



# CAAB NEWS



## Message from the Chief Executive Work of CAAB to be Integrated into OMCYA

*Quite ironically, as we were just about to deliver another strand of our objective of supporting the development of inter-agency working, the CAAB learned on Budget Day that it was to be subsumed into the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.*

That this announcement came on the eve of our national conference was particularly deflating to the staff of the Board but did not interfere with the professional running of what was once again an excellent two day event.

One of the major contributions of the CAAB in its short life has been to broaden the engagement on childcare policy, management and delivery issues across the range of sectors dealing with children and families. The make

up of our Board in terms of the influencing capacity of members and the broad experience and enthusiasm of our staff has contributed greatly to meeting this objective.

Our conferences, seminars and network events have been attended by a broad range of service providers and policy makers both from the statutory agencies and NGO's, who have also engaged in the range of committees and working groups which had commenced work and produced a number of worthwhile outputs. I believe that this level of stakeholder engagement is a key ingredient in supporting better outcomes for children and their families. This is a people business and it is critical that those involved can take advantage of all opportunities to share their experience and learning, to take on new learning, to understand one another, to feel listened to and supported so that ultimately they can better influence outcomes for children.

The conference itself was very successful – the summary report is contained in this issue. An agenda of work was outlined which remains to be done.

The OMCYA has been very supportive of the work of the CAAB since its inception and we have fully collaborated on our respective work programmes. I am hopeful that our moving into the OMCYA will achieve the synergy that is intended.

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## New UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement

*We would like to offer our heartiest congratulations to Dr Pat Dolan of NUIG who has been appointed as Professor of Children, Youth and Civic Engagement.*

This new UNESCO Chair has been created to promote an integrated system of research, training, information and documentation in the field of children, youth and civic engagement. It will serve as a means of facilitating collaboration between high-level, internationally

recognised researchers and teaching staff of NUIG and other institutions in Ireland and elsewhere in Europe and North America, and in other regions of the world.

Pat has been a great exponent of family and youth work both as a practitioner and academic for many years and has worked closely with service providers in developing and evaluating new models of service provision.

His appointment to this prestigious position is a great honour for himself and for the NUIG Child and Family Research Centre.

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## Report on CAAB's 2008 National Conference

### More than Rhetoric: Improving Outcomes for Children and Families through Inter-Agency Working

The CAAB's second (and last!) National Conference was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of October. The conference was opened by Barry Andrews TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, sessions were chaired by members of the Board of the CAAB, there were 38 presentations (plenary and break-out) and 245 people attended.

All plenary and breakout presentations are available to download from our website ([www.caab.ie](http://www.caab.ie)). In this Newsletter we provide a brief overview of the plenary presentations (a more detailed conference report will be available before year end providing a summary and links to all of the presentations). We also provide feedback from conference participants on the event and their suggestions for future consideration.

More than 70 completed feedback sheets (a response rate of 32%) were received. The majority of those who completed feedback forms found the plenary sessions and workshops very useful. All respondents indicated that the conference provided useful information, over 90% indicated that the conference provided them with new information and that the information provided would help them when working with children and young people. Over 90% indicated that the conference provided suitable networking opportunities and well over 80% reported that they made new contacts at the conference.

Written comments from participants show that particular value was attached to workshop presentations with practical examples of inter-agency working. Most participants found the conference to be very informative and comprehensive and felt the theme was important, while networking opportunities were also noted as valuable.

Many suggestions were made for future areas to be explored namely; the practicalities of implementing good inter-agency practice, the need for facilitation in this, how to manage resources for this in the current climate, training, leadership and support in the area of inter-agency working, a focus on intra-agency working. Suggestions were also made to focus on how to 'evidence base' work practice. A number of delegates suggested a need to focus on children in homeless and emergency care and particularly to focus on the education sector and its involvement/relationship with other sectors. It is hoped that the above work will continue to support the children's sector to address these issues as the CAAB is subsumed into the OMCYA.

The CAAB would like to thank all involved in the conference for their participation, for the words of encouragement and support provided to staff of the CAAB over the two days, and for their dedication for working to help improve outcomes for children.

## PLENARY SESSION 1



### Children's Services in Ireland: An Evolving Landscape. *Aidan Browne, Chief Executive, Children Acts Advisory Board*

Aidan's presentation provided a snapshot of the changing landscape of children's services in Ireland over recent years. Following the National Children's Strategy 2000 Aidan outlined a very active legislative environment with significant organisational change, particularly in the last five years.

Aidan discussed some of the key trends across the three sectors of justice, welfare and education. Overall, the trends have shown that legislative and organisational changes are having some desired effect on activities. For example, in justice there has been an increase in the number of diversion and restorative justice referrals. In the health and welfare sector, there has been a significant drop off in the amount of children being detained. In the education sector, there has been an increase in the number of home visits and prosecutions notices issued by the NEWB. Nevertheless, systematic evidence on outcomes for children is limited.

Aidan highlighted that there was evidence from agencies that the 'voice of the child' has been taken into consideration and in some cases specific training has been developed around this concept. While many agencies acknowledged the importance of inter-agency working some do not have written protocols in place. In addition, there is an absence of an overall monitoring, review or evaluation process across agencies, inconsistencies in data for the same variable across different years and publications and limited analysis of trends and the drivers of these trends.

## PLENARY SESSION 1



### **Children's Services and Inter-Agency Working: A European Perspective.**

*Daniel Molinuevo, European Social Network*

Daniel's presentation explained that tackling child poverty from a multi-dimensional approach has increasingly become a key priority for the European Union. In 2006 the European Council asked national governments to develop co-ordinated actions in the field of child welfare. As a consequence of this, the focus on inter-agency working has increased across European countries. Daniel explained the needs of disadvantaged children are complex and that different agencies and different levels of government provide different services which creates challenges for service planning and provision.

Daniel provided practical examples of inter-agency working in Europe, looking at specific examples of good practice at the national level in Hungary, regional level in Malta and at a local level in Denmark and Spain. Daniel concluded that: service platforms require ownership, shared vision and values; that service user participation is required at both the management and personal level; and that there is a need for effective and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems.



### **The Contribution of Local Authorities to Inter-Agency Working.**

*Joe Horan, Manager, South Dublin County Council*

Joe opened his address by outlining the benefits of better spatial planning, real community building and the delivery of a lifestyle approach. He highlighted the potential of influencing outcomes through inter-agency co-operation and posed some key questions such as, 'what are we trying to achieve?' and 'is that child being taken into consideration?'. Joe provided the audience with some examples of the practical work South Dublin County Council is involved with. These included the National High Level Group on Children's Services and the National Implementation Group on Traveller's Services. Joe also provided an overview of the 'connect school model' as a practical example of inter-agency working.

Joe emphasised the importance of data sharing and illustrated the importance of a data sharing protocol connecting operational activity to physical space with the potential of connecting diverse communities. He outlined the 'quality of life mapping project' undertaken by South Dublin County Council that reflected the real positive effects of data sharing and information sharing. Joe also informed the audience of an international project 'Linking our community to Butajira & Werabe' that was implemented and supported by South Dublin County Council which he appraised as helping people rediscover community spirit.

## PLENARY SESSION 2



### Inter-Agency Co-operation in Children's Services in Ireland: The Experience of Stakeholders.

*Robert Murphy, Head of Research and Information, CAAB*

Robert's presentation described findings from focus groups hosted by the CAAB with over 100 workers from across the children's sector. The presentation of focus group findings examined participants involvement and understanding of inter-agency co-operation, their experiences of the benefits of and barriers to inter-agency co-operation and their views on what is needed to help improve inter-agency co-operation and to improve outcomes for children.

The research findings are detailed in the presentation and a report on the focus groups will be circulated by the CAAB. Of particular note was the numbers of barriers or obstacles to achieving effective inter-agency co-operation experienced by professionals. In fact more than 20 specific barriers were reported across the four categories of: information barriers; organisational barriers; service barriers; resource barriers. Furthermore, the need for central and organisational support to help overcome these barriers to achieve better outcomes for children was widely expressed.

During the presentation Robert noted that a key message from workers was 'the need *and* desire for positive change in how services are delivered to vulnerable children'. He explained how the CAAB had planned to support positive change by: building an evidence base and expertise in inter-agency co-operation; by providing guidance and assistance on good practice in inter-agency co-operation and by advising the Minister on issues relating to the co-ordinated delivery of services. Details were provided in relation to specific plans for the first two of these three areas (see slides 20 and 21). Robert explained that while the CAAB will no longer be able to undertake this work as an independent body (following the recent government decision to integrate the CAAB into the OMCYA) it was hoped that the planned work would continue under the OMCYA.



### Data Protection in the Context of Inter-Agency Working.

*Gary Davis, Deputy Commissioner, Data Protection Commission*

In this presentation, Gary outlined the guidelines for obtaining, retaining and storing of data. The main focus of the presentation was on achieving the balance between the individual's right to privacy and the rights of society. The need for explicit consent in the sharing of any data was emphasised, except in circumstances where it is prescribed by law or where it may prevent a crime. Gary explained that data sharing is also permitted where it is in the vital interests of the subject. This includes the right to share information vital to the interests to the child. This right however, must be implemented with reference to good practice guidelines in the collection and sharing of data and cannot be relied on for a generalised and ongoing exchange of information.



### Restorative Justice: Lessons for Partnership and Inter-Agency Work.

*Tim Chapman, Senior Consultant, CTC Associates*

Tim provided an overview of the restorative justice process that arose in the north of Ireland as a result of the peace process. He explained that restorative justice is based on human rights, respect and an acknowledgement of the interdependencies of society. Tim highlighted that partnership and co-operation are a prerequisite to make it work. The inclusive, participative and transformative characteristics of the process were outlined emphasising the elements of collaboration that work and what is involved in the facilitation of partnership.

## PLENARY SESSION 3



### **More than the Sum of its Parts? Inter-professional Working in the Education of Children in Public Care.**

*Dr Ruth Sinclair, NCB Northern Ireland*

Ruth described findings from a detailed evaluation of the education of 'looked after children' across three Local Authorities in England. Ruth discussed a number of factors that were found to promote inter-professional working. Namely: commitment to joint working; structures to support joint working; effective working relationships; information sharing; strong leadership and adequate resources.

Ruth concluded that many different changes can each have some effect but that strong positive impacts come from the constructive interaction of a bundle of changes with different foci and at many levels. Ruth therefore concluded that is a combination of factors that can produce 'more than the sum of its parts'.



### **Joining up Children's Services: Safeguarding Children in Multi-Disciplinary Teams.**

*Professor Nick Frost, Leeds Metropolitan University*

Nick described the English 'onion' model (see presentation) for joining up children's services and discussed relevant themes from the research literature. Nick explained how co-location has impacted on confidentiality and sharing of information and on exchanging professional knowledge. He explained the importance of professional perspectives and how experiences have shown that different explanatory models are used by different professionals to understand and intervene in the world.

Nick also discussed professional identify and noted how many practitioners felt that multi-disciplinary teams helped them to maintain their own professional identify while at the same time to gain more knowledge about other agencies and the way that they work. With regard to planning a way forward Nick noted: the importance of planning and team building; that co-location is not a magic wand; the importance of sharing explanatory models and of respecting diversity; and that leadership is a key factor.



### **How to Halve Arrest Rates: An Example of Inter-Agency Working (USA).**

*Wansley Walters, Director,  
Miami Dade County Juvenile Services Department*

Wansley noted that 'People react in the midst of a crisis in a way they rarely do otherwise. And so the juvenile justice stakeholders in Miami-Dade County began to do something that was not common at the time. We began to talk to each other and plan how things could change. Ten years later, things progressed to a degree we never expected. We now have 41% fewer arrests than we had in 1998. The re-arrest rate for juveniles has dropped 78%. Most importantly, we have created a system that allows a child to be treated as an individual and not as a number. We have been designated a national model.'

Wansley explained that 'if you had to sum up the reason for this progress with only one word, that word would be collaboration'. She then discussed seven key factors that enabled the collaboration achieved. These were: the need for a change agent; the importance of gaining agency affiliation and credibility; the need to 'plan like no one needs money' in order to create collaborative opportunities; the need to schedule many, many planning meetings; the importance of 'keeping everyone in their own lane'; the realisation that if you want to change how something is done, be willing to do the necessary work to achieve change; and the necessity to keep the partnership alive.

## PLENARY SESSION 4



### Improving Outcomes through Inter-Agency Working: Insights from the Strength to Strengths Programme.

*Dr Leon Fulcher, International Child and Youth Care Consultant*

Leon outlined seven voices that promote good outcomes for Ireland's children. He pointed to the voice of scholars and researchers that contemplate evidence about whether children are healthy both psychically and mentally, the voice of policy makers communicating an agenda for children's services where young people are supported in active learning and the voice of the media shaping public opinion about children being safe from accidental and intentional harm. Leon also highlighted the voice of service regulators checking to see if children are economically secure and the voice of health, educational and welfare professionals questioning whether children are secure in their physical environments. He included the voice of birth family and kinship carers desiring their children to be a part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community and most importantly, the voice of children themselves.

Leon differentiated between outputs and outcomes; outputs are generated by service production organisations operated by corporate parents and outcomes are achievements shaped through relationships with children and young people during particular times in their lives. Leon pointed out that developmental outcomes for children and young people that make a difference to young people's futures can be supported, nurtured and evaluated from the beginning of each placement, shifting attention towards strengths that children carry with them day to day. Resiliency-building from strength to strengths that address Key Assets for Kids as highlighted in his presentation. Leon advised that the care received by children growing up in their own families is directly impacted by the quality of care rendered to their immediate caregiver. He concluded that improving outcomes for children and young people, through inter-agency working means managing the surprises.



### Marrying Better Outcomes to Reflective Practice.

*Professor Pat Dolan, Director and  
Dr John Canavan, Associate Director,  
Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway*

Although there is a growing interest in matters such as better outcomes for children and fidelity to tried and tested programmes for youth who experience adversity, Pat and John highlighted that the actual processes for service planning and practice implementation tends to be less noticed. In the interest of practice and policy they married the concepts of joint planning and commissioning of services for young people and reflective practice methods and messages. John provided a comprehensive overview of integrated planning for outcomes. He explained that outcome-focused research has emerged due to dissatisfaction with inputs analyses and highlighted the benefits of using this method including, accountability, standards for service development and guides reform and evaluation. John also outlined the potential benefits of integrated planning for outcomes and provided good examples of practice and potential challenges. John concluded that outcomes focus can lead to evidence based models, prevention and later intervention.

Pat expanded on the outcomes approach adopting it to a practical framework. He argued that better outcomes for young people and families who experience severe difficulties will be best delivered by practitioners who engage in theory (know of) skills (know how) and reflective practice (know to). He stressed that mere transplanting of youth work intervention programmes will not suffice if engagement in understanding and working with relationships across 'children to policy' is not seen as of equal importance to fidelity. In conclusion, a willingness to 'try out' informed by outcomes agenda, what is known to work, practice wisdom and using reflective skills was encouraged. Pat summarised that joining the mutual desire for better outcomes as held by planners and practitioner alike is possible and using reflective practice will enhance this.

***The conference included the following breakout sessions:***

**Planning for Solutions: Tower Hamlet's Children's Social Care.** Briege Gilhooly, Child in Need Reviewing Officer.

**Differential Model in Practice? Faint Voice from the Trenches.** Molly Finn, Children and Families Social Work Sligo/Leitrim/West Cavan.

**From Strength to Strengths Shaping Developmental Outcomes for Children in Kinship and Foster Care.** Leon Fulcher, International Child and Youth Care Consultant and Stuart Graham, Database Developer, Kibble Education & Care Centre, Scotland.

**Finding the Pathway to Positive Outcomes: An Interactive Game.** Tim Chapman, Senior Consultant and Howard Jenkinson, Associate Consultant, CTC Associates.

**Strengthening Families – An Inter-Agency Perspective.** Catherine Gill, Senior Probation Officer and Rosemary Fox, Probation Officer, Young Persons Probation.

**Achieving Child and Family Support in Primary School.** Mary Cullen, Project Manager, Child and Family Support Project, Mounttown (NYFP).

**Reflections from Northern Ireland's Children of Prisoners.** Robin Scott, Director of Prison Fellowship, Northern Ireland.

**Insights from Inter-Agency Training.** Deirdre Bigley, Project Manager, Copping On.

**Advocating for Children and Young People in Care – Working Together for Better Outcomes.** Jennifer Gargan, Director and Larissa Comiskey, Children Rights & Participation Officer, IAYPIC.

**The Strengthening Families Programme, Ballymun.** Catherine McGowan, Network Coordinator, Youngballymun.

**Towards Integration: An Explorative Study of Inter-disciplinary Collaboration in Preventative and Intervention Services for Children.** Fergus Comerford, Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown.

**Creative Tensions: The Introduction of the Private Sector to Foster care in Ireland, Fostering First Ireland's Journey Towards Partnership within the Social Care Arena.** Steve Jacques, Director and Miriam Uhlemann, Assistant Director, Fostering First Ireland.

**Building and Maintaining Partnerships Across Children's Services.** Marian Quinn, CEO, The Childhood Development Initiative.

**Children's Services Committees – Inter-Agency Working in Action.** Elizabeth Canavan, Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

**The YPAR Protocol: A Practical Tool for the Coordination of Inter-Agency Services for 0-18 Year Olds in the North Inner City of Dublin.** David Little, Coordinator, YPAR.

**Factors that both Impede and Promote Collaborative Work.** Dr Helen Buckley, Senior Lecturer, School of Social Work & Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin.

**Family Involvement in Education.** Siobhán Phillips, Research & Evaluation Psychologist, Eustace Paterson Ltd.

**How the Development of a NLP Training Programme can Impact on the Success of Inter-Agency Work.** Marie Delaney, Director, The Learning Harbour.

**New Beginnings: The Experience of the Western Health and Social Services Board, Northern Ireland.** Deirdre Mahon, Assistant Director of Social Services.

**Integrated Interventions – The Need for Joined Up Services for Families and Children.** Sean McDonnell, Archways and Doreen McGowan, HSE.

**Inter-Agency Working: Implications for Staff.** Bronach O'Donoghue, Social Care Manager of 'Parkview'.

**Young People Offending in Our Communities: A Challenge for Many.** Sean Redmond, Head of Young Offender Programme, IYJS.

**The Identification of Need Project. Building a Cooperative Network with Families at the Centre.** Peter Walker, ION Coordinator and Colin Harrison, Child Care Manager.

**Clinical Psychology in Residential Care, High Support and Special Care.** Dr Anne Byrne Lynch and Dr Pat Corbett, Clinical Psychologists.

**Evidence Based Approaches to Integrated Assessment, Analysis and Outcomes: Focused Planning for Children and Families.** Liza Miller, Children and Families Training, U.K.

**Protecting and Promoting the Welfare of Children and Young People: School Based Care Teams.** David Lewers, Assistant Advisor, Post Primary Schools Branch, NEELB.

Please visit our website [www.caab.ie](http://www.caab.ie) for further information on these.

The Children Acts Advisory Board would like to thank all the people who returned evaluation forms.  
The prizes winners are as follows:

***Stella Ownes, Daughters of Charity (Claidh Mor Family Centre)***  
***Maurice Fenton, Rainbow Community Service***  
***Caroline Cronly, Don Bosco House***  
***Rosemary Cronin, Young Persons Probation***



## Study Visit: Institute for Restorative Practices *Summer Training Institute, Pennsylvania, USA*

The Children Acts Advisory Board is keen to support a robust scientific approach to restorative practice and has for the last few years sponsored a member of the Garda Síochána in a key position to influence practice to attend training opportunities in the US. In August this year we sponsored Sergeant Ben Flahive, JLO Sergeant from Cork and Ciarán Ó Searcaigh, Advisory Officer CAAB to attend the Summer School in the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA.

The IIRP is dedicated to the advanced education of professionals, to research and develop the growing field of restorative practices, with the goal of positively influencing human behaviour and strengthening civil society throughout the world. The institute provides consultancy and training to professionals across the world.

The course covered an Introduction to Restorative Practices, Using Restorative Circles and Facilitating Restorative Conferences. There were over 40 participants, with participants from the USA but also from Brazil, Belgium, UK, Colombia, Canada and Ireland. The trainers were very experienced restorative justice practitioners.

The training was very interactive. It comprised of lectures, videos, case studies, written handouts, role play as well as discussions on individuals' experiences. The programme was well designed and presented. The programme addressed the techniques, tools, theory and ethos of restorative justice...

The purpose and use of restorative circles for resolving problems in school, family and other settings was explored in lectures, videos and case studies. The use of circles in primary schools to deal with issues was demonstrated in videos and through discussions with primary school principal teachers attending the course and IIRP practitioners. The role play provided an opportunity for people to experience the different applications of circle techniques in a practical way.



### INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT (ISPCAN)

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## Study Visit: *Hong Kong, China*

The 17th ISPCAN international congress on child abuse and neglect entitled: 'Towards a Caring and Non-Violent Community: A Child's Perspective', was held in September 2008 in Hong Kong. This congress was attended by Aidan Browne, Chief Executive and Bronagh Gibson, Advisory Officer of the CAAB. The congress included papers from professionals involved in child protection practice and research including, Dr David Finkelhor (USA), Dr Cindy Kiro (Ombudsman for Children NZ) and Dr Richard Krugman (USA) (who gave the Henry Kempe lecture). Delegates also heard from several professors from Hong Kong on child protection issues and initiatives from the host country. Alongside the key note and plenary speakers were many workshops and mini plenaries at which presentations were given by speakers from all over the world including Ireland,

Finland, Japan, Australia and the USA. Some of the Irish presentations included 'How Child Protection Services Respond to Domestic Violence: A Service Users Perspective', by Dr Helen Buckley (TCD) and 'Ascertaining the Discernable Wishes of the Child in Post-Separation Contact Cases with a Prior History of Domestic Violence' by Stephanie Holt (TCD). A paper was also delivered by Bronagh Gibson (CAAB) entitled 'Opt Out-Locked Up: The Educational Disadvantage Experienced by Young Offenders in Ireland'.

To view conference papers please go to the following link  
[www.ispcan.org/conferences/pastconferences](http://www.ispcan.org/conferences/pastconferences)

# Research Committee Report

## CAAB Research Committee

The CAAB's Strategy notes that it aimed to 'support the development of services that are evidence based and outcomes focused'. During the lifetime of the CAAB the Research Committee has played an important role in helping to establish a relevant evidence base. The Committee includes members from the education, health and welfare, and the juvenile justice sectors. The Research Committee has supported the executive in the development, implementation and evaluation of a research programme to help the CAAB achieve its strategic objectives.

The Research Committee met quarterly in 2008 and members were actively involved in: sharing information on relevant research (ongoing or planned) in their respective areas; identifying and discussing areas and topics for research; developing specific research projects; facilitating access to and exchange of information and resources; participating in Steering Committees for individual projects.

During 2008 a research programme was agreed and four research projects were commissioned. At the time of the government decision the Committee was in the process of agreeing a number of additional projects to be commissioned. This work has been proposed for inclusion in the OMCYA Business Plan for 2009. The Committee also greatly supported the CAAB in a number of research projects that it undertook internally. For more information about research projects please visit our website at [www.caab.ie](http://www.caab.ie).

# Review of Special Care Applications

by Mark Brierley

## Overview

The CAAB recently published a *Review of special care Applications*, a report commissioned by the CAAB on behalf of itself, the HSE and the Office of the Minister for Children. The research was undertaken by Mark Brierley, Executive Director, and Henri Giller, Managing Director, of Social Information Systems Ltd (SIS).

Special care is a form of secure care with the explicit objective of providing a stabilising period of short term care which will enable a child to return to less secure care as soon as possible. Revised infrastructure for applications to special care were implemented from January 2007. Changes included the incorporation of family welfare conferences (FWCs) into the process, a single National special care Admissions and Discharges Committee for the HSE (there had previously been three, one for each of the three special care Units), and a formal role for the CAAB in offering its view to the Courts on the applications. Applications are made by the HSE to the High Court for an order of detention of a child to be placed in a Special Care Unit (SCU) under the Court's inherent jurisdiction: sections in the Childcare Act, 1991 (as amended) which provide for District Courts to hear applications for special care have not been operationalised yet due to the need for revised legislation.

The research covered 36 applications for special care made between January and June 2007. SIS examined both the case characteristics (e.g. demographics and whether the application demonstrated that the criteria for special care had been met) and the application process itself.

## Profile of Applicants

As with previous research into special care, females were more likely than males to be subject to both an application for special care, and for that application to lead to an admission. Other gender variations were also identified, including:

- 80% of the applications for females had factors relating to sexual risks compared to only 29% of the applications for males.

- 'Risk-taking behaviour' had a higher likelihood of admission for females than males.
- Successful applications for females more likely to be linked to previous admissions to special care or where High Support had been considered as an option.
- 50% of males had a low/mild/borderline learning disability compared to only 25% for females.

The report made recommendations for the HSE to develop risk management/assessment guidance, with a particular emphasis on gender issues; and for social work professionals to be mindful of whether they respond differently to the same risky behaviour displayed by females and males.

The research also identified that there was a high likelihood of an application being successful where the child was felt to be at risk from a known individual (usually an older boyfriend). Protocols for agencies working together need to be re-examined for policy, practice and legislative implications to address this.

In addition, there was a high likelihood of an application being successful where the child was endangering other children by inciting them to criminal or anti-social behaviour. It should be questioned whether special care is the optimum method of separating children in these circumstances: there should be a substantive body of evidence to demonstrate that all efforts have been taken to reduce this risk before special care is considered as an option.

Absconding was also a common feature of all the applications and it was clear that guidance is required to emphasise that absconding alone is not sufficient for an application for special care.



Mark Brierley is Executive Director with Social Information Systems Ltd (SIS) who specialise in Independent Research Consultancy.

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## Application Process

Nine children were remanded to a Children Detention School at the time of the application to special care and 13 applications had ongoing proceedings before the District Court. Rulings by Judge MacMenamin in June 2007, while this research was underway, in *Health Service Executive v. S (S) (A Minor)*, (2007, paragraph 19)<sup>1</sup>, made it clear that cases cannot be before courts for both civil and criminal jurisdictions simultaneously and that the latter must have priority and prevail. Many cases not supported by the NSCADC were on the basis of ongoing criminal proceedings and guidance needs to be amended to reflect the above High Court judgement.

There was a strong relationship between the robustness of having an agreed, secured onward placement and the likelihood of the application being successful. Even where onward placements change as a result of needs that emerge during the special care placement, it is important to have such the onward placement secured. Research has shown that this is also better for the child.

Some applications did not appear to have actively sought and obtained support from senior managers locally in support of the application. It is important that, where a child is potentially to be deprived on their liberty, there is a clear and defensible audit trail of decision-making within the Local Health Office. The report made recommendations with regard to the HSE refreshing the understanding of the relative roles and responsibilities of staff and for the HSE and the CAAB to make clear their expectations of evidence of key senior personnel being aware of, and supportive of, the decision to apply for special care.

In addition, five children were unaware that a referral was being made, and 13 children were aware that the application was being made but not informed of its progress, primarily through fears that the child's behaviour would deteriorate (through increased absconding or increased risk of self-harm). The report notes the potential children's rights implications of progressing an application for special care without the child's knowledge need to be considered.

It is a requirement for a family welfare conference to be held (or for the applicant to have consulted the local Family Welfare Conference Service to confirm that it cannot be held) prior to making an application for special care. Six applications failed to fulfil this at all, while 11 made a parallel application for special care. Social workers also had a generally negative view of FWCs within the process (although there was more support for them in welfare cases), feeling that usually by this stage all options had been exhausted. There

is clearly a continued exercise needed to emphasise the role of FWCs as a means of taking one last attempt to prevent an admission to special care; but there should also be an ongoing review of whether family welfare conferences are achieving their intended preventive aim within the process.

## Views of the NSCADC and the CAAB

19 of the applications resulted in an admission to special care. The NSCADC and the CAAB came to the same view about 62% of these cases. Where there were differences, these tended to be for reasons that are not currently part of the criteria for special care but which are relevant to the 'purposefulness' of a special care placement. Cases that the CAAB supported but the NSCADC did not tended to be:

- Where there had been two previous placements in special care. (The report recommended amending guidance and/or criteria to reflect a higher threshold for applications where there had been two or more previous admissions to special care.)
- Where there were ongoing criminal proceedings.
- Where the time that the child had been detained in a Children Detention School was taken into account.

For most of the applications, therefore, there were generally logical explanations for the differences of views. Changes to the criteria/guidance to reflect the above should help to increase convergence, while the relative roles and powers of the HSE and the CAAB also need to be stated in revised guidance.

13 applications were subject to an 'appeal'. 10 appeals were made to the NSCADC and 5 to the CAAB and both bodies did change their views in the light of new information. The report recommends that there is a need to more robustly define the appeals process, addressing, for example:

- Grounds for an 'appeal'.
- How to appeal.
- To whom to appeal.
- Opportunities to consult prior to the appeal.
- Opportunities to present an appeal in person, where felt desirable.

Despite the child being 'in crisis', most admissions to special care took place in a planned manner. Where an application progressed relatively smoothly, the average length of time between date of application and date of admission was 31 calendar days. In addition, there appears to be an unwritten procedure for 'emergency' applications, while those applications defined as an emergency by Social Workers were not necessarily viewed as such by the HSE and the CAAB. In order to provide an effective and timely response to emergencies, with robust gate keeping at local and national level, guidance should be provided on what should happen in an emergency situation.

## The Report

The report contains a range of recommendations reflecting issues relating to management of practice, processes and monitoring. The CAAB, HSE and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs are in the process of establishing an implementation group to take the recommendations forward. The full report was published in July 2008 and is also available directly from the CAAB website.

1 *Health Service Executive (Southern Area) v. S (S) (A Minor)* represented by his Guardian Ad Litem and Next Friend ML, and MS, SC and The Special Residential Services Board (Notice Parties) (2007) IEHC 189, unreported MacMenamin J.



# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: Young People, Alcohol and Drugs

Dr Gary O' Reilly, School of Psychology, University College Dublin

*The Children Acts Advisory Board co-sponsored an international conference on Young People, Alcohol and Drugs at University College Dublin on 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2008. The conference launched research conducted at the UCD School of Psychology by Dr Deirdre Palmer and Dr Gary O' Reilly on 462 15-19 year olds living in the South and South East region of Ireland. The study found that more than half of young people binge drink regularly and half have also used illegal drugs.*

## Alcohol use by young people

An estimated 86% of young people said they did drink alcohol while 14% said they did not drink. The average age for taking their first drink was 13½ years. A further 51% of young people binge drink regularly, which is defined as consuming five or more drinks on one occasion once a month or more. Weekly binge drink was reported by 19%, while 4% said they binge drink several times a week. The frequency of binge drinking increased with age. There was no significant overall difference between males and females on their average age of first consumption, or in their rates of binge drinking.

Young people reported that on a typical drinking occasion they consumed 5.75 drinks. Males at 6.25 drinks reported a higher level of average consumption than females at 5.36 drinks. As young people move through adolescence the average amount they consume when drinking increases from 4.14 drinks at 15 years of age to 7.36 drinks at 19 years of age.

In terms of frequency of alcohol consumption, 29% of young people surveyed drink on a weekly basis. At 15 years of age 12% of males and 20.3% of females reported they drink once a week or more. At 19 years, 50% of males and 67% of females reported they drink at this frequency.

## Consequences from drinking

Consequences of alcohol use were reported by 38% of all participants. Getting into an argument was the most frequently reported consequence of alcohol use, experienced by 20% of young people. Trouble at home was reported as the next most frequent consequence at 18%. An estimated 13% of the sample reported that alcohol use led to an accident or injury, getting into a physical fight, or causing damage to property. It was reported by 10% that alcohol use resulted in getting into trouble with the police. Performance affected at school was indicated by 7% and trouble at school as a result of alcohol use was reported by 4%.

With regard to gender similarities and differences among young people who drink females were more likely to report that alcohol use had resulted in trouble at home while males were more likely to report that alcohol use had led to a physical fight, damage to property, or trouble with the police.

## Drug use by young people

A reported 50% of young people had ever used illicit drugs (including inhalants) with no significant difference reported between males and females. The average age of first drug use was 14½ years with both males and females reporting their first drug use at the same average age.

Cannabis was the most commonly reported drug 'ever used' by young people at 41%. This was followed by inhalants 30%, poppers 17%, cocaine 11%, tranquillisers/sedatives 11%, amphetamines 9%, ecstasy 9%, hallucinogens 7% and opiates 2%. Females had a significantly higher rate of lifetime use of cannabis compared to males. No gender differences were found in lifetime use of each of the other drugs.

Graph 1 outlines the frequency of once a month or more usage of the five most common drugs in the survey.

## Consequences from drug use

Consequences of drug use were reported by 11% of young people. Performance affected at school at 7% was reported most often as a consequence of drug use. Getting into an argument at 4% and trouble at home at 3% were the two next most frequently reported consequences. Other consequences reported were as follows: an accident or injury (3%), trouble with the police (2%), property damage (2%), physical fight (2%) and trouble at school/work (2%). An estimated 38% of young people indicated that they had tried some form of illicit substance but not experienced a consequence from it.

## Categorising the alcohol and drug use of young people

In analysing the data six categories of substance use within young people based on the key characteristics of behaviours of participants in the study were identified. The six categories are shown in graph 2.

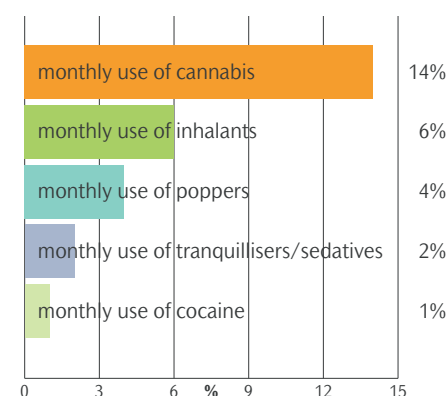
The research reported a comparable level of alcohol use to previous research, but a higher rate of drug use. There was a clear link between substance abuse and family functioning. The most problematic substance users in the sample indicated poorer family functioning relative to some less problematic substance user groups. The pattern which emerged was that as the level of substance use increased the adaptive functioning of families decreased.

## Solutions

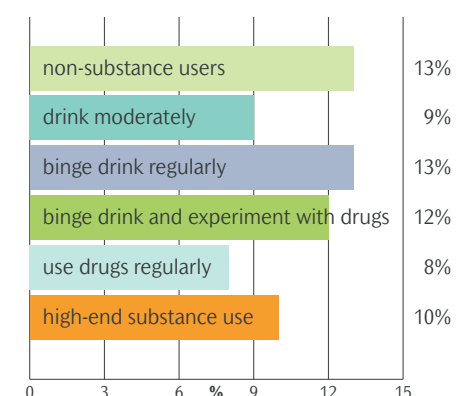
The aim of the conference was to present an accurate picture of alcohol and drug use in Ireland and to use this to consider evidence based solutions for young people, their families and their communities when it comes to tackling substance mis-use. Towards this end the other conference speakers were Mr. Peter Sheridan, author and film director; Dr Howard Liddle, University of Miami, an expert on effective family based intervention; Professor Tracy O' Leary Tevyaw, Brown University, America; an expert on motivational enhancement for adolescent substance abuse; and Dr John Howard, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (Australia), an expert on building communities to work effectively with alcohol and drug use in young people.

The full report from the UCD research and other conference related material is available for free download from [www.juvenilementalhealthmatters.com](http://www.juvenilementalhealthmatters.com)

Graph 1: Five most commonly used drugs



Graph 2: Six categories of substance use



# CAAB Updates and Upcoming Events

## 'ASSESSED – SO WHAT!' – CAAB Evidence to Practice Seminar November 2008

The second in a series of seminars hosted by the Children Acts Advisory Board to assist services to children in achieving positive outcomes for children by improving areas of practice will be held on the **19<sup>th</sup> of November 2008 in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin**. The primary objective of this seminar is to engage with practitioners and decision makers with the purpose of reflecting on the current approach to assessment of children and young people and to consider moving toward a more focused assessment framework throughout the sectors, ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and their families.

Speakers include: Michael Little, Dartington Social Research Unit, UK and Chapin Hall Centre for Children at the University of Chicago; Deirdre Mahon, Health and Social Services Board, N.I.; Tim Chapman, Senior Consultant, CTC Associates; Dr Anne Byrne-Lynch, Principal Clinical Psychologist; Dr Mark Smyth, Senior Clinical Psychologist; Carol Jolliffe, Children and Family Training, UK; Dr Helen Buckley, Children's Research Centre, TCD and Professor Jan Horwath, University of Sheffield.

For further information and booking details see our website at [www.caab.ie](http://www.caab.ie) or contact Marion Martin at [marion.martin@caab.ie](mailto:marion.martin@caab.ie) or **01 6724116**.

## Guardian Ad Litem Update

The Draft Guidance has been accepted by the Board. In addition, the Board will forward a memo to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs making recommendations with regard to the future management of a Guardian *ad litem* system that would include monitoring of the implementation of the guidance. When the guidance has been published and formally launched, the booklet will be distributed to key stakeholders in hard copy and will also be available on the CAAB website.

## An Audit and Analysis of Irish Research Literature on Children in Detention and Out of Home Care

The overall objective of this study is to produce an 'audit' and an 'analysis' of research literature on 'children in detention and out of home care' in Ireland. For the purpose of this research project 'children in detention and out of home care' are defined as children in care in Ireland with experience of being in foster care, residential care and/or detention.

The project will: identify research in relation to children in care or detention in Ireland; summarise and analyse key findings, conclusions and recommendations in the research by key themes; identify areas for future research and it will identify international cases where similar research has been completed. The CAAB is pleased to announce that Eustace Patterson Ltd. has recently been awarded this tender. The project will be guided by a steering committee with representatives from the health, juvenile justice and community and voluntary sectors.

## Putting Research Evidence to Work (PREW)

The objective of this project is to develop initiatives, in partnership with relevant organisations that help policy makers, managers and practitioners to put research evidence to work. This project is led by Dr Helen Buckley from the School for Social Work and Social Policy and the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin in association with the CAAB. The first stage of PREW will be to produce a report on the barriers, facilitators and approaches to putting research evidence to work based on a review of literature, a review of international web-based research dissemination mechanisms, and a consultation process to establish access to and application of research by stakeholders. A draft report should be produced by end 2008.

## Consultation Process on Inter-Agency Co-operation in the Children's Sector

As noted in the Summer Newsletter the CAAB has undertaken a consultation process on inter-agency co-operation in the children's sector as part of our 2008 Network Seminars with professionals working in children's services. A report on this process is being produced by Finbar McDonnell of Hibernian Consulting and the CAAB. Dr Helen Buckley along with Nicola Carr and Cliona Murphy are also facilitating in this process. The report will focus on stakeholders' experiences of inter-agency co-operation and on their views on future requirements to enable better inter-agency co-operation. A draft report should be produced by December 2008.

## Children Acts Advisory Board 2009 Awards for Services to Children and Young People

Applications are now being processed for the 2009 winners. The 2009 Awards Ceremony will be held in Croke Park on **19<sup>th</sup> of February 2009**. See our Website [www.caab.ie](http://www.caab.ie) or contact Rose Sweeney on **01-6724106** for further details.

## Therapeutic Interventions Update

Since the previous newsletter work is still ongoing under the draft headings.

Have you got news for us? Your contributions to future CAAB Publications are very welcome. For further details please contact Clodagh Thorne on **01 672 4119** or email [clodagh.thorne@caab.ie](mailto:clodagh.thorne@caab.ie). If you wish to download a copy of our newsletter please visit our website [www.caab.ie](http://www.caab.ie)

## An Analysis of Research Literature on Inter-Agency Co-operation in Children's Services

The research project An Analysis of Research Literature on Inter-Agency Co-operation in Children's Services involves an analysis of research literature on inter-agency co-operation in public services, with a particular focus on inter-agency co-operation in children's services in Ireland. CAAB recently awarded the contract for this research project to WRC, Social & Economic Consultants Ltd. A draft report should be produced by December 2008.

## CAAB Art Competition

The CAAB is holding its annual Art Competition for Children who are residing in children detention schools, special care units and high support units.

For more details please contact Clodagh Thorne on **01-6724119** or [clodagh.thorne@caab.ie](mailto:clodagh.thorne@caab.ie)

**THE COMPETITION DEADLINE HAS BEEN EXTENDED UNTIL FRIDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> OF NOVEMBER**