



A Government-mandated Working Party on Foster Care has been called for by SWIFC, the Social Workers in Foster Care Special Interest Group of the Irish Association of Social Workers.

At the launch of their document *Foster Care: Envisioning the Future*, the Social Workers in Foster Care Group, SWIFC, call on the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs to set up a Working Party on Foster Care to review and develop the provision of foster care in Ireland. They highlight that it was a similar collaborative working group, established in 1998, which enabled Ireland to progress its Foster Care services to the stage where Ireland is recognized as a leading country in family-based alternative care for children in need.

Foster Care: Envisioning the Future highlights the urgency of setting up a Working Party in the context of a changing child care environment, and increasing pressure on the child care system. This document provides a comprehensive picture of the current state of foster care provision in Ireland and, while acknowledging progress, points up the challenges to the continued provision of high quality care for the most vulnerable in society. These challenges include the on-going scarcity of resources; the unintended impacts of increasing standardization of policy and practice and centralization of services; recruitment and retention of foster carers; private sector provision; court proceedings and the law; the role of the Guardian ad Litem; preventing family breakdown; and maintaining social work values and ethics in the midst of the above detailed challenges.

In the light of its concerns, SWIFC recommends that the Working Party carry out a review of the foster care services from the perspectives of legislation, policy, resource allocation, and best practice in the field of foster care provision.

Tusla, the Child & Family Agency commits to providing family based care for the children and young people requiring the care and protection of the Irish state. Currently approximately 93 % of children in state care in Ireland are cared for in a foster care setting - a hard earned statistic we can be proud of and one that places us to the fore in foster care provision in a world context. However at this time of challenge, we must work diligently to protect this core strand and principle in care provision.

Foster Care: Envisioning the Future is a valuable source of first hand information on the current state of foster care in Ireland from one of the key stakeholders involved, the social work practitioner. It is currently the only document on this subject to include this important perspective, amongst the perspective of other important stakeholders.

Foster Care: Envisioning the Future is a detailed discussion document produced by the IASW's special interest group on foster care - SWIFC and is the product of wide ranging consultation among social work practitioners, academics, and other stakeholders in the provision of alternative care for children. It contains a range of information on the current

state of foster care provision, including an analysis of what is working and what needs to be addressed.

Foster Care: Envisioning the Future, based as it is on consultation and discussion, sets out to be an interactive document, one that will continue to spark debate on foster care provision. It draws on the wealth of experience of those delivering the service. All too often, the voice of those at the frontline of service delivery is missing from the literature, and this document goes some way towards redressing that balance. While the importance of the social worker voice is writ large in *Foster Care: Envisioning the Future*, it has at its core the best interests of the child, and a commitment to the provision of high quality foster care.

Launch Details

Date: Thursday the 2nd of March 2017

Time: 11am – 12noon

Location: Room 3, St Andrews Resource Centre, Pearse St, Grand Canal Dock, Dublin.

RSVP: Email:
Phone:

Contact Details - SWIFC Spokespersons;

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