

Submission on the Department of Children and Youth Affairs Statement of Strategy 2015- 2017

28th October 2014

Introduction

The Children's Mental Health Coalition (CMHC) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs Statement of Strategy 2015 – 2017. The Children's Mental Health Coalition is the national coalition promoting the realisation of every child's right to mental health and well-being.

The children's policy framework *Brighter Futures, Better Outcomes* includes a commitment under its five national priorities to ensure that children and young people in Ireland achieve mental well-being. The framework includes specific commitments to:

- implement *A Vision for Change* as it relates to children and young people, in particular to improve access to early intervention youth mental health services and coordination of service supports, with a focus on improving mental health literacy and reducing incidents of self-harm and suicide
- implement early intervention and prevention strategies in a number of areas, including youth mental health
- strengthen the participation of children and young people in decision-making for health and well-being at community level
- strengthen transitions between child and adolescent and adult services in the areas of physical and mental health services
- achieve a cross-Governmental approach, in line with the goals of Healthy Ireland, to seek to improve all aspects of health and wellbeing, and to reduce risk-taking behaviour in children, with a particular focus on promoting healthy behaviour and positive mental health

The Children's Mental Health Coalition welcomes these commitments reflecting the importance of mental health to children and young people's overall health and well-being in the present and in the future.

The Children's Mental Health Coalition recommends that the Department of Children and Youth Affairs note the mental health-specific commitments within *Brighter Futures, Better Outcomes* in its Statement of Strategy 2015 – 2017.

The Children's Mental Health Coalition further recommends that the Statement of Strategy include commitments to:

- ensure that every child in Ireland is provided with education on how to look after their mental health and seek help when they are experiencing mental or emotional distress
- improve the mental well-being of children and young people during the period of the Strategy
- work with other Government departments and agencies to ensure the timely, appropriate and equitable access to mental health services, supports and therapeutic interventions, particularly for children and young people in the care and youth justice system
- inter-departmental collaboration to ensure the effective implementation of aftercare plans and supports for children and young people in care, and
- in terms of young people in the care and youth justice system, the Statement of Strategy should make a specific commitment to expanding the Assessment, Consultation and Therapy service (ACTS) to meet the unmet need.

About the Children's Mental Health Coalition

The Children's Mental Health Coalition is chaired by Mental Health Reform and has over 50 member organisations from a range of backgrounds and sectors, including children's rights, human rights, education and mental health services. Our vision is that Ireland should be one of the best places in the world to be a child, where every child's right to mental health is realised.

The Children's Mental Health Coalition is available to discuss the above recommendations. Please contact Kate Mitchell, Policy & Research Officer, at 01 874 9468 or via email at kmitchell@mentalhealthreform.ie for further information.