We adhered to the Government guidelines as they evolved through the year and tapped into the various resources made available by state and by community sources (e.g. HSA guidelines and checklists).

We provided various supports to staff to help with the transition to home working. We introduced ICT and communication tools such as Zoom, Webex and Microsoft Teams to interact both internally and externally. We set up a Remote Working Project Team and collaborated across the Service to produce a number of support leaflets to make the transition to remote working easier for all. A key element of our Wellbeing Strategy during 2020

was to ensure that staff were supported through the various challenges presented by Covid 19. To keep Covid out of our Centres, we treated any Covid related absences as a special category illness and we signed onto the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme in linewith departmental guidelines.

Our HR Café meetings almost exclusively focussed on supporting staff through the individual challenges presented by Covid 19. From helping staff work from home whilst parenting, to helping staff cope with the lack of normal support structures, there were many such challenges. For one welcome initiative we tapped into expertise of trained staff and made regular Capacitar wellbeing sessions available to all. Our Mindful Monday and later Thankful Thursday were, and continue to be, a great success and compliment the Employee Assistance Programme service provided by Inspire Workplaces.

Covid 19 also brought challenges in areas such as recruitment, induction, and training & development. These challenges were addressed by adapting flexible working and embracing technology. Interestingly our staff absenteeism was slightly lower than previous years despite the pandemic. Staff turnover was similar to previous years and we had mixed results inducting new staff into the Service during the period of remote working. Covid 19 has brought significant challenges to the organisation but with the growth mindset that is infused through the Service we are learning to meet these challenges in creative, progressive and supportive ways.



The Investing in Children Award recognises and celebrates examples of imaginative and inclusive practice. The Award is achieved by Services that can demonstrate a commitment to dialogue with young people that leads to change. In 2020 Arklow Springboard Family Centre and Mosney ECDS achieved the award adding to the five other Centres who had achieved the award previously. The remaining Centres are exploring how to attain the award and have begun the process by engaging their children's imagination in finding new ways to achieve the award while working remotely.

Feedback from TUSLA

Following Arklow Springboard Family Centre's application for renewal of the award, Avril Dooley, Participation and Partnership Officer, Tusla wrote,

"It was clear from meeting with the children and young people that they were fully involved in decision making in their groups and one-to-one sessions. Both the children and young people wanted help with stress and anxiety and pottery and the Working It Out group was organised as a result".

"The children and young people also direct their own one-to-one sessions and get the support they need. When asked should Arklow Springboard receive the Investing in Children Membership

Award™ for the second time the answer was a resounding "Yes" with the young people giving the below reasons: "They deserve it" "Usually listened to" "Always listened to here. I have school problems, no one listens to me there" "All our ideas are considered thoroughly" "Listen to everyone especially your feelings and opinions" "It's good here and all, they're all nice" The young people also stated that the staff "all help", "all are nice" and "the minute I walk in they ask me do I want a coffee, they know me".

"For these reasons, I would like to recommend that Arklow Springboard receives the Investing in Children Membership Award™ for the second time".

Advocating for children, working partnership

Strategic Pillar 7

Formal Submissions to Public Consultations throughout 2020 sought to articulate our concerns and act as the voice of the children and families who attend our Services.

Review of the Child Care Act 1991 (DCYA)
Public Consultation on the Workforce Development Plan for the Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Sector in Ireland (DCYA)
Public Consultation on Future Funding of Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare in Ireland (DCYA)
Submission to Child and Family Agency Corporate Plan 2021 – 2023 (TUSLA)
Youth Justice Strategy Submission (Dept of Justice and Equality)



Research Informed Organisation – Measuring Change for Children and Families.

More pro-social behaviour.
 Less conflict between parent and child.
 Improved parental mental health and wellbeing.

DoCCFS as a research-informed organisation is working in collaboration with the Trinity Research in Childhood Centre (TRiCC), TCD. Since 2015 we have been working with Irish Universities to analyse data collected from children and parents who attend our Services using Outcomes Measures that are validated, robust and reliable. Our aim is always to improve how we meet the needs of the parents and children who come through our doors, or that we meet in their homes and in their communities.

Collection and analysis of data continued in 2020 despite the disruption of Covid 19. Analysis of the data revealed the most statistically significant findings for 2020 were in line with those of 2019, therefore lending weight to the evidence that our interventions make a difference. In 2019 and 2020 the measures found that children with the highest level of need displayed more pro-social behaviour following attendance at our Family Centres and there was less conflict and improved closeness between parent and child. Parental mental health and well-being showed statistically significant improvement during attendance in both

2019 and 2020. As a research informed organisation, our focus is to ensure that we share this learning with other Services and Agencies and the wider world and provide a roadmap for measuring outcomes for children and families. Dissemination has been carried out through webinars, reports, and academic outputs. Our research has been used as the basis of articles published in the British Journal of Social Work, 'Outcomes for families referred to Family Centres: Using validated instruments to chart changes in psychological functioning, relationships and children's coping strategies over time' (Spratt, Swords and Vilda, 2020) and 'Adverse Childhood Experiences: Developments in Trauma and Resilience Aware Services' (Spratt and Kennedy, 2020). Additionally, as part of our work with TCD and as a site of research we are also engaging with PhD students who are using our organisation as a research site.

Corporate Support Service

Strategic Pillar 1

DoCCFS Identified the need for increased focus on, and advancement of, the Corporate Business Support Areas within the organisation as a strategic pillar of ‘Supporting Families, Changing Lives’. Delivery of Pillar 1- Corporate Support, enables the organisation to meet the needs of external compliance and improve internal ways of working to support Service needs and staff requirements. Areas of focus include solidifying policy, documentation and processes across

Governance and Compliance, Audit and Risk, Human Resources, Communications, Health and Safety and ICT.

With the recruitment of a Corporate Support Senior Manager in early 2020, funded by the Daughters of Charity for a 3 year period, Strategic Goals within all areas of focus were advanced with a view to completion over the lifetime of the Strategy until 2024.

PILLAR 1 – CORPORATE SUPPORT - KEY OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS 2020:



ICT Transformation

In 2019 an ICT ROADMAP was developed which assessed the overall requirements for ICT across all DoCCFS Service sites inclusive of the central management office. Solutions were proposed across all software and hardware and detailed in a comprehensive ICT Transformation Programme. In 2020 Covid brought an urgency to rolling out these solutions and the Service responded by prioritizing delivery across a range of areas such as, devices deployed to staff, Office 365 deployed across the organisation, increased helpdesk support for staff and enhanced security across all devices and systems.

ICT Covid Specific Response: Enabling Remote Working

When Covid lockdowns began to restrict staff movements with ‘work from home’ requests from the Irish Government, DoCCFS maintained services for children and families by rolling out new ICT software and devices such as phones and laptops were delivered directly to staff homes. Family Centres remained open throughout the pandemic as newly enabled software gave remote access to office PCs allowing staff access to shared drives, documents, and our policies. MS Teams was deployed across the Service to support staff remotely connecting for remotely connecting for internal and external meetings and therapeutic sessions.

Data Collection and Key Outcomes and Outputs

Remote access enabled ongoing utilisation of our CRM Quartz database collection and reporting system. This allowed staff working remotely with children and families to complete session notes, and for managers to complete metric reports for TUSLA. Our database was used to establish patterns and trends and highlight areas of need and this allowed us to maximize the use of our resources when formulating our responses to the pandemic across the Service.

Health and Safety

DoCCFS developed Organisational Protocols and safeguards were put in place to respond to the various level lockdowns issued by the Government as a response to Covid 19. These included GDPR processing of Health Data and updated Health and Safety Policies. A range of Organisational Procedures and policies were also developed to support staff adapt to the ‘new normal’ and to reduce the spread of the Virus in the workplace to protect our staff and the children and families using our centres.

In the ECDS a Pod system was implemented for childcare in coordination with parents and child requirements. Safety measures were put in place, such as deep cleaning, signage, handwashing stations in all offices, and PPE availability. A rota system was established for staff in Centres and policies were developed for ‘dealing with a suspected case’. Staff Training was delivered on breaking the chain of infection and incident management and Covid Induction Training was rolled out across the organisation. Covid Checklists specific to DoCCFS business requirements and in line with public health guidelines were deployed and completed throughout the organisation and monitored by Senior Management.

A Return to Work Organisational Plan which provided a holistic approach to engagement with staff and addressing the needs of the organisation was developed and a reporting framework was put in place with weekly reporting of mitigating circumstances of Covid cases. Regular communications were established with HSE and localised Covid Response agencies. Lead Worker Representative training and a tiered feedback system with key staff was put in place and operated on a bi-weekly basis. Feedback has been received by staff and factored into any change processes. Across the Service all new Policies, protocols, procedures, and safeguards were rolled out to staff by regular communications and meetings between and with management.

Energy Use

SEAI is currently analysing the extent to which the COVID-19 emergency has had an impact on energy consumption in the public sector. SEAI are considering how the data submitted for 2020 should be interpreted in the context of the 2020 energy efficiency target and how it should be presented in the annual report that SEAI will publish later in 2021. In 2020, DoCCFS continued to seek new measures to reduce the overall energy consumption and this was supported by remote working practices and reduced footfall across the Service. The DoCCFS are continuing to working towards reducing energy consumption through a range of measures including the use of energy efficient appliances and computers and staff energy awareness and training. Plans for 2021 are to continue to improve energy performance and reduce consumption, carry out energy efficient repairs, provide staff training with the help of SEAI, and incorporate energy renewable technology.

Complaints and Compliances

The Service received no complaints during the year 2020

All inspections carried out reached full compliance.

Tusla Preschool Inspection	Environmental Health Inspection
Goldenbridge ECDS	Goldenbridge ECDS
St Vincent’s ECDS	St Vincent’s ECDS
St Joseph’s ECDS	St Joseph’s ECDS
	Tír na nÓg ECDS

Our Funders

TUSLA	Daughters of Charity
Health Service Executive – Lottery Grant	Dept of Social Protection
POBAL	Mosney
Wicklow County Council	Croke Park Community Fund
Dept of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. International Protection Accommodation Service	Community Donations



Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service Limited
(A company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital)

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
Year Ended 31 December 2020

	2020 €	2019 €
Income		
Tusla - Child and Family Agency	5,988,153	5,830,429
Other income	1,236,183	1,512,492
Total income	7,224,336	7,342,921
Expenditure		
Remuneration	5,938,720	6,109,217
Infrastructural & Maintenance Costs	522,984	462,271
Service Provision Costs	103,833	177,515
Information technology & Communication and Administration Costs	403,406	415,188
Insurance, Legal & Professional and Accountancy	107,771	165,684
Recruitment & Development Costs	35,714	40,153
Depreciation / Amortisation	-	-
Total expenditure	7,112,428	7,370,028
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	111,908	(27,107)

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BALANCE SHEET
Year Ended 31 December 2020

	Notes	2020 €	2019 €
Tangible fixed assets	1	-	-
Current Assets			
Debtors	2	164,731	539,542
Bank		2,448,550	1,984,506
		<u>2,613,281</u>	<u>2,524,048</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	3	<u>(1,133,175)</u>	<u>(1,155,850)</u>
Net current assets		<u>1,480,106</u>	<u>1,368,198</u>
Net assets		<u>1,480,106</u>	<u>1,368,198</u>
Capital and Reserves			
Income and expenditure account	4	<u>1,480,106</u>	<u>1,368,198</u>



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Notes

1	Tangible fixed assets		
	This reflects the written down value of a motor vehicle owned by the company.		
2	Debtors		
		2020	2019
		€	€
	Amounts falling due within one year:		
	Debtors	164,731	539,542
		<u>164,731</u>	<u>539,542</u>
3	Creditors		
		2020	2019
		€	€
	Amounts falling due within one year:		
	Trade creditors	70,310	71,374
	Other creditors and accruals	368,989	391,267
	PAYE/PRSI	143,434	135,979
	Superannuation - Tusla	7,616	-
	Additional superannuation contribution - Tusla	9,075	-
	Deferred income and restricted funds	533,751	557,230
		<u>1,133,175</u>	<u>1,155,850</u>
4	Reserves		
		2020	2019
		€	€
	Opening balance 1 January	1,368,198	1,395,305
	Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	111,908	(27,107)
	At end of year	<u>1,480,106</u>	<u>1,368,198</u>

Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service Limited
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Notes

5 Related party transactions

During 2020 contributions from the Daughters of Charity to the Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service amounted to €394,420 (2019: €620,190).

Amounts due at year end - 2020: €130,538, (2019: €536,152). Any amounts due at year end 2020 were paid subsequent to year end.

Contact us

<https://www.docchildandfamily.ie/>