



United Nations
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NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

- UNESCO Chair in
- Children, Youth and Civic Engagement
- Ireland
- **CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE**

Building the Pillars : It takes a Village to Raise a Child
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Reframe

It takes a complex but coherent and cohesive system of protection and support to ensure that children and young people's rights to have their views taken into account, to be cared for safely within their families, and to realise their potential are realised?

Some of the questions – how do we

- ◎ Begin to think and operate as a cohesive system of support for children and families?
- ◎ Ensure the support we offer is preventative and evidence based/informed rather than a political reaction to media coverage of the latest crisis and based on long term sustainability, rather than the election cycle?
- ◎ Ensure that scarce resources are devoted to timely and appropriate help received by families using multi-agency approaches?
- ◎ Develop effective inspection and monitoring systems that are quality focused and not driven by crude numerical calculations?
- ◎ Develop and embed a culture of implementation, rather than being policy rich and service poor?
- ◎ Maintain a concern with process whilst developing a focus on outcomes that we can measure and demonstrate progress towards?

Source of some answers

- Rights Based Approach to child protection and family support.
- Whole Child Whole system approach to working with children, young people and their families.

Current Opportunities for Reform

- Momentum for change following reports on institutional and clerical abuse.
- Children First Guidance has just been reviewed, Child Protection Handbook has been issued.
- Plan to place the Guidance on a statutory footing and legislation on failure to report an arrestable offence against a child or vulnerable adult.
- Failures in the CP system highlighted by recent reports – now a systematic review process in place.
- Structural changes, including the creation of a Child Protection and Family Support Agency – including the development of a national standardised service delivery framework.
- HIQA National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children.
- Referendum on the rights of the child.
- Further rollout of Children Services Committees.
- Forthcoming successor to the National Children's Strategy.



A Human Rights Based Approach to Child Protection and Family Support

What does this really mean?

How is it different from other
approaches?

The Child and the Family and the Village

- Child invisible within family group, village/system uninvolved.
- Child as object of concern for the village/system, separate from family and families' involvement curtailed.

or

- Child as resilient agent of change and active participant with rights within their family, community and society?

Child Rescue Paradigm

- Model, in which children perceived to be at danger – risk oriented.
- Removed from the scene of danger, and are treated exclusively as individuals with little thought to the essentiality of their connections to family, community, culture, landscape or other aspects of their environment meaningful to them.
- Historically dating from late 18th and early 19th century Europe.
- This approach frequently carries a subtext of disparagement of children's natural and social surroundings, which may be regarded as pernicious.

Bissell et al, http://www.iicrd.org/resources/research_reports/ICPRC1

A Human Rights Based Approach to Child Protection and Family Support – Article 19 UNCRC

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

A Human Rights Based Approach to Child Protection and Family Support

- A child rights approach 'requires a **paradigm shift** away from child protection approaches in which children are perceived and treated as "objects" in need of assistance'
- Children's views must be invited and given due weight as a **mandatory** step at **every point** in a child protection process
- Child protection must begin with proactive prevention – this involves supporting parents and caregivers to understand, embrace and implement good childrearing, based on knowledge of child rights, child development and techniques for positive discipline in order to support families' capacity to provide children with care in a safe environment;

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment 13 (2011)

Are we operating a Human Rights Based Child Protection and Family Support?

- Are policy makers and practitioners trained in human rights based approaches?
- Is our system reflective of our human rights obligations, for example, under the UNCRC? In particular does our understanding of child protection start with prevention and include participation?
- Do children, young people, parents and wider family members experience our system as participatory and empowering of them as rights holders?

Whole Child Whole System Approach

- Provision of services in ways that recognise the extent of children's own capacities, the multiple interlinked dimensions to their lives and the complex mix of informal and formal supports that they draw upon (Agenda for Children's Services, 2007).

Consistent with Rights Based Approach

- This child rights approach is holistic and places emphasis on supporting the strengths and resources of the child him/herself and all social systems of which the child is a part: family, school, community, institutions, religious and cultural systems. (General Comment 13)

A Coordinating framework

- Can provide a common frame of reference and a mechanism for communication amongst government ministries and also for state and civil society actors at all levels with regard to needed measures across the range of measures and at each stage of intervention identified in Article 19.

- It can promote flexibility and creativity and allow for the development and implementation of initiatives led simultaneously by both government and community, but which are nonetheless contained within an overall cohesive and coordinated framework.

Are we operating a whole child whole system approach?

- Do children and families experience services as easily accessed, coherent and connected?
- Is the whole system approach evident at Departmental level?
- Do you as a practitioner feel part of a wider system of support?
- Is there a standardised approach to needs assessment and integrated working?

Coordinating Mechanism?

- Mechanisms have to be explicitly outlined which will ensure effective coordination at central, regional and local levels, between different sectors and with civil society, including the empirical research community (General Comment 13)

National Service Delivery Framework of the Child and Family Support Agency

- The formation of the new agency and the implementation of its NSDF is an opportunity to implement a rights based, whole child, whole system approach with the service delivery framework acting as the coordinating mechanism.
- This could offer the operational integration to complement the strategic coordination of Children's Services Committees.

Area Based Child and Family Support Networks

Building on the learning from existing networks, such as the Ballymun Network. Also YPAR, Jobstown ARM, Sligo ION, Limerick LANS....

- To create a collaborative network of community, voluntary and statutory providers so as to improve access for children and families to support services at all levels of need.
- To operate a case coordination process for families with additional need who require multi-agency intervention but who do not meet the threshold for referral to the Social Work Department under the Children First Guidance (2011).

Ultimately to

Build a complex but coherent and cohesive system of protection and support to ensure all children and young people's rights to be safe and to maximise their potential are realised.

Questions....

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