

# Parenting Support and Parental Participation

## Mapping Parenting Support in the Irish Context

### KEY FINDINGS



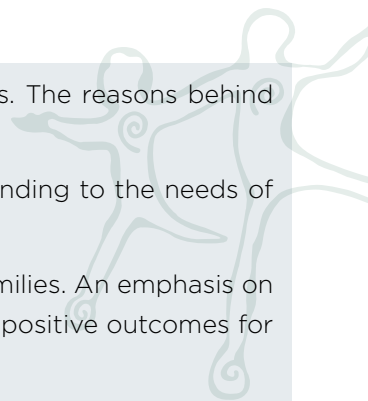
By Dr Nuala Connolly and Dr Carmel Devaney | FEBRUARY 2017

## Introduction

This study provides a mapping of parenting support service provision in Ireland. It outlines the policy context, the existing evidence base and is informed by the best available data. It details the delivery of services in specific geographical areas to provide additional insight, highlighting the similarities and diversity across areas in providing parenting support.

## Key Findings

- Parenting support itself is a broad concept, it includes direct supports and actions aimed exclusively at improving parental skills and capacities, and indirect parent and family supports aimed at improving outcomes for families.
- The delivery of parenting supports in Ireland is multi-faceted. At a national level, a number of government departments are responsible for the delivery of a range of supports in different contexts. At a local level, the delivery of parenting support services varies from area to area.
- Indirect supports for parents and families are fundamental to the delivery of parenting support. They may be aimed at families in particular contexts or families with particular needs. Such services indirectly support parents to improve outcomes for their families.
- Interagency working at a national and local level is an important element in the delivery of services. While a variety of stakeholders and service providers are committed to delivering a broad range of services for parents and families, the emphasis on working together has proved successful.
- A progressive universal approach to the provision of parenting support ensures that parents in particular contexts are provided with appropriate services, contributing to positive outcomes for their families.
- While the success of evidence-based, programmatic parenting courses are evident in the areas profiled, such programmes are complemented by a range of local-level family supports and one to-one initiatives which are also effective in delivering supports to parents.
- It is important that parents are aware of available services, however evidence shows that this is not always the case.



- Non-engagement and dropout rates are significant barriers to successful outcomes. The reasons behind these issues need further exploration in programme evaluation and research.
- Ongoing assessment of need is key to the planning of services. For example, responding to the needs of parents who do not speak English as a first language.
- Parent's emotional well-being is essential to improving outcomes for children and families. An emphasis on 'coping' in the strategic direction of parent support service planning would support positive outcomes for children and families.
- Despite an emphasis on inclusivity there remains a possibility that all parents may not access the supports available to them. Providing opportunities for all parents to engage with existing services is important and should be reflected in service planning.

*This literature is derived from the Parenting Support and Parental Participation work package as part of the Development and Mainstreaming Programme for Prevention, Partnership & Family Support.*

Full report is available online at: [www.nuigalway.ie/cfrc/mainstream/ourworktoday](http://www.nuigalway.ie/cfrc/mainstream/ourworktoday)

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, Institute for Lifecourse and Society, Upper Newcastle Road,  
National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland