

# **Report**

## **Children First Event**

**“Children First: How can we  
put children who have a  
disability first?”**

**April 2015**

# NATIONAL FEDERATION OF VOLUNTARY BODIES

*Providing Services to People with Intellectual Disability*

## Background to the Children First Conference:

In recent years there have been significant policy and legislative developments in relation to children in Ireland. With this in mind the Children First Implementation Group of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies saw the need for organisations to be kept informed of their responsibilities in the critical area of child protection and related legislation. To this end a conference was organised and took place on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March in the Heritage Hotel in Portlaoise entitled **“Children First: How can we put children who have a disability first?”**. This event provided an opportunity for all those working in the area of children’s disability services, child protection & welfare - to network, share information and hear from a range of experts on key legislative changes and the obligation on organisations in reporting child protection concerns.

*“Once again a very worthwhile day from the National Federation”*

## Run of the Day:

The first half of the day was chaired by Mr. John Hannigan, Chairperson of the National Federation and began with an overview of the key legislation by Ms. Jenny Bulbulia, Barrister at Law. Detective Sergeant Jennifer Molony from An Garda Síochána spoke about the obligation on organisations in reporting child protection concerns. The newly appointed Ombudsman for Children Dr. Niall Muldoon gave a presentation on the function of the Ombudsman for Children’s office. This was followed by a presentation by Ms Marie Faughey from the HSE who gave an overview of the HSE’s Children First Implementation Plan. Roundtable discussions afforded delegates the opportunity to discuss the on-going challenges facing their organisations in relation to child protection and welfare.



John Hannigan Chairperson, Mary Barrett, Brian O'Donnell & Jillian Sexton National Federation, Dr. Aisling Gillen Tusla, Dr. Niall Muldoon Ombudsman for Children, Maire Faughey HSE, Colette Daly Ability West, Detective Garda Jennifer Molony, Colette McLoughlin Tusla and Jenny Bulbulia, Barrister at Law.

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The afternoon session was chaired by Ms. Maria Corrigan, Principal Clinical Psychologist, and it began with a presentation from Dr Aisling Gillen and Ms Colette McLoughlin, Tusla-Child & Family Agency. They outlined the function of Tusla in supporting and promoting the development, welfare and protection of children and also supporting and encouraging the effective functioning of families. They discussed the development of Child and Family Support Networks and presented case studies under the Meitheal model. The final input of the day came from Ms. Colette Daly, Ability West, whose presentation was entitled 'Children First: Why an explicit Action Plan is needed to protect children with disabilities'. Colette outlined feedback and concerns which were highlighted previously by Federation members in relation to child protection and welfare.



Ms Maria Corrigan, Principal Clinical Psychologist

### Evaluation of the event by the delegates :

The event proved very successful and was attended by over 220 delegates from across a range of voluntary and statutory agencies. People reported that they found the topics discussed were very relevant to issues on the ground.

Following the event an online survey was developed and circulated to give delegates the opportunity to provide feedback on what they thought of the day and suggestions of what could be improved for future events. The following are a sample of some of the main points made by delegates:

- Excellent speakers, and presentations.
- Extremely relevant to current issues and discourse. Event well organised.
- It was very well chaired. The venue was excellent.
- Congratulations on a well run event and very useful conference.
- Too little time for round table discussion - no opportunity to discuss the issues.
- Good opportunity for networking

*"Keep up the  
good work – well  
done"*

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220 delegates attended the conference and bookings had to be closed prior to the event

- It was very well chaired, there was very good attendance.
- I would like more of the same really - National Federation Events never disappoint - I always go away from their events having gained a lot.

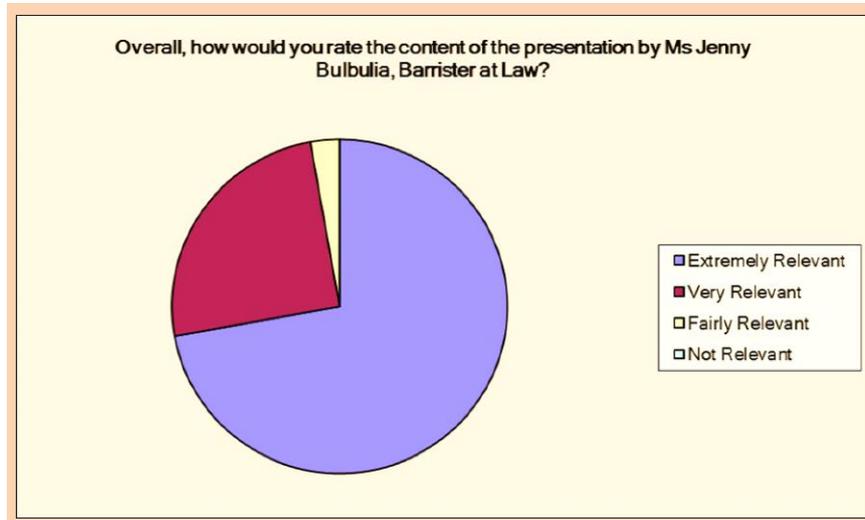


Judy Moynihan, Cope Foundation and Rosaleen Maguire, Laura Lynn, who were members of the organising committee with Colette Daly Ability West, Jillian Sexton & Mary Barrett, National Federation.

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The delegates were also asked to give their views on the each of the individual presentations given by the speakers on the day. The first presentation was by Ms. Jenny Bullbia entitled “Mandatory Reporting of Child Protection Concerns: Helping You Understand Your Obligations”



|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Extremely Relevant | 72.2% |
| Very Relevant      | 25.0% |
| Fairly Relevant    | 2.8%  |
| Not Relevant       | 0.0%  |

### **Feedback from the delegates on the presentation by Ms. Jenny Bullbia:**

- “Concise look at the most relevant issues at a practical level”
- “Would liked to have heard more from this presenter”
- “I found presentation gave an overview of relevant legislation”
- “Very informative, well presented”
- Excellent, practical and straight forward - common sense translation of law
- Excellent Presentation
- Very clear and therefore easily understood and memorable.
- Legislation explained very clearly and at a good pace

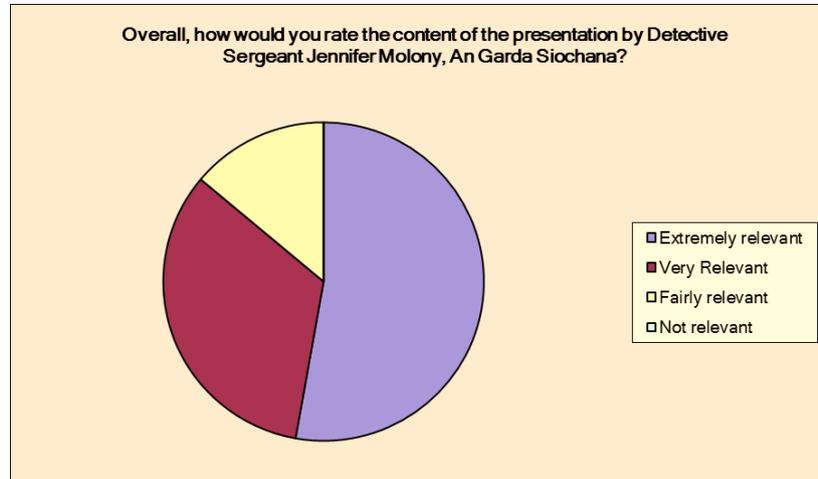


**Ms Jenny Bullbia, Barrister at Law**

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**Presentation by Detective Sergeant Jennifer Molony “An Garda Síochána & protection of vulnerable persons.”**



|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Extremely relevant | 52.8% |
| Very Relevant      | 33.3% |
| Fairly relevant    | 13.9% |
| Not relevant       | 0.0%  |

## **Feedback from the delegates on presentation by Detective Sergeant Jennifer Molony:**

- “It was very useful to hear the perspective of the gardai”
- “Jennifer provided great clarity on how the services work together”
- “Very interesting presentation – Jennifer ably demystified the process involved for all involved in the reporting of abuse matters”
- It was informative to hear from Gardai directly in relation to their processes and practice in relation to investigating child abuse
- Excellent and really helpful - common sense approaches.

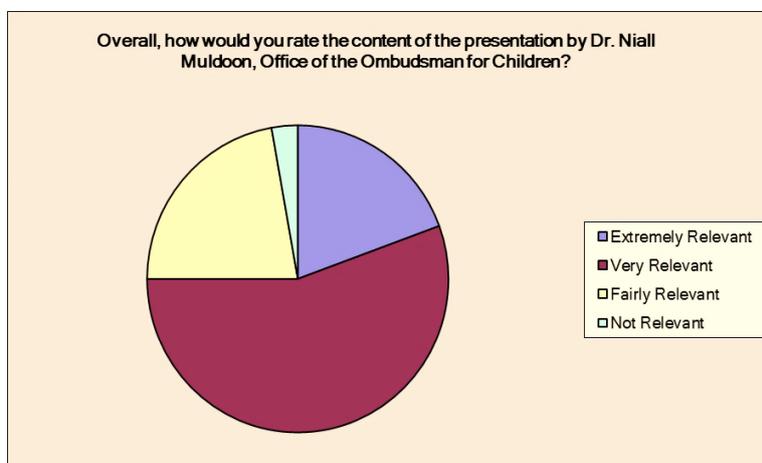


**Detective Sergeant Jennifer Molony**

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Presentation by Dr. Niall Muldoon, Office of the Ombudsman for Children “Ombudsman for Children’s Office - 10 Years putting Children First”



|                    |       |    |
|--------------------|-------|----|
| Extremely Relevant | 19.4% | 7  |
| Very Relevant      | 55.6% | 20 |
| Fairly Relevant    | 22.2% | 8  |
| Not Relevant       | 2.8%  | 1  |

This is a sample of the comments from the delegates on the presentation by Dr. Niall Muldoon:

- Clarified well the current role of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children
- Would love to see more ties with ID services
- Great to hear Dr. Muldoon speak in such an inclusive manner in relation to children with a disability
- It was good to know that this office would be accessible to everyone
- It would have been more interesting if he had discussed one investigation related to disability.

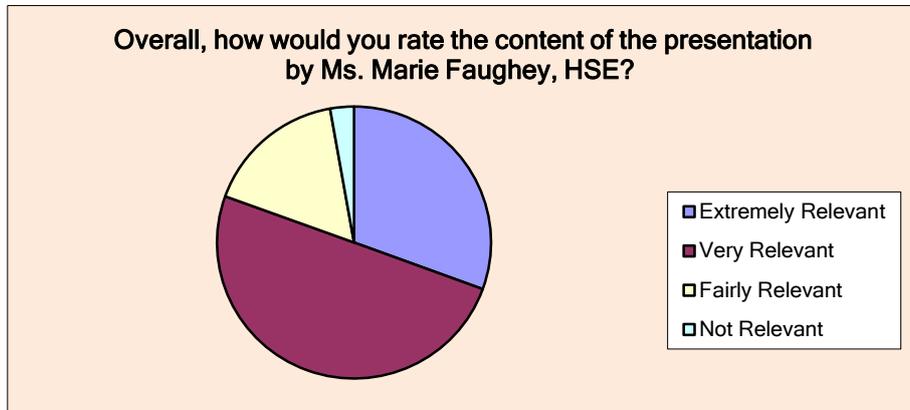


Dr. Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children

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Presentation by Ms. Marie Faughey, HSE “Children First Implementation Plan for Health Service Executive”



|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Extremely Relevant | 30.6% |
| Very Relevant      | 50.0% |
| Fairly Relevant    | 16.7% |
| Not Relevant       | 2.8%  |

## Feedback from the delegates on presentation by Ms Marie Faughey:

- Good overview of current structures within H.S.E.
- A comprehensive presentation - and good to hear honesty about the practice challenges on the frontline
- Jargon-filled presentation
- A lot of information regarding the huge amount of work being undertaken. Would love to hear more and have local accessible information and consultation/ discussion e.g. a hub to get advice.
- Useful new information on new structures
- Presentation seemed to focus on plans and aspirations.

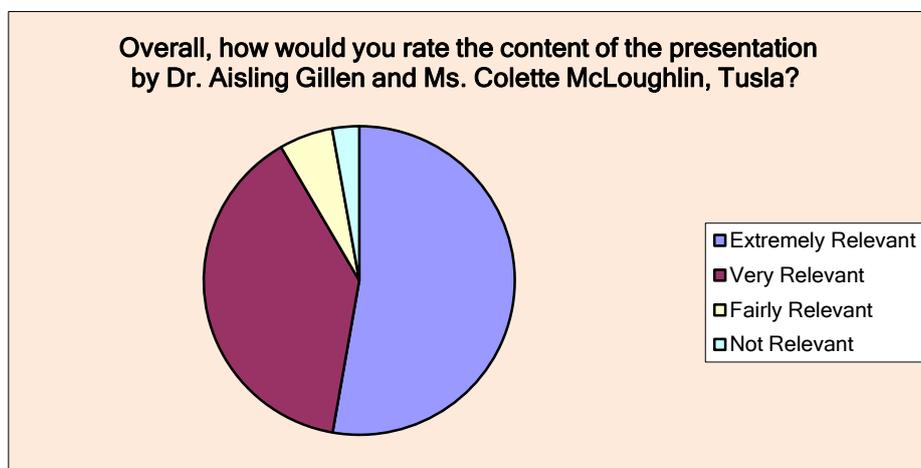


Ms Marie Faughey, Children First Lead, HSE

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Presentation by Dr. Aisling Gillen and Ms. Colette McLoughlin, Tusla “Working together to protect and promote the welfare of children with a disability”



|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Extremely Relevant | 80.6% |
| Very Relevant      | 13.9% |
| Fairly Relevant    | 5.6%  |
| Not Relevant       | 0.0%  |

This is a sample of some of the comments on the presentations made by Dr. Aisling Gillen and Ms. Colette McLoughlin from Tusla:

- Interesting to hear how Tusla is growing and developing but feel it is still in it's infancy
- Good overview of vision of Children First in relation to children, prevention, protection and welfare.
- Discussion highlighted dilemmas and sometime inequities of access to services.
- The use of scenarios featuring people with disabilities was very useful.
- Excellent presentation of complex systems and frameworks made clear and easy to understand.
- Further clarification required on the role of Tusla
- It was good to have case examples but this for me didn't seem to translate to what happens on the ground.
- I am now more informed as to the structures now in place through which child welfare supports can be accessed .
- I plan to make contact with the local Child and Family Support Network to ensure that our agency is somehow represented on this.

“Overview of the management structure very useful”

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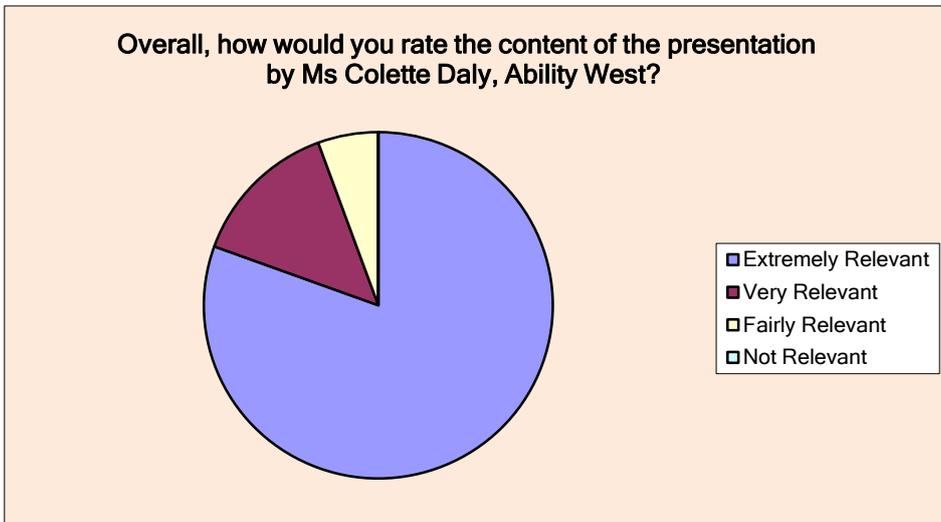
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Dr. Aisling Gillen, National Policy Manager Family Support and Ms. Colette McLoughlin, Area Manager, Tusla

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**Presentation by Ms Colette Daly, Ability West “Why an explicit Action Plan is needed to protect Children with Disabilities”**



|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Extremely Relevant | 80.6% |
| Very Relevant      | 13.9% |
| Fairly Relevant    | 5.6%  |
| Not Relevant       | 0.0%  |

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Colette Daly, Head of Social Work & Family Support, Ability West

The following are some of the comments on the presentation by Ms Colette Daly, Ability West:

- Superb presentation well aware of issues for frontline staff would have loved to have heard more from this presenter.
- This was very useful and brought the focus back to disability and the very real difficulties agencies have when trying to get extra resources for those in need.
- Excellent, well researched and backed by evidence
- From providers perspective this was excellent she absolutely spoke about all of the issues that service providers are experiencing
- This could have been at the start? However it was a good conclusion given the context of the rest of the day.
- It summarised the issues voluntary organisations are experiencing. Also highlights that there is no good/ clear communication between HSE / Tusla and voluntary orgs
- Very thought provoking and insightful presentation.

*"Excellent presentation, well researched and backed by evidence"*

## Roundtable discussions

Roundtable discussions afforded delegates the opportunity to discuss the challenges facing their organisations arising from the morning presentations. This session was chaired by John Hannigan Chair, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, with a panel of the speakers from the morning

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session also participating. Delegates were given a 'reflection sheet' and were asked to record for their own personal information two key actions they would implement into their work practice following the presentations.

The questions which were discussed as a group at each table were *"What are the challenges arising for me / my organisation from the mornings presentations and What supports do I / my organisation need to address same?"*. The responses were recorded and collated and it was found that the issues raised primarily related to: training, compliance, reporting and lack of resources. This information will inform the National Federation's Children First / Child Protection & Welfare work plan for 2015/6.



The Panel participants at the Q&A session during roundtable discussions: John Hannigan (Chairperson), Dr. Niall Muldoon Office of the Ombudsman for Children, Marie Faughey HSE, Jenny Bullbia Barrister at Law, Detective Sergeant Jennifer Molony, An Garda Síochána

### General Questions posed to delegates on the online survey:

In addition to asking the delegates to evaluate the presentations of the various speakers we also posed some questions that we felt would help us when organising future events, as having this information is invaluable to us. We learn from knowing what went well and what may not have gone as well as we had hoped. The questions were as follows:

1. What went well at the event?
2. What could be improved?

*"Congratulations  
on a well run and  
very useful  
conference"*

3. What themes would you like addressed at seminars organised in the future?
4. How would you rate the venue?

### **Q: What went well at the event?**

Organisers were very happy with the positive response to the event with delegates reporting that “ There were excellent speakers and presentations and conference was “extremely relevant to current issues and discourse”. The range of speakers from varied backgrounds covered all relevant areas and delegates said they went away with a lot a valuable information from the event. The opportunity to network with a range of other agencies and professionals was very worthwhile to the delegates.

### **Q: What could be improved?**

When asked this question “what could be improved?” one issue for delegates was that more time could have been given to the roundtable discussion session. Delegates also requested that the issues raised during these discussions should be collated and given as feedback to members. The National Federation will be bringing back all of this information to the Children First Implementation Group which is made up of National Federation members.

The use of scenarios featuring people with disabilities was reported as very useful by delegates in helping them get a better understanding of the work of Tusla but was felt that further clarification was required on their role.



All comments were collated and will be taken into account when planning future events.

### **Q: Following on from the Children First conference do you have any suggestions or comments to make in terms of future events / supports?**

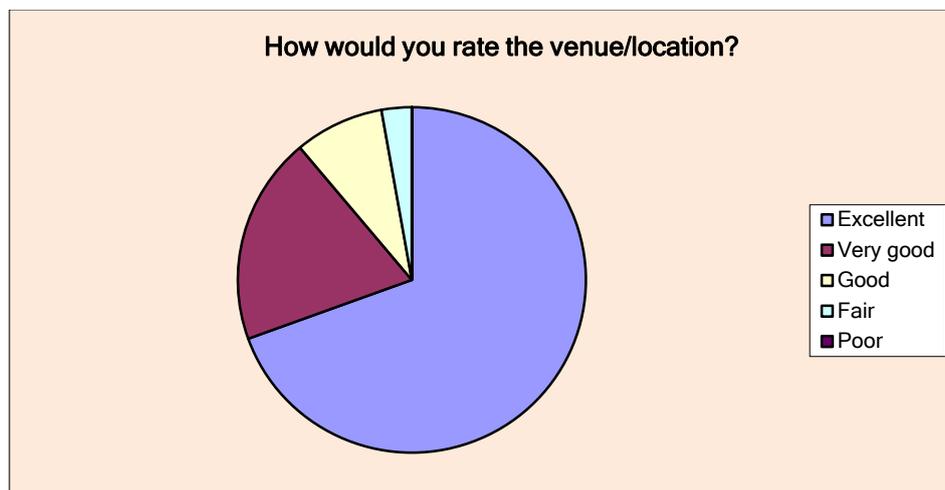
A lot of suggestions were put forward in response to this question which have been recorded and will be taken into account by the National Federation when planning future events. One theme that emerged repeatedly was a request to have a similar event devoted to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and the implementation of the new policy at a practical level. The view was also expressed that hosting similar events each time there are changes in legislation would be very beneficial to member organisations e.g. a conference on the legal capacity legislation.

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## Q. How would you rate the venue?

The event took place in the Heritage Hotel in Portlaoise and the below you may read a summary of the evaluation from delegates:



- Enjoyable day and really nice to get an opportunity to network with different organisations.
- Thank you for a very well organised, informative day.
- Not the cleanest hotel but good location
- Central for all parts of the country
- Room good when air was on. Easy to hear speakers - even from back.
- Good Venue and location.
- The venue and the catering were excellent.

“Venue is central for all parts of the country”

## Other useful information

- The Irish Association of Social Workers CPD Committee awarded **four CPD points** to the event and delegates can request a certificate of attendance by sending an email to Mary Barrett at [mary.barrett@fedvol.ie](mailto:mary.barrett@fedvol.ie)
- All [presentations](#) are available to download on the website of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies [www.fedvol.ie](http://www.fedvol.ie).
- If you would like to subscribe to our mailing list for upcoming events please send your details to [info@fedvol.ie](mailto:info@fedvol.ie). Alternatively, if you are already on our mailing list and wish to unsubscribe please let us know and we will arrange to have this done immediately.

