

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

National Scaling-up of an area-based approach to Prevention, Partnership & Family Support in Ireland: Key strengths and challenges to its implementation.

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This paper focuses on the scaling-up of an area-based systems wide approach to prevention, partnership and family support (PP&FS) by Tusla, Child & Family Agency, Ireland. The area-based approach to PP&FS aims to align services to support children and families in local communities and geographical areas through the development of Child & Family Support Networks (CFSNs), which are clusters of support serving geographical areas that may be smaller than Area Management areas or Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) areas. The Child and Family Support Networks (CFSNs) are a frontline operational structure to ensure integrated service delivery. The local Child and Family Support Networks consist of all services that play a role in the lives of children and families in a given area and reflect that the CFSN is a partnership that recognises that supporting families and keeping children safe is everyone's business. Tusla is also implementing Meitheal, a Tusla-led Early Intervention National Practice Model to ensure that the needs and strengths of children and their families are effectively identified and understood and responded to in a timely way. This paper explores the current status of implementation of the area-based approach to PP&FS and some of the challenges posed to its successful implementation. It is based on a detailed analysis of system readiness for full scale-up of the national practice model and service delivery frameworks across 17 service delivery areas, spanning the whole of Ireland. This data was collected through interviews with Senior Managers for PP&FS and Area Managers, utilising a standardised readiness checklist; case study analysis from local areas and; national analysis and planning around critical implementation drivers. This paper argues that the introduction of the area-based approach offers huge opportunity for Tusla, with key inter-agency partners, to intervene earlier and more preventatively with children and families; helps to build multi-agency working and engagement for early help provision for children and families; engages with and utilises community assets; and; ultimately improves child and family outcomes. Key implementation challenges in scaling-up a national systems-change model are outlined.

Keywords: networks; meitheal; early intervention; parent-led; inter-agency
