

Department/Arms-Length Bodies: Relationships and Key Issues

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Department of Children and Youth Affairs

- DCYA: *Lead the effort to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland*
- We collaborate on issues affecting children and young people in areas such as
 - child welfare and protection,
 - early childhood care and education,
 - youth justice,
 - youth work,
 - children and young people's participation,
 - research on children and young people, and
 - cross-cutting initiatives for children and young people.
- Collaborate, co-ordinate, oversee, persuade, cajole, direct!



DCYA 'Environment'

- **DCYA:** €1.35 billion; 250 staff
- **Tusla, Child and Family Agency:** €753m; 3,800 staff
 - Statutory body; detailed governance arrangements specified in law; extensive procedures for interaction with DCYA
- **Pobal:** Childcare element accounts for €485m
 - Not-for-profit company; DCYA has a detailed SLA in place
- **Oberstown Children Detention Centre:** €22.6m; 280 staff
 - Statutory board; close relationship with DCYA
- **Adoption Authority of Ireland:** €3.8m; 22 staff
 - Statutory body; governance arrangements with DCYA
- **Ombudsman for Children:** €2.3m; 19 staff
 - Statutory body; independent in its investigations and reports



DCYA Relationship with Agencies

- Statement of Strategy 2016-2019
- Governance Framework for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (updated 2017)
- Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies 2016
- Child and Family Agency Act 2013
- Children First Act 2015
- Child Care Act 1991
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Children Act 2001
- Adoption Acts 1952-2017



Relationship with Tusla

- Minister's *Performance Framework* => Tusla's *Corporate Plan* (Three-year)
 - Submitted by Board and approved by Minister
- Minister's *Performance Statement* => Tusla's *Business Plan* (annual)
 - Minister may direct changes
- Minister may issue policy directions under 2013 Act
- Oversight Agreement between DCYA and Tusla
- Practical, established arrangements:
 - Monthly meetings between DCYA and Tusla senior officials
 - Monthly data on finance, HR and service activity
 - Quarterly meetings between Minister and Chair of Board
 - Regular interactions on individual issues – SG and CEO; Minister and Chair of Board



Relationship with Pobal

- Service level agreement 2017-2020
- Programme of Work agreed for 2018
- Substantial work to formalise relationship
- Growing expenditure and schemes
 - ECCE (non statutory)
 - ACS (in preparation – will be statutory)
 - Range of other work for DCYA (e.g. youth sector)
- Operational Review for future governance arrangements



Strategy

- How to align bodies with DCYA strategic priorities?
 - Formal Ministerial statements to strategies of Tusla, AAI, Oberstown
 - Regular dialogue, formal and informal
 - Managing differing perspectives
 - Short term v medium to long term issues
- Legal requirements v close working relationships based on trust and collaboration



Monitoring Performance

- Autonomy versus Accountability
- Effective oversight v micro-managing?
 - Integrated reports on finance, HR, services
 - Analysis of data
 - Monthly meetings
 - Progress reviews and updates
 - Judgement: when and how far to intervene?
- Role of Minister
- Role of Accounting Officer and senior colleagues



Assurance

- Role of Accounting Officer
- Role of 'Accountable Officer' (CEO, Tusla)
- Satisfying the Department about processes, procedures, systems
- Trust in quality of teams/individuals responsible
- Culture is key
 - Real challenge or just 'tick box'?
 - Commitment to continuous improvement or just a 'quiet life'?



How important are structures?

- Separate governance division or responsibility of each unit within Department?
- Recent changes to DCYA structures focus on
 - Tusla and related areas
 - Early years – strategy and operations
 - Youth and participation
 - Corporate functions including finance, HR, research
- Governance issues reflected throughout DCYA



Some final reflections ...

- Ensure clarity in legal relationships
- Build good processes for engagement; develop and modify as needed – but make them stick
- Emphasise the non formal interactions as well as the legal/formal ones
- Build trust, openness, honesty
- Call it, fix it, learn from it, move on
- Promote improvement, not defensiveness
- Keep asking hard questions!

