An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Review of Out-of-School Education Provision

Acronyms

ACTS	Assessment Consultation Therapy Service
AEARS	Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service
ALP	Alternative Learning Programme
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DDLETB	Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria, Australia)
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DE	Department of Education
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DJ	Department of Justice
EOTAS	Education Other Than At School (Northern Ireland)
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETB	Education and training board
EWO	Educational welfare officer
EWS	Educational Welfare Service
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
HSE	Health Service Executive
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NTRIS	National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

POD	Primary Online Database
PPOD	Post-Primary Online Database
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit (Great Britain)
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
TESS	Tusla Education Support Service
SAL	Supervised Alternative Learning (Ontario)
SCP	School Completion Programme
SCU	Special Care Unit
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SSIS	Student Support Information System (Boston)
VET	Vocational education and training
YEP	Youth Encounter Project school

Foreword by the Minister

I am pleased to welcome this Review of Out-of-School Education Provision. Since the 1970's, with the establishment of the Youth Encounter Projects, there has been an education sector which has operated outside of the traditional mainstream school system. This sector has expanded over time and most often as a response to a local need.

This review outlines the education provision delivered to a significant cohort of children who have become disengaged from mainstream education. These out-of-school settings typically support children who have become disengaged when all other options and pathways have been tried in maintaining the student's engagement with mainstream education.

This review focused its scope on the provision of education for children aged 15 and younger. Its aims were to research current provision, to identify how best the sector should be served and to make recommendations for future policy development.

This report has fulfilled this brief and provided a series of well-considered recommendations. I intend to now appoint an implementation group to progress these recommendations. This in turn will inform proposals for the funding of a long-term sustainable model of out of school education provision.

I am grateful to all the members of the working group for their dedicated work on this review, and would like to thank them all for their important contributions.

I look forward to progressing this work and placing the out of school education sector on a more sustainable framework into the future.

Norma Foley TD

Minister for Education

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary

The research in relation to this review was conducted before the onset of Covid19. The review working group recognises that since March 2020, the education landscape has changed. The context of those changes, together with learnings from the provision of education during COVID-19, will be taken into consideration as the recommendations of this report are implemented.

Background

Ireland's school completion rates at lower post-primary and upper post-primary levels are among the highest in Europe (Eurostat, 2021), but there remains a small cohort of young students[1], aged between 13 and 15 in particular who become disengaged from traditional mainstream education. There are many different reasons, from in-school social relationships and difficult primary to post-primary transitions to other factors outside the school environment which cause a fractured school experience for these students. For these students, out-of-school education provision is generally the final option within the education system, when all other supports, options and pathways have been tried and have not proved successful in maintaining their engagement with mainstream education.

Since the establishment of the Youth Encounter Project (YEP) schools in the 1970's, there has been an education sector which operates outside of the traditional mainstream school system. This has expanded since this time, often as a response to a specific local need. Other alternative education settings have now been established in Dublin, Limerick, Cork and other mainly urban areas to provide an alternative education pathway for students who have become disengaged from the mainstream education system. These settings have played an important role in the lives of many of these students, but the nature of their establishment has resulted in a sector without an overarching governance or education structure with which to secure the ongoing existence of these settings.

Context for the Review

Under Action 88 of DEIS Plan 2017[2] the Department of Education (DE) committed to review the current provision for out-of-school education to inform future supports in this area. The policy objective of this review is to set out a structured and standardised approach, endorsed by the State, to meet the educational needs of all children, who have disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from mainstream school. The review sits alongside DE policies such as the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, the continuation of the School Inclusion Model[3], and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Statement of Strategy, all of which set a vision to improve outcomes for students. Out-of-school education provision is also referenced in the

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[1] For the purpose of this report, the term 'student' refers to all children and young people in primary, post-primary and out-of-school education.

[2] https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/DEIS-Plan-2017.pdf

[3] https://ncse.ie/continuation-of-pilot-school-inclusion-model

context of the formulation of the Youth Justice Strategy 2020-2026 by the Department of Justice (DJ)[4].

This review focused its scope on the provision of education for children aged 15 and younger who had become disengaged or were at risk of becoming disengaged from mainstream education. This allowed the review to complement, without duplication, the findings and recommendations of the Evaluation of the National Youthreach Programme (Smyth, Banks, O'Sullivan, & McCoy, 2019) which was commissioned by SOLAS and carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). The extensive qualitative and quantitative research demonstrated the benefits of the Youthreach programme, but also raised some issues around demand, geographic distribution and governance[5].

Aim of the Review

The review of out-of-school education provision had three main aims.

1. To research the current provision of out-of-school education to identify the range, volume and quality of the provision in the sector.
2. To identify how out-of-school education provision should ideally serve this specific cohort and be a sustainable option within the education system.
3. To make recommendations to inform future policy in the area of education provision for students who are at risk of becoming disengaged or have become disengaged from mainstream education.

Review Methodology

A review working group was established to carry out the review, consider the findings and make recommendations for the sector. This group was made up of representatives from relevant units within the DE, Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY[6]) and SOLAS.

This review was conducted through a mixture of a literature review of national and international examples of out-of-school education provision and a data gathering exercise with individuals who have experience of the sector. This data was initially gathered in the form of a survey and followed up with a focus group with a sample of practitioners and young people who had attended out-of-school education provision.

Stakeholders and interested parties had the opportunity to contribute to the review through written submissions and a consultation workshop.

Findings of the Review

Meeting the needs of "at risk" students in mainstream education

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[4] http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Youth_Justice_Strategy_Public_Consultation
[5] https://www.esri.ie/publications/evaluation-of-the-national-youthreach-programme
[6] At the time the review working group was established, TESS and AEARS was under the remit of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Since January 2021, TESS and AEARS is under the remit of the Minister for Education

The working group found that while *Ireland* has a high retention rate to *Leaving Certificate*, there is a small cohort of students, with a diverse range of needs whose level of individual requirement is such that it can be difficult for them to remain engaged in education within a mainstream setting despite the supports available. There may be factors which increase the risk of the student becoming disengaged from education at the level of school organisation, due to the young person's own needs and personal situation and/or within the young person's relationship with the school and their learning. The DE has set out the Continuum of Support Framework[7] which supports school to identify and respond to students' needs, providing support at Whole School/Classroom level, School Support and School Support Plus. It is a notable feature internationally that those countries with higher retention rates than Ireland place an emphasis on vocational education pathways.

Structure of education for students at risk of becoming disengaged from mainstream education

The review found that there is no clear tracking system for students who become disengaged or are at risk of becoming disengaged from mainstream education. A joint working protocol is in place across Tusla to ensure alignment of services in relation to the Section 14 register. Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 requires Tusla to maintain a register of all children[8] and young people under 16 years receiving education outside recognised school settings. However, without an alignment of the data systems of the DE and Tusla which record referrals to the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) and applications for registration under section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act, it is not possible to readily determine an accurate number of children and young people aged 15 and under who are not receiving any education or who are attending out-of-school settings. As the education welfare act requires attendance at a recognised school, these children are under the remit of EWS until such time as the parents submit a valid application for section 14 registration.

Notwithstanding these issues, we are aware that there are a small cohort of students who attend out-of-school education settings. Some of these settings receive support directly and indirectly from the DE and in some cases receive advisory visits from the DE Inspectorate or are assessed by Tusla Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS). From this we are aware that many of the settings are providing an educational and holistic service.

The review found that the structure of support for students at risk of becoming disengaged from education, and how it is provided, is not currently standardised. Research conducted on international models highlight that tiered approaches to retaining 'at risk' students, which include some short term out-of-school intervention have been used and a similar approach was identified among the options submitted by stakeholders in the consultation process.

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[7] https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/#overview-of-neps-service

[8] "child" means a person resident in the State who has reached the age of 6 years and who-
    (a) Has not reached the age of 16 years, or
    (b) Has not completed 3 years of post-primary education,
Whichever occurs later, but shall not include a person who has read the age of 18 years
https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/22/enacted/en/print#sec21

Education provision in out-of-school settings

The findings of the review suggest that out-of-school education settings are providing an educational and holistic service to the cohort of students who have not been able to cope with the demands of mainstream education settings. The benefits of the out-of-school education setting, as reported by attendees at the workshops and in written submissions, are the ability to provide flexible, individual education plans with prolonged support on a one to one basis to students. A wrap-around approach is applied to meeting student needs, using supports from local community services and Government Departments and agencies. However, the approach to the education curriculum, certification and education pathways for students, are very dependent on what can be provided by the individual setting with no consistent approach across the sector.

Governance of Out-of-School Education Settings

The review highlighted the unstructured nature of the provision of out-of-school education with a mix of governance approaches. This has resulted in provision which provides valuable support to an important cohort of children which is vulnerable in terms of funding and stability. This was highlighted in the consultation with practitioners in out-of-school education settings and has been a finding of reports on the sector in other jurisdictions. Greater formalisation of governance arrangements in the provision of out-of-school education would allow for a sustainable and responsive model of support for children who have become disengaged from mainstream education.

Funding of Out-of-School Education Provision

The unit cost per student in out-of-school education is difficult to calculate but current DE funding to the YEP schools equates to approximately €30,000 per student per year. By comparison OECD Education at a Glance 2020 measures Ireland's expenditure on post-primary education settings as US$9,445 (€7,800) per student annually (OECD, 2020). The review found that funding sources across the out-of-school education sector are varied. All settings received some level of support from Government Departments and agencies, but some were more reliant than others on the community and voluntary sectors for the provision of financial resources. The lack of standardised settings and structures means that it is difficult to measure, at a sectoral level, the outcomes of the resources put into the settings.

Location of Out-of-School Supports

At the time the analysis was conducted for this review, out-of-school education provision was primarily focused in the main urban areas in Dublin, Cork and Limerick, with little to none in the west and northwest regions. This does not indicate that there is no requirement for the provision in these areas and the review heard of anecdotal evidence, and noted in the findings of the Evaluation of the National Youthreach Programme, that in exceptional circumstances, small numbers of students younger than 15 years old were being accommodated in Youthreach Centres where no other provision was available. The review found a data-based approach, in consultation with Tusla, would need to be considered to identify where out-of-school education provision was required to meet the needs of students who had become disengaged from

mainstream education with more prompt reporting and recording at school level required to identify those students most at risk.

Recommendations

The recommendations, based on the findings of this report are:

1.

> This report recommends that a framework of support for students at risk of disengaging from education is developed which gives consideration to the position of short term and longer term out-of-school education provision in relation to the current three tier DE Continuum of Support model.

A framework of support for those students who are at risk of becoming disengaged from education should be developed which incorporates the current DE three tier Continuum of Support model and considers the provision of out-of-school education as a support for students, who following full documented intervention through the continuum of support model, remain at risk of disengaging from education. The location of out-of-school education provision in relation to the three tiered continuum of support model should be considered within a flexible framework within which schools and agencies can address a range of needs in a timely manner.

2.

> This report recommends that, standardised structure is required for the governance of out-of-school education provision. This review finds positively on the work which is carried out in out-of-school settings and it is important to provide stability to this provision. It recommends that all settings be supported by state funding to ensure its stability. However, in order to receive funding, out-of-school settings should be required to meet set criteria in relation to the level of education provision, level of teaching, referrals process and overall governance.

While this review finds positively on the work which is carried out in out-of-school settings, it is important to provide stability to this provision. In order to formalise the governance approach in the out-of-school education sector, this report recommends the development of an overarching framework for out-of-school education provision. While there are broad parameters set out in section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 in relation to education provision outside the recognised school system, the framework referenced here would also encompass the overall requirements, governance and structures that alternative out-of-school settings would need to comply with, in order to qualify for funding by the DE.

3.

This report recommends that a referral framework is developed to provide clear structure, guidelines and accountability for the referral process through the continuum of support for the retention of students in education and training.

Development of a referral framework to provide clear structure, guidelines and accountability for the referral process through the continuum of support for the retention of students in education and training.

4.

This report recommends improvement in the current level of the data recording and transfer on the needs, supports, outcomes and attendance of students throughout the education continuum.

Improvement is required in the current level of the data recording and tracking of students who are expelled or referred to educational welfare officers (EWO) due to chronic absenteeism. This should also provide for data tracking and recording of students on the section 14 register of Tusla. Tusla has progressed work on the development of an online referral portal. Additional research on the needs, supports, outcomes and attendance of students who ultimately avail of out of school provision is warranted.

5.

The report recommends that consideration be given to the location and accessibility of short term and longer term out-of-school supports, to prevent the early leaving of students from education and training.

Consideration should be given to the location and accessibility of short term and long term out-of-school education provision, to prevent the early leaving of students from education and training.

6.

A recommendation of this report is the completion of a mapping of all support services available to schools to support the educational and personal development of their students to include all cross departmental, agency and community services.

A mapping of all support services available to schools should be completed to support the educational and personal development of students to include all cross departmental, agency and community services.

The National Youthreach Programme is not covered within the scope of this review, however, it is acknowledged that the future arrangements for the provision of education in the out-of-school sector should take into consideration the education provision provided by Youthreach to ensure that all students are supported, including those aged 16 and older.

Next steps

This review working group recognises the importance of the out-of-school sector in providing education for those students who have become disengaged from mainstream education. Often this is the last chance for education for students who have the highest level of need. It is therefore important that the recommendations of this review are implemented to provide for a defined standard of governance, education and support for this sector.

The first step towards implementing the recommendations of this report will be to put in place an implementation group to oversee the process and ensure each recommendation is progressed to completion. This group will have primary responsibility for ensuring that the recommendations of this report are implemented in line with the timelines outlined. It will also have responsibility for ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are engaged throughout the implementation process and to report on progress.

2. Introduction, Context and Background

2.1 Introduction

An out-of-school service is typically a provision of education, outside of the mainstream[9] school setting, for children who have become disengaged from mainstream education. This provision is generally the final option within the education system, when all other supports, options and pathways have been tried and have not proved successful in maintaining the student's engagement with mainstream education. These settings vary in structure and design but provide an important service for the cohort of students who have become disengaged from mainstream education.

Section 2 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000[10] defines a child as 'a person resident in the State who has reached the age of 6 years and who – (a) has not yet reached the age of 16 years or (b) has not yet completed 3 years of post-primary education, whichever occurs later, but shall not include a person who has reached the age of 18 years'. While this review focuses primarily on children as defined in the Act, the overall aim of education policy is to increase retention rates to Leaving Certificate and to decrease the rate of early school leaving. The recommendations of this review are aimed at fulfilling this overall objective.

This purpose of this review is to assist in the development of a plan for a successful interagency approach to supporting children and young people who have become disengaged or are at risk of becoming disengaged from the mainstream education system. The policy objective of this review is to set out a structured and standardised approach, endorsed by the State, to meet the educational needs of all children, who have disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from mainstream school.

While this report concerns the review of out-of-school education provision, its findings and recommendations can be considered alongside other DE and Government policy to support this cohort of students. The DE Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, the continuation of the School Inclusion Model[11], the DEIS Plan and the NCSE's Statement of Strategy are all DE policy which set a vision to improve outcomes for students at risk of becoming disengaged from education. Out-of-school education provision is also referenced in the context of the publication of the Youth Justice Strategy 2020-2026 by the Department of Justice (DJ)[12.] This report will also inform the policy direction of the TESS and AEARS following the transfer of the agencies to the remit of the Minister of Education. It will also inform policy for the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) in relation to continuous pathways in education for learners who become disengaged from school.

2.2 Policy Context for the Review

Some of the following strategies were in place when this review commenced in 2018. While some are currently undergoing updating or successor policies are being

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[9] For the purpose of this report mainstream school and education refers to all recognised primary and post-primary schools and transitional special schools.
[10] http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/22/section/2/enacted/en/html#sec2
[11] https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2019-press-releases/PR19-03-27-1.html
[12] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3670e-youth-justice-strategy-2021-2027 [13]
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en

developed, the principles underpinning this report were aligned to the strategies in place at the time of commencement.

Education and Training 2020

Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020)[13] is the European Union framework for cooperation in education and training.

In 2009, ET 2020 set four common EU objectives to address challenges in education and training systems by 2020:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promoting equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

The framework sets a number of benchmarks, one of which is to reduce the rate of early leavers from education aged 18-24 to below 10%[14], which has been achieved by Ireland (Eurostat, 2021).

The Council of the European Union Recommendation of 28 June 2011[15] on policies to reduce early school leaving recommends a framework for comprehensive policies to reduce early school leaving. Policies should be based on an analysis at national regional and local level of the conditions leading to early school leaving. A comprehensive strategy, comprised of a mix of policies is recommended, with a coordinated and integrated approach across policy sectors. It recommends that Member States should adopt strategies according to their own circumstances but with three main elements:

- Prevention – reduce the risk before the problems start.
- Intervention – react to early warning signs and provide targeted support.
- Compensation – help those who left school prematurely to re-engage with education through alternative routes.

DEIS Plan 2017

DEIS – *"Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools"* is the main policy initiative of the DE to address educational disadvantage at school level (Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2017)

DEIS Plan 2017 sets out the vision for future interventions in the critical area of educational disadvantage policy and builds on what has already been achieved by schools that have benefitted from the additional supports available under the initial DEIS programme introduced in 2005. The DEIS Plan 2017 is based on the findings of an extensive review of the DEIS programme, which involved extensive consultations with

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[13] http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en
[14] Early leavers from education and training in this instance are defined as young people who had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding surveying.
[15] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011H0701(01)&from=FRF

all relevant stakeholders and resulted in the publication of the Report of the Review of DEIS[16].

Two key elements of the DEIS Plan are:

- The development of a new identification process for the assessment of schools in terms of the socio-economic background of their student cohort using centrally held data including DE Primary Online Database (POD) and Post-Primary Online (PPOD) Databases and the CSO Small Area of Population (SAP) statistics from the National Censuses of Population 2011 and 2016 as represented by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (HP Index[17]).

- The updating of the DEIS School Support Programme which represents the overall 'package' of supports available to schools participating in the programme in order to improve educational outcomes for students at greatest risk of not reaching their full potential by virtue of their socio-economic circumstances.

The Plan sets out a number of goals, one of which is to improve retention rates in schools. One of the actions to support this goal is to review the current out-of-school provision with a view to informing the policy and practice in this area.

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures - The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, led by the DCEDIY, set out the Government's agenda and priorities in relation to children and young people up to 2020. The aim of Better Outcomes Brighter Futures is to move policy development and service delivery to a whole of Government approach between a range of child, youth and adult services to improve the lives and life chances of children and young people.

Specific actions relating to supporting children and young people to remain in education, within Better Outcomes Brighter Futures include:

- The adoption of strategies to strengthen transitions through the educational system;
- Supporting the development of interdisciplinary and inter-professional training programmes which encourage leadership and collaboration for professionals working with children and young people across the range of service delivery;
- Building on existing good practice around clustering of schools to enable better access to educational supports and encourage greater connections between schools, and community and state services;
- Addressing information-sharing issues across sectors and strengthen the integration of data systems, including, where appropriate, to support greater use of data to inform policy, planning and service development.

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[16] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0fea7-deis-plan-2017/
[17] This index provides a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage or a particular geographical area using data compiled from various censuses.
See:https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2018/06/The-2016-Pobal-HP-Deprivation-Index-Introduction-07.pdf

The Department of Education's Statement of Strategy 2021 - 2023

The Department's Strategy Statement, which sets out the vision of an educational system where every child and young person feels valued and is actively supported and nurtured to reach their full potential. In order to achieve this vision and mission, the Statement of Strategy aims to *ensure equity of opportunity in education and that all students are supported to fulfil their potential* by recognising that equality of opportunity and inclusivity must be fundamental principles in our education system.

The successful delivery of this goal means that our school system is open and welcoming for all students, regardless of background, and that in particular learners at risk of educational disadvantage will be supported to achieve their full potential.

This goal is underpinned by key strategic actions. These actions include helping students at risk of educational disadvantage to access appropriate education resources which reflect their diverse needs and support improved outcomes.

The publication of this report is in line with the overall objectives of the Department's statement of strategy.

2.3 Background

Ireland's school completion rates at lower post-primary and upper post-primary levels are among the highest in Europe (Eurostat, 2021). The results of the analysis of the first-time enrolments in secondary school in 2014 showed that (adjusting for emigration, deaths and students remaining in school beyond 2018), 97.6% went on to sit the Junior Certificate exams in 2017 or 2018 and 91.5% went on to sit the Leaving Certificate exams in 2019 or avail of Calculated Grades in 2020.

This retention rate to the Leaving Certificate of 91.5% represents an increase of 0.3 percentage points on the 2013 cohort when it stood at 91.2%. This matches the record high of 91.5% recorded for the 2011 cohort and remains reflective of the steady improvement over the past 15 years, when the retention rate to Leaving Certificate was 82.3% for the 1997 cohort. (Department of Education, 2021).

There have been significant improvements in retention rates in schools in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme. For the cohort of students who entered post-primary school in 2014 the gap in retention rates to Leaving Certificate between DEIS and non-DEIS schools was 8.6%. While this figure is a slight change from the smallest gap recorded to date of 8.5% for the 2011 entry cohort, the figure has almost halved from 16.8% difference recorded for the 2001 cohort. (Department of Education, 2021).

The comparable results for the 2013 cohort were 83.8 per cent for DEIS and 93.1 per cent for non-DEIS, with a gap of 9.3 percentage points.

Ireland's rates of early leavers from education and training[18] is significantly lower than the EU-28 average of 10.3% (Eurostat, 2021) and currently stands at 5% for 2020. The percentage of 20-24 year olds in Ireland whose highest level of education is at least upper secondary level education is also among the highest in Europe at 94.9% (Eurostat, 2021).

Much of the consistent improvement in retention levels in Irish schools in recent years is attributable to the range of supports available. TESS provides three support strands which have all impacted positively on retention rates. The School Completion Programme (SCP), managed by Tusla, is a school-based programme which provides in-school and out-of-school supports for children and young people at risk of becoming disengaged or have become disengaged from education. The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme is a school-based intervention, funded by the DE and managed by Tusla provided to DEIS schools to address the needs of children and their families in schools serving areas of disadvantage through acknowledging and developing the role of the parent as prime educator. This is achieved through targeting the families of students at risk of educational disadvantage and putting in place a range of appropriate support interventions. The statutory Educational Welfare Service (EWS) (formerly School Attendance Service) provides support to students across all DE funded schools. The work of the statutory EWS service is targeted at those students experiencing attendance difficulties and is primarily preventative, with recourse to prosecution where this is deemed necessary to enable students to attend school. Under section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000[19], each school is required to have a Statement of Strategy for School Attendance to support the engagement in learning of students attending that school which is to be submitted to Tusla. The *Tusla Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance - Guidelines for Schools* (Tusla - The Child and Family Agency, 2015) supports schools in preparing this statement and in improving attendance and retention rates.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018[20] provides provisions to make it easier for a child to access their local school by removing the use of religion as a criteria for school admissions, end admissions fees and, provide the Minister with the power to direct schools to cooperate with each other and share information in the admission process. From 2021, this provision will require schools to make a statement in its admissions policy that it will not discriminate on a range of specified grounds, including family status, disability, race and Traveller community grounds.

The DEIS School Support Programme (SSP) consists of a suite of supports, targeted at schools who have a concentrated student cohort at risk of educational disadvantage. These supports include additional financial resources from enhanced capitation and access to the School Meals Programme, School Book Rental Schemes and other additional supports for students in schools serving areas of concentrated disadvantage. It also places a renewed emphasis on the involvement of parents, families and communities in children's education. The DEIS Plan sets as a goal the enhancement of

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[18] Early leavers from education and training in this instance are defined as young people who had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding surveying.
[19] http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/22/section/22/enacted/en/html
[20] http://www.legislation.ie/eli/2018/act/14/enacted/en/pdf

the experience and outcomes of students in DEIS schools. (Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2017).

The review of the DEIS programme noted the importance of the school climate and leadership as being key to providing quality learning experiences for students. Access to the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the availability of wellbeing programmes[21] [22]are likely to be among the factors that have assisted schools to develop and maintain a positive environment and address factors leading to early school leaving. The NEPS Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 (Department of Education and Skills, 2018) provides an overarching structure to the existing work in schools and centres for education to ensure that the experience of children and young people in education is one that nurtures and enhances their wellbeing.

Schools participating in the DEIS programme are required to provide a three-year action plan focusing on at risk students and on identifying and providing a range of supports to increase attendance rates. Evaluations by the DE Inspectorate on Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Post-primary Schools (Department of Education and Skills, 2015) found that where DEIS interventions and supports are having a positive impact on schools in the scheme and, where these are well coordinated and monitored, their impact is increased.

The need for increased attendance, retention and progression levels for Traveller children and young people in order to improve their prospects of better educational outcomes and overall life chances is recognised. The DE 2016 Early Leavers – What Next? Report (Department of Education and Skills, 2016) identified that 500 students who had been in receipt of Traveller community support were enrolled in post-primary school in 2010/2011 were no longer enrolled in 2011/2012, having left school early. This equaled 18% of the 2,767 students who were receipt of Traveller community support for the 2010/2011 school year (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). In June 2017 the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (NTRIS)[23] was published. There are a number of actions in the strategy to address the high rates of early school leaving among Traveller and Roma children and young people. This includes a two year pilot programme to target attendance, participation and school completion in specific Traveller and Roma Communities regionally. This is supported by the DE, DCEDIY with Tusla and Traveller and Roma representative bodies working with schools to improve overall outcomes for Travellers and Roma students.

Research has indicated that the transition from primary to post-primary education is a crucial time point for young people's educational careers. Data from the Growing Up in Ireland National Longitudinal Study of Children, used in the ESRI report *'Off to a good start? Primary school experiences and the transition to second-level education'* (Smyth E. , Off to a good start? Primary school experiences and the transition to second-level education, 2017), reports the difficulties experienced by children at this time. Children following transition reported to be on average less confident in their academic abilities. This was reported to be more prevalent among girls than boys. Social relationships with

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[21] https://assets.gov.ie/25105/b32a40105ca541688f3ab73d9687cccb.pdf

[22] https://assets.gov.ie/41241/b59549d33653430ba47312e5357311d1.pdf /
[23] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c83a7d-national-traveller-and-roma-inclusion-strategy-2017-2021/

peers and teachers, and social background were also reported to have an effect on the post-primary school experience of children transitioning from primary school. Children who did not have large friendship networks, have positive interactions with teachers or were from socially disadvantaged backgrounds where more likely to have a negative attitude to school and poorer school attendance. The study also found that students in second year were more likely to become disengaged from school. By second year students were more likely to have less trust in teachers and peers and to report that they did not like or hated school. The findings of the report highlight the importance of providing a positive school climate for children and young people, particularly following the transition from primary school.

Despite Ireland's overall success in increasing retention rates in education, there still remains a small cohort of young students, aged between 13 and 15 in particular, who do not remain in mainstream education or training. For students aged 15 to 20, there are structured options such as the National Youthreach Programme[24], community training centres or employment. However, there is a statutory requirement under Article 42 of the Constitution[25] for the state to provide primary education, and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000[26] sets out provisions to ensure that children who have not yet reached the age of 16 years receive a certain minimum education. There is a range of alternative settings, many of which receive supports from the DE, Tusla, the regional ETBs and a range of public and private bodies. These settings play a vital role in providing education for students who would not otherwise be able to avail of it.

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[24] Youthreach is a Department of Further and Higher Education Innovation and Science official education, training and work experience programme for early school leavers ages 15 to 20
[25] http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en#article42
[26] http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/22/enacted/en/html

3. Current Out-of-School Education Provision in Ireland

3.1 Categories of students who avail of out-of-school education

This review focuses on those aged 15 and under who have become disengaged or are in danger of becoming disengaged from mainstream education. Tusla is required under Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 to maintain a register of all children in receipt of education in a place other than a recognised school. This register refers to all children not attending recognised school and includes those currently being home-schooled and attending private fee paying (non-recognised) schools. However, without an alignment of data systems across DE and Tusla to record school enrolment and attendance, referrals to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) due to attendance issues and the number of applications for registration under section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act, it is not possible to readily determine an accurate number of children and young people aged 15 and under who are not receiving any education or who are attending out-of-school settings.

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (s.21) requires school principals, to notify an EWO in writing, where a student is, in the opinion of the principal of the recognised school at which he or she is registered, not attending school regularly. Section 24 of the Act specifies that a board of management must inform an EWO where it intends to expel a student. In both cases the EWO is required to *"make all reasonable efforts to ensure that provision is made for the continued education of the student".[27]*

Under the Act, Tusla is tasked with maintaining the Section 14 register and has responsibility for assessing the provision of education where parents have applied for the inclusion of their child on the register. This includes out-of-school education provision as covered within the scope of this review but also extends to Independent fee charging schools, and those receiving home education. The Act also requires schools who have a real concern about a child's attendance to make a referral to Tusla.

Section 20 of the Act specifies that the school principal cannot remove the name of a student from the school register unless the principal has been formally notified in writing by the Tusla that the child concerned is registered in the register maintained under section 14, or by another principal that the child has been registered at another recognised school.

Under section 14 of the Act a parent who chooses to have their child educated in a place other than a recognised school must apply for their child to be registered on the section 14 register. The Alternative Education and Registration Service of Tusla (AEARS) manages section 14 registrations. In theory therefore, all children should be on the register of a recognised school or on the section 14 register.

Depending on the timing of receipt of applications for registration by AEARS it remains possible that students may already be attending out-of-school settings prior to AEARS being in a position to formally revert to the child's previous school notifying them that the child concerned is on the section 14 register.

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[27] http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/22/enacted/en/html

Analysis of data from the Retention Rates of Pupils in Second-Level Schools – 2014 Entry Cohort (Department of Education, 2021) indicates that of those who entered post-primary education in 2014 just 1.3 % did not reach Junior Certificate Year 3 and a further 1.1% did not complete the Junior Certificate exams[28]. This means that 1,497 of the 2014 cohort of students left school prior to completing the Junior Certificate. This figure will include young people who turned 16 years of age and left school. There are a number of students who remain enrolled in recognised school education but who are in danger of becoming disengaged. These students may be on a reduced timetable or only attending sporadically. Therefore it is difficult to gauge exactly the cohort of students who are within the scope of this review. However, this data does indicate that there is a cohort, albeit small relative to the overall majority of students, who are not remaining in recognised school until they have reached the statutory age at which they can leave education.

There are some students who have left mainstream recognised schools and continue to pursue education through different models of provision such as non-recognised fee charging schools or in alternative education settings (including out-of-school settings) but whom complete the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate exams. There are other students, who though they remain enrolled in mainstream school, were sanctioned for the home tuition component for children with diagnoses of school phobia and/or associated depression and anxiety. There were 364 such students in the 2019/20 school year. A further 277 students were granted home tuition where the student had a medical condition which caused and was likely to cause, major disruption to their attendance at school in the 2019/20 school year. These students remain enrolled in mainstream school but cannot attend due to special educational needs (SEN) or medical reasons.

Students may also be approved for the home tuition scheme for non-SEN children who are out-of-school or expelled and unable to secure a school place. There were 162 children approved under this scheme for the school year 2019/2020. Applicants are approved for one school term at a time in the hope that they secure a new school place before having to apply for a second or third term.

There are some students who leave mainstream education and pursue education in alternative education models which are not recognised by the DE. Settings such as the XLC project[29] and ALFA project[30] are examples of this.

Youthreach and Community Training Centres[31] are catering for some children who are under the age of 16 where no other provision is available. The Evaluation of the Youthreach Programme commissioned by SOLAS and conducted by the ESRI featured reports from centre managers of increased inquiries from children below 16 years old and instances of where the child had been out of school for 18 months (Smyth, Banks, O'Sullivan, & McCoy, 2019) The extensive qualitative and quantitative research

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[28] Figures are adjusted to take into account those from the cohort who may have emigrated or deceased in the period under consideration (Department of Education and Skills, 2018)
[29] http://www.wstcys.ie/services/xlc-project-citywide/?nowprocket=1
[30] http://www.alfaproject.org/
[31] A CTC (Community Training Centre) provides training, educational and employment related services for young people in a friendly and informal manner.

demonstrated the benefits of the Youthreach programme, but also raised some issues around demand, geographic distribution and governance.

3.2 Out-of-School Education Settings

Education provision, outside of the mainstream, provided for children identified in the scope of this review is delivered through a range of centres and programmes. Provision is delivered through education centres and schools in residential centres and special care centres, Line Projects, Life Centres and other learning programmes for early school leavers. This provision caters for children who have become disengaged or are in danger of becoming disengaged from the mainstream school model. Some of these children have been put into the care of the state. A table outlining the details of provision in out-of-school education settings is provided at Appendix 1.

Youth Encounter Project schools (YEPs)

Alternative education provision, as defined in the scope of this review, has its origins in the formation of the Youth Encounter Project (YEP) schools in the 1970's. They were a consequence of revised thinking by the State at the time of the manner in which education and care provision should be made for young people at risk of coming into conflict with authority and of becoming disengaged from mainstream education. The new schools provided a non-residential community-based alternative to mainstream schools, they were structurally and pedagogically different, providing personalised education and flexibility in teaching and programmes.

The original guidelines for teachers in YEP schools (Department of Education, 1977) focused on personal development and encouraged schools to avoid "an approach of the traditional kind". Because of the intensive nature of the education, schools were to enrol no more than twenty-five students each, with a pupil-teacher ratio of approximately eight to one. Categories of staff not usually available to schools included counsellors, community workers and a "bean/fear an tí"[32] (Department of Education and Science, 2008) . All staff shared an educational responsibility, as personal education was seen in broader terms than in mainstream schools. The cultivation of a home environment was seen as central to the YEP school model of intervention.

In 2021 there are five YEP schools:

- St. Paul's YEP school, Deanstown Avenue, Finglas West, Dublin 11
- St. Augustine's Special School, Sexton Street, Limerick
- Henrietta Street School, Henrietta Street, Dublin 1
- St. Laurence O'Toole Special School, North Strand, Dublin 1
- St. Kevin's School, The Rectory, Infirmary Road, Cork

At the time of the review, enrolment in these schools varied from 16 to 25 (DE, 2021). YEP schools are situated in locations where there is a greater risk of disadvantage. Four of the five YEP schools are located in city centre areas and they are easily accessible for those students whose lives are embedded in particular areas of the cities. The YEP schools provide education up to Junior Certificate level. These schools have roll

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[32] The "bean/fear an tí" is responsible for cooking and meals as an aspect of learning social and life skills.

numbers and are recognised as special primary schools but they do offer education on the post-primary curriculum. Teachers are able to access the range of supports provided by the professional development services.

Schools in Special Care Units (SCUs)

Tusla has responsibility for children who are at risk from their own behaviour and as a result of special care orders granted by the courts, need to be cared for in a secure environment. Under the Children Act 2001[33], Tusla made the necessary funding available for the provision of facilities for non-offender children. The DE, either directly or through the relevant ETB, provide education services.

SCUs provide residential care for children legally deemed to be at risk from their own behaviour, or in need of care and protection and who require the provision and delivery of education services in a secure and therapeutic environment. The schools in these settings may also provide education for children in care who are in need of higher support, with severe emotional and behavioural problems, whose presenting difficulties cannot be met in mainstream schools. The service provides opportunity for additional support to young people, via higher staff ratios and higher levels of therapeutic input. It is less restrictive than secure provision.

Currently there are three schools in special care settings in the state. These schools are:

- St. Canice's School, Coovagh House, St. Joseph's, Mulgrave Street, Limerick
- Crannóg Nua Special School, Portrane, Co. Dublin
- Ballydowd Special Care School, Ballyowen, Palmerstown, Dublin 20

The majority of the children attending these schools are either in residential care in a centre on the same campus as the school or in relatively close proximity to it. Some are in a shared placement in a foster home and a small number live in their own homes with their parents or close relatives. The provision in these schools includes a range of supports designed to support the young persons' emotional wellbeing and behaviour. At the time of the review enrolment in these schools ranged from six to 20 students. (DE, 2021)

Residential School

Until 2018, Coláiste Shliabh Na mBan (formerly known as St. Joseph's Residential School) Ferryhouse, Co. Tipperary was an open residential centre, owned and managed by Tusla, for boys between the ages of 10 and 17.

Responsibility for the provision of education at St. Joseph's School is with Tipperary ETB.

This school has been included within this review and has informed this report based on its former designation as a residential school. The education provision, under Tipperary

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[33] http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2001/act/24/enacted/en/html

Education and Training Board no longer operates on the basis of catering solely for children in residential care and now also caters for children who have become disengaged or are at risk of becoming disengaged from the education system. Referrals come from Tusla EWOs and Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Services. In general, the students are all either in care or referred voluntarily.

Line Projects

In the early 1990's line centres such as Carline Centre for Learning, Lucan, Co. Dublin and City Motor Sports, Francis Street, Dublin 8 were established to bring together the community, parents, state agencies and relevant Government Departments in order to respond to the needs of young people aged 13 to 18 who had become disengaged from mainstream education. Since then they have developed into a social care centre of learning which offers a combination of educational, emotional and social care programmes. The DE, through the relevant regional ETB, funds the provision of education in these centres, providing financial supports through the part-time hour's scheme for the teachers they employ. Line projects are not recognised schools and therefore not subject to inspection by the DE and may not have access to the full range of supports available to teachers in recognised schools.

Life Centres

Life Centres were initially established by the Christian Brothers in 1996, with the assistance of the Holy Faith Sisters, to cater for young people between the ages of 12 and 18 who are out of the mainstream school system. There were two Life Centres included in the scope of this report who were in operation at that time.

- Cork Life Centre currently caters for approximately 50 students and supports them in preparation for State examinations.
- Cherry Orchard Life Centre, Dublin 10 was established in the early 2000's to cater for the most vulnerable 12-16 year olds in the community of Dublin 10.

The DE supports Cork Life Centre through the provision of funding and teaching hours. A number of the workers in these centres are voluntary. Cherry Orchard Life Centre closed in 2020.

Foróige Early School Leavers Programme

Foróige has provided an Early School Leavers Programme[34] in Blanchardstown since 1992 to cater for the formal and non-formal educational and personal development needs of a targeted group of young people from across Dublin 15 who have become disengaged from mainstream education. The programme aims to provide opportunities to children who are at risk of educational disadvantage and who are no longer in mainstream education. Young people may attend for between one and three years, depending on their age and needs, until completion of the Junior Cycle and/or return to mainstream education or an alternative learning site.

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[34] www.foroige.ie

Cork City Learning Support Service

Cork City Learning Support Service operates as part of the 'Youthreach family' catering for students aged 12 to 18 and has a capacity for 60 to 70 students. It operates under the aegis of Cork ETB. This setting caters for students who have become disengaged or are at risk of becoming disengaged from mainstream education. It aims to reintegrate students to mainstream settings, but does offer certification up to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and Junior Cycle levels for students who remain in the setting. This service is linked with a Youthreach setting and this acts as an alternative pathway for those who do not reintegrate to the mainstream school system.

Online and blended learning

iScoil[35] and the Alternative Learning Programme[36] provide an online or blended learning alternative pathway for early school leavers aged between 13 and 16 years old.

- iScoil is an individual learning programme with an online mentor, with additional support in iScoil blended learning centres. The programme can be accessed by the student from their own home or a local blended centre, such as ETB facilities, local libraries and other community facilities. The first blended learning centre was set up in 2010. In the 2017/18 school year iScoil catered for 77 young people across 17 counties, 73 of whom were full time students who logged in from home or from blended learning centres[37]. In late 2019, DCEDIY provided additional funding of €100,000 to allow children access iScoil under the SCP.[38]
- The Alternative Learning Programme (ALP)[39] is an initiative of the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB. The programme commenced in 2012 and uses a combination of local Youth Workers and ETB tutors to deliver the programme. This programme is delivered over three days per week coinciding with the academic term. The programme relies heavily on the support of the EWOs, school principals and parents/guardians.

A partnership was developed in 2016 between the ALP and iScoil to offer young people an opportunity to gain QQI Level 3 certification (which is equivalent to the Junior Certificate on the National Framework of Qualifications).

Other forms of provision

The Inspire Programme, Dublin 8: This programme was set up to assist children at risk of leaving school early to remain engaged in education. Up to eight students at a time attend the Inspire programme for eight week periods, spending four days a week in the centre and each Friday back in their own school.

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[35] https://iscoil.ie/
[36] https://www.ddletb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Youth-ALP-Revised-Booklet-2018.pdf
[37] https://iscoil.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/iScoil_AnnualReport2019.pdf
[38] https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/8a0734-minister-zappone-announces-funding-provision-of-1514000-under-the-wh/
[39] http://www.ddletb.ie/Footer/Youth-and-Sport-Development-Services/Alternative-Learning-Programme.aspx

St. John's Education Centre, Glasnevin: This centre was established by the Holy Faith Sisters and De La Salle Brothers to target students at risk of exclusion or becoming disengaged from mainstream education. This programme aims to provide a short term 'time out' period from school with a view to reintegrating the student in the mainstream school.

St. Anthony's Education Centre, Athlone: This centre aims to provide education and a caring environment to cater for children in the area who have difficulty adapting to the structure and demands of a mainstream school. The Longford and Westmeath ETB provide the majority of the funds and support for the running of the school. Other local agencies provide additional support to the centre.

Roscrea Education Centre: This centre provides a Youthreach programme and Back to Education Initiative for early school leavers in the North Tipperary region. The majority of students in the centre are aged 16 and over, however it does cater for some students as young as 14 where no other provision is available.

3.3 Other Reviews of Out-of-School Education Settings

The DE Inspectorate in 2017, published a composite report of evaluations of the schools in special care, high support and residential settings entitled *'Education of Children in Detention and Care'* (Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate, 2017). The findings of these evaluations identified strengths in relation to the quality of teaching, range of subject choices, accreditation opportunities and fostering of good relationships. Areas for improvement highlighted included the assessment of student needs, individualised planning and target setting. It also highlighted the importance of having established links between the out-of-school education settings with the student's previous and future school or education setting to avoid further fragmentation in their education. The report recommended giving serious consideration to the placing of all of these schools under one patron body, together with exploring the benefits of also including YEP schools and the Youthreach Programme under the same patronage (Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate, 2017).

The DE in 2008, published a '*Value for Money Review of Youth Encounter Project (YEP) Schools'* (Department of Education and Science, 2008). The review was positive in regard to the YEP schools and their ability to meet their objectives. The report made recommendations in relation to establishing a more structured approach to maintain and improve performance and using the expertise of YEP school staff in the wider education community to increase retention levels. This review led to the permanent recognition of the YEP schools by the DE (Department of Education and Science, 2008).The Inspectorate continue to carry out inspections and advisory visits of YEP schools, which continue to inform both the schools and the Department of these school's strengths and areas for development in meeting the needs of the most marginalised

4. Review Structure

4.1 Review Working Group

The DE working with Tusla established a working group to carry out the current review of out-of-school education provision. The working group membership had a cross departmental and interagency nature.

Membership of the group was invited from the following Departments and agencies.

- Department of Education (DE)
- Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)
- Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- SOLAS

The remit of the group was to review the current out-of-school education provision and make recommendations with a view to developing a framework for education provision in the area. The objective was to ensure greater cohesion and cross-sectoral cooperation for future delivery of supports to cater for those who have become disengaged or who are at risk of becoming disengaged from mainstream education.

Details of the working group members are provided at Appendix 2.

4.2 Review Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the review as agreed by the working group, having due regard to the level of provision in the sector, were;

1. What does current provision for out-of-school education look like?
2. What should it look like?
3. How can the State provide for it?

4.3 Review Scope

The scope of the review as agreed by the working group was defined as:

Education provision in the State for children aged 6-16 years (or who have received less than 3 years of post-primary education, whichever is the later) who have become disengaged or are at risk of becoming disengaged from mainstream education.

The scope does not extend to education provision for children in:

- Independent fee charging schools
- All categories of Home Tuition
- Home education, where a parent/guardian has chosen to educate their child themselves

The scope of this review relates to out-of-school education provision for those children who are under the age of 16 (or have not yet completed 3 years of post-primary school). This aligns with the definition of a child under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 for whom the provision of education is a statutory requirement.

The methodology of the review process involved a review of related literature and international models, data collection, and a public consultation including both written submissions and verbal engagement with stakeholders, managers, children and young people. A full methodology of the review is provided at Appendix 3.

An evaluation of the National Youthreach Programme was commissioned by SOLAS in advance of this review and has been published by the ESRI[40]. Therefore, to avoid duplication, education provision in Youthreach was excluded from the scope of this review. The working group acknowledge however, that the future arrangements for the provision of education in the out-of-school sector should take into consideration the education provision provided by Youthreach to ensure that all students are supported, including those aged 16 and older. The working group liaised with SOLAS and the ESRI throughout the Review process.

5. Out-of-School Education Provision – International Context: Review of Literature

5.1 Early School Leaving in the European Context

The working group conducted a review of literature relating to international models of out-of-school and alternative education provisions. A range of international models were reviewed, identifying best practice and its relevance and applicability to Ireland.

Across different social contexts and educational systems, early school leaving is found to be disproportionately concentrated among young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those with SEN (Smyth, Banks, Whelan, & Darmody, 2015). A number of studies have also focused on how school policy and practice can contribute to or counter school drop-out. Student teacher relations are found to have a significant influence on school retention with students half as likely to drop out if they feel supported by their teachers in their efforts to succeed in school, with students who have experienced academic difficulties or from poor socio-economic background most responsive to teacher support (Smyth, Banks, Whelan, & Darmody, 2015).

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE), in 2017, published the report, *Early School Leaving and Learners with Disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs*. This report set out to explore the challenges faced by policy makers in the EU to respond to early school leaving. EASNIE identified a number of challenges:

- Difficulties in agreeing and applying common definitions
- The need to see early school leaving as a set of processes running through a learner's life, rather than an outcome

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[40] https://www.esri.ie/publications/evaluation-of-the-national-youthreach-programme

- Different subgroups of learners may experience early school leaving and is subjected to different risks and protective factors
- Actions laid out in policy are divided into those that focus on prevention, intervention or compensation
- The focus for action needs to be at different levels and these include a school improvement focus, a learner engagement and motivation focus and a focus on the wider social aspects of learners' lives. (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017, p. 6)

EASNIE (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017) identify early school leaving as the outcome of a range of different interacting processes which present different risks for different individuals. In order to understand the processes involved they propose modelling early school leaving in terms of risk, protective and compensation factors. They define prevention as the ability to anticipate risks, intervention as attempts to overcome needs or develop protective practices and strategies and compensation as allowing for a second chance at learning or increasing opportunities. While the Youthreach model is cited in the report as an example of successful compensatory support, the importance of actions related to intervention and prevention are stressed as central to the development of policy and practice.

EASNIE (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017) have identified three risk processes which may act on their own, or interact with each other. These are described as Push-Out, Pull-Out and Fall-Out. These three processes require consideration at school organisational level, at community level and in terms of connectedness and success in school. The Push-Out factors relate to school discipline and teacher and curriculum focus. When these areas begin to work against an individual the overall effect may be that the learner is 'pushed out' of education (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017, p. 9). Pull-Out is seen in terms of the individual and factors relating to family, peer, community and financial pressures. While Fall-Out is used to describe a process of mismatch between the learner and his/her learning, with pressures on academic success, belonging and motivation. The factors described in the literature are illustrated in the graphic below.
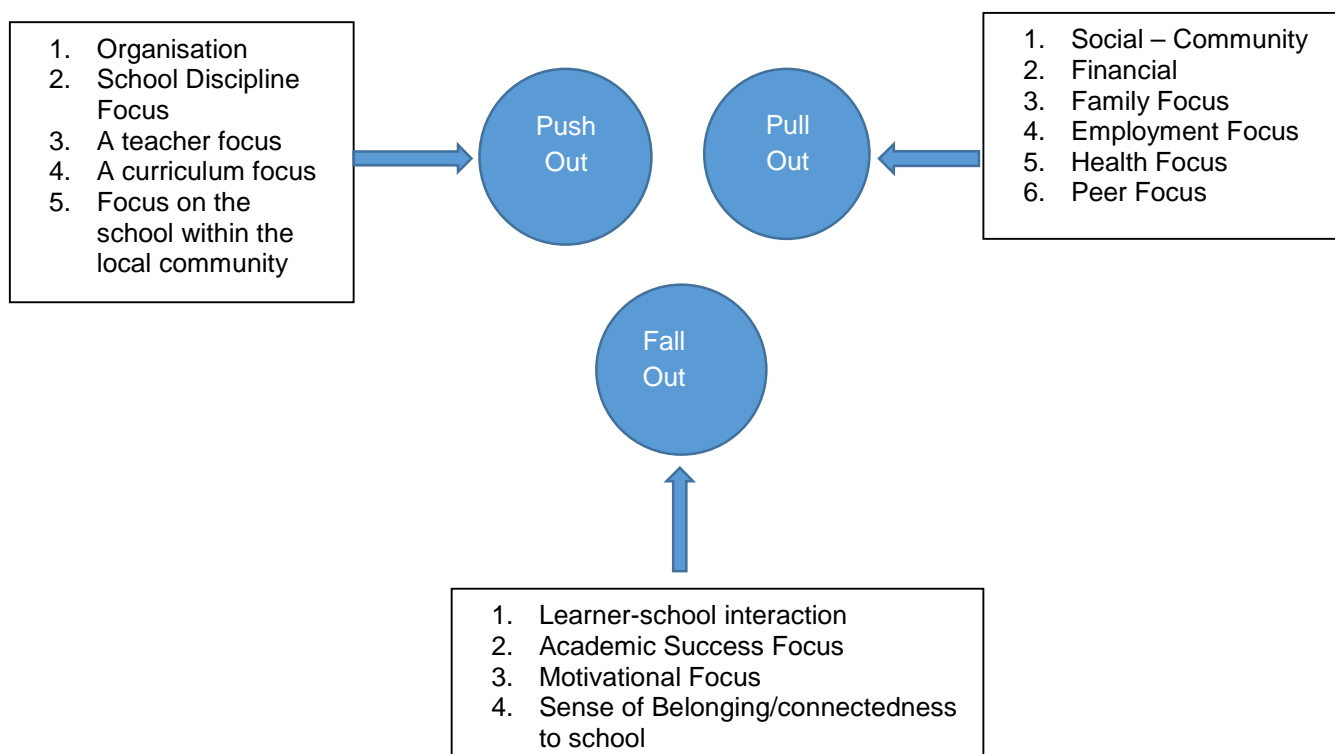
Figure 5.1 Illustration of the push out, pull out and fall out processes which may act on their own, or interact with each other to cause early school leaving as described in Early School Leaving and Learners with Disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017)

Understanding the individual risk and protective factors, or the interaction of multiple risk factors can lead to the development of prevention strategies which can be tailored to have a particular focus. This is broad and may be considered in terms of societal and social issues, a school development, or a focus on individual needs in terms of building skills for academic access and success, building resilience, motivation, connectedness and wellbeing.

Eurostat figures for 2020 (Eurostat, 2021) show that 5% of Ireland's population aged 18 to 24 were early leavers from education and training. This was the sixth lowest in Europe. The five countries with lower rates are Croatia, Greece, Switzerland, Slovenia and Montenegro. It is notable that, with the exception of Greece, a common theme across these countries is a strong focus on Vocational Education and Training (VET) and a flexible approach to learning (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2019; OECD, 2019). Switzerland's vocational and professional training structure is strongly employer and market driven and designed to respond to changes in demand (Switzerland around the World, 2022). In recent years Swiss-Croatian cooperation has helped modernise the Croatian VET model and promoted a similar work-based learning approach. Croatia now has the lowest rate of early leavers and amongst the highest share of upper secondary students in vocational learning with 69.6% in 2017. Current policy aims to reduce this share to 60% (Cedefop, 2020).

A study prepared for the European Commission by research company, Ecorys, examined 15 out-of-school education schemes across 10 European countries (Austria,

France, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and their transferability to initial education settings to prevent early school leaving in Europe (Day, Mozuraityte, Redgrave, & McCoshan, 2013). The research found varying models of governance and funding. Funding was found to be an issue in most states with factors such as limited public funds, changing national or institutional priorities and demographic changes affecting the ability to finance the schemes. Models co-located within mainstream schools, such as the micro-lycée model in France, were seen as successful. These co-located programmes were able to develop innovative approaches within the mainstream system, which were linked to policy priorities, and were thus supported by local and national institutions. Partnership with community organisations was identified as a key success factor from a number of sources in the report. Active participation by students was encouraged in all of the schemes and relationships with peers is an aspect of out-of-school education mentioned by students in the report as different from mainstream education schools.

The review of a European pilot project on second chance schools (European Commission, 2001) concluded that factors linked to success of out-of-school education included:

- a link with local employers can prove beneficial to contextualise learning, reflect the needs of the young person and provide opportunities for work experience.
- personalised learning and the provision of formal and non-formal education. Learning is embedded in practical activities with a focus on building self-confidence, personal and life skills rather than qualifications (Day, Mozuraityte, Redgrave, & McCoshan, 2013).
- social and emotional support provision for complex challenges faced by students inside and outside the school environment.
- a safe and sociable school environment.

Literature on out-of-school and alternative in-school education provision in six other educational jurisdictions was reviewed by the working group and the key points are set out below.

5.2 Northern Ireland

Under Article 86(1) of the Education (NI) Order 1998, all Education and Library Boards have a duty to "make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who by reason of illness, expulsion or suspension from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them" (Department of Education NI, 2014).

Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) is the model of out-of-school education provision in Northern Ireland. It is not designed as a stand-alone alternative to school but instead aims to meet specific needs and help children overcome barriers to learning. It is provided by the local education and library boards through EOTAS centres or contracted providers. Education and Library Boards refer students, following consultation with parents and the school, to an EOTAS placement. The mainstream

school remains responsible for the educational outcomes of the student, even when in EOTAS and is expected to maintain regular contact with the student to ensure their needs are being met.

Each student is set a tailored education plan with individual development targets, decided with input from their mainstream school. EOTAS centres report to the mainstream school with attendance data and progress reports. This in turn is formally reported by the school to the student's parents/guardian and to the Education and Library Board as with all enrolled students.

Funding from the Education and Library Boards relating to students placed in EOTAS is recouped from the mainstream school on a pro rata basis and is then reinstated as the school contributes to the student's ongoing education (Department of Education NI, 2014).

There are three types of EOTAS provision:

- Short term placement focused on social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) which may be conducted with continued attendance in school.
- Longer term placement addressing SEBD and curriculum issues, delivered out-of-school but linked to the enrolling school.
- Exceptional arrangements where attendance at group provision is temporarily unsustainable and the aim is to re-establish links to the school at the earliest opportunity.

EOTAS centres are subject to inspection by the Education and Training Inspectorate. The Chief Inspectors Report 2016-18 (Education and Training Inspectorate Northern Ireland, 2019) found an overall effectiveness of provision in 80% of providers inspected. The most effective centres provided broad, individual curricula and focused strongly on the academic development and the emotional wellbeing of students. In these centres students obtained meaningful accreditation which led to entry to further education and training or other study. However, it did find that better links with schools, in planning personal education programmes and targets were required and that the governance of the provision needed to be developed further.

In 2019 the rate of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 not in education, employment or training in Northern Ireland was 10.2%, the lowest in the United Kingdom at that time (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency , 2019).

5.3 Great Britain

Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded students, and for other students who – because of illness or other reasons – would not receive suitable education without such provision. This applies to all children of compulsory school age[41] resident in the local authority area, whether or not

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[41] This varies depending on country. See https://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school

they are on the roll of a school, and whatever type of school they attend (Department for Education, 2013).

Generally, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)[42] are established and maintained by local authorities in order to provide education for students who have become disengaged from the mainstream education model. Other alternatives such as Alternative Provision Academies[43] and Free Schools[44] are available. PRUs have often converted to these models. PRUs are operated by management committees, containing representatives of relevant stakeholders such as parents, staff, the local authority, community groups and sponsors. Members of the management committee are appointed by the local authority and have responsibility for managing a delegated budget. Recruitment and staff management are managed by the committee although the local authority remain the employer. Students may be registered with both their mainstream school and the PRU, attending each on a part-time basis.

There are also a range of alternative provision options provided by independent schools, further education colleges, charities and private businesses. Alternative education is often intended to be therapeutic in nature, dealing with behavioural and mental health issues and may offer vocational learning.

Reviews noted that the disjointed nature of alternative provision has resulted in unsatisfactory academic outcomes and a lack of support for reintegration into mainstream school or progression to further education and training or employment (Tate & Greatbatch, 2017). Recent pilot programmes containing a more active role for schools for ensuring effective education provision for all have shown more positive results.

The Education Excellence Everywhere White Paper (Department for Education, 2016) sets out the United Kingdom Government's commitment to reform the alternative provision system so that mainstream schools remain accountable for the education of students in alternative provision and are responsible for commissioning high quality provision (Tate & Greatbatch, 2017).

Increasing numbers of exclusions and a rise in the number of students being educated in alternative provision has led to an inquiry by the House of Commons Education Committee, titled *Forgotten Children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions* (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018) and an independent review led by Edward Timpson which led to the publication of *Creating Opportunity for All – Our vision for alternative provision* (Department for Education, 2018). This vision wants to ensure that schools are supported to create the culture and system to support children to remain in school and to place the only children with acute needs in alternative provision in a planned approach. It also set out to ensure that children who attend alternative provision receive a good quality education and achieve

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[42] Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) teach children who are not able to attend school and may not otherwise receive suitable education.
[43] Alternative Provision Academies are public funded independent schools who may also have private sponsors. Academies do not have to follow the national curriculum and can set their own term times and are run by an academy trust who employs the staff (gov.uk, 2018).
[44] Free Schools are "all-ability" schools funded by the government but not run by local council. Free schools often work with local employers and develop a curriculum designed to give students skills for work (gov.uk, 2018).

meaningful outcomes. It also aims to recognise alternative provision as an integral part the education system which is monitored and evaluated.

In 2019 the rates of early school leaving in the United Kingdom were around the European average at 10.7%. This varied within the country, ranging from 6% in London to almost 14% in the East of England (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2019).

5.4 Victoria, Australia

In 2009 the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), Victoria commissioned a review of alternative provision in the state (KPMG, 2009). The review signalled the development of a four tier approach to children and young people at risk of disengagement or have already become disengaged:

- Tier 1: Differentiated provision of education which responds to different needs with a diverse range of educational programmes. All schools are responsible for engaging and motivating students.
- Tier 2: Targeted measures to promote engagement (such as school-based mentoring services).
- Tier 3: Short-term intensive programmes provided on the school site but away from the regular classroom for some or all of the timetable.
- Tier 4: Complex and intense provision in separate or off-site settings. This is appropriate where all other options have been exhausted, where there is a long history of disengagement or exclusion and where re-integration is a long-term option (Harper, Heron, Houghton, & O'Donnell, 2011).

Schools can draw on a range of data and tools to identify students who are at risk of disengagement. These include the Student Mapping Tool, a computer-based application available to all Victorian Government schools that collates a range of school-level data to identify those students at risk of becoming disengaged (State Government of Victoria, Support for Disengaged and At Risk Students - Identifying students at risk, 2022). Where possible schools have developed innovative in-school programmes to cater for students who have become disengaged or are at risk of becoming disengaged. Each school is required to have a Student Engagement Policy, developed to promote and maintain student engagement in the mainstream school setting. Only as a last resort is the tier four option of off-site alternative provision utilised.

The Navigator re-engagement programme is available for students who are aged between 12 and 17 years of age and have attended less than 30% of the previous school term (if enrolled in a school) and either live in or have most recently been enrolled in an education setting in the eight Navigator sites. This programme is a hands on service provided by community agencies in collaboration with the Victoria DEECD's local area teams. This is complemented by school focused youth services which provide in-school support to students at risk of becoming disengaged and Local Learning and Employment Networks (Parliament of Victoria, 2018). The development of the Navigator programme aims to streamline the re-engagement supports in the state. This initially operated on a pilot process. A review of the programme (Parliament of Victoria, 2018) found that it was achieving positive outcomes. As a result the 2018 Victoria State budget committed $44 million (€28 million) to extend the programme statewide on a phased

basis. (State of Victoria (Department of Treasury), 2018). This works alongside the in school supports such as Student Mentoring Programme, Team Around the Learner and the School Focused Youth Service which are available to support the engagement of vulnerable students in school. These programmes facilitate the school to work with community and local government agencies to provide targeted support. Where more intensive supports are required, the student is referred to the Navigator programme (Victoria State Government Education and Training, 2022). The February 2019 school census reported an apparent retention rate in secondary school of 91%[45].

5.5 New Zealand

Alternative education, as provided by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, is seen as a short term intervention to support students and reintegrate them to mainstream school or further training.

Alternative education caters for students between 13 and 15 years of age who are unable to develop their education in a mainstream school. To be eligible for alternative education, the student needs to meet one of the following criteria:

- Out of a registered school for two terms or more.
- Excluded and enrolment is refused by local schools (including a history of stand-downs[46] or suspension in the past two years).
- Has dropped out of Te Kura[47].
- Absent for at least half of the last 20 school weeks for reasons other than illness and the absence has meant they are unable to maintain a mainstream programme.
- Has multiple suspensions and risks further suspension.
- Alienated. At any one time 20% of students do not have to fit one of the first five categories above but in the professional opinion of the school alternative education is the best option for the student.

Students can remain enrolled in alternative education until the end of the year in which they turned 16. In exceptional circumstances students may stay in alternative education past the age of 16 at the discretion of the Director of Education.

The Ministry determines the operational policy for alternative education, managing funds and contracts with managing schools. The managing school is contracted by the Ministry to provide alternative education, but may subcontract this to third party providers. The managing school has final say on the acceptance or not of referrals. The enrolling school refers students to alternative education, but remains responsible for the student's educational success, developing an Individual Learning Plan with the student, their extended family, community and the alternative education provider. These roles are

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[45] https://www.google.ie/url?esrc=s&q=&rct=j&sa=U&url=https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/department/apparentretentionandtransitionrates.xlsx&ved=2ahUKEwjsjOfk7ar2AhWJUcAKHbM1CkMQFnoECAQQAg&usg=AOvVaw1mNNW7zInc-jY6eraAmTGn

[46] **Stand-down** is a temporary removal of a student from school. **Suspension** is a formal removal of a student by the principal, until the Board of Trustees can meet to decide what to do

[47] Te Kura is a correspondence and distance learning school that provides education to children in isolated communities and to those who are alienated from mainstream school (tekura.school.nz)

clearly outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry and the other parties (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017).

A review of alternative provision was conducted as part of an overall review of education provision in New Zealand. This review found that alternative provision varied in quality, but that it did provide the best option in the short-term for some students. The review also found positively on the impact of Te Kura[48] and found it had greater potential to provide flexible schooling for those in need of it. In 2019, 82% of students remained at school to their 17th birthday. Retention of senior students has dropped 3 percentage points since it peaked in 2015.

5.6 Ontario

Ontario Regulation 374/10 'Supervised Alternative Learning and Other Excuses from Attendance in school'[49] was introduced in 2011 to provide structure and clarity for students who are at risk of leaving school early. The age of compulsory school attendance in the state was increased to 18 in 2006 and together with a range of in-school initiatives has seen the rate of school completion increase.

Alternative education provisions form part of the four stage continuum of approaches to re-engage students in Ontario. The stages are:

- Stage 1: Prevention - strategies such as positive school atmosphere, a range of pathways in school, and transition plans for new or returning students
- Stage 2: In-class and in-school interventions - measures such as special education support, transferring to another school, tutoring, coaching, community agency support and credit recovery
- Stage 3: School board interventions such as alternative education programmes
- Stage 4: Supervised Alternative Learning (SAL)[50] where 14 to 17 year olds are excused from school and continue their learning under the supervision of the school board. (Harper, Heron, Houghton, & O'Donnell, 2011)

Other policy developments such as the Safer Schools Approach[51] to promote good behaviour and a positive school climate through parental and community engagement operate in parallel to contribute to meeting the needs of vulnerable students.

The Student Success Strategy[52] is a support programme which has helped resolve transition and engagement issues and helped increase graduation rates. (Harper, Heron, Houghton, & O'Donnell, 2011).

School board intervention programmes include alternative education models which take place away from the school, often in shopping malls or areas where the student feels comfortable. The length of these programmes vary but the student remains linked to the

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[48] https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/main/student-engagement-participation/1955
[49] https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/100374
[50] http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/SAL2011English.pdf
[51] http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/saferSchools.html
[52] http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/studentsuccess/strategy.html

school and continue to earn credits towards their school diploma with the aim to re-integrate to the mainstream education model in the school.

Supervised Alternative Learning Programmes (SAL) are used for a small segment of population, where all other measures are not effective and students have been excused from their school and are at risk of not graduating. All students in SAL are given an individual learning plan to enable them progress towards obtaining their Secondary School Diploma and achieve other goals and skills development. SAL is delivered through grouped delivery in an SAL Centre, partly structured programmes which may include attendance at school for periods of the day and independent programmes where students do not attend a site are provided. These programmes are effective in isolated areas.

The aim of SAL is for students to either return to secondary school or proceed to a post-secondary education, training or employment when they reach age 18. Each student in SAL has a 'primary contact' who plays a key role, particularly in individual programmes, in monitoring and reviewing progress.

Achieving Excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2014) sets out the Ontario Governments action plan for education in the state. It seeks to develop the potential of every student and at second level in particular proposes more flexible learning practices and pathways for students to retain engagement. This allows more project based and experiential learning to engage the students' interests. Ontario's *Education Equity Plan* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017) builds further on this to plan a more inclusive environment for all students to achieve their potential. The Ontario has seen a steady increase in 5 year graduation rates over recent years to 87.1 in 2018[53].

5.7 Summary

The review of international literature on alternative education provision highlights the different target populations, enrolment criteria and types of interventions used to support those who have become disengaged from mainstream education.

However, within the literature a number of common themes emerged, including:

- The need to develop mainstream schools' capacity to retain students in the school settings and the need for measures to ensure as few students as possible avail of out-of-school provision.
- The common use of a tiered model, whereby there is a graduated approach to meeting student needs and long term education outside the mainstream system is an exceptional case.
- Individualised learning plans with a varied curricula are key to providing positive learning outcomes for students in out-of-school education settings.
- The involvement of social and behavioural supports are necessary for the personal development of students in out-of-school education.
- Maintaining strong links to the enrolling school in the development of individual curriculum and monitoring of progress is important for creating a pathway for re-introduction to mainstream school/further education and

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[53] https://www.app.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/bpr/allBoards.asp?chosenIndicator=11

training for students in out-of-school education. These may often be physical links, with students spending some portion of the school week in the mainstream school.

- The importance of an organised governance model for alternative education for greater oversight and assurance. A singular governance model is also seen to aid greater consistency in data collection and in monitoring and assessing alternative education providers.
- The provision of education for students outside the mainstream system is widely recognised as best delivered at a localised and individual level, often by regional councils or education boards.
- Individual education plans should support the student to achieve formal education qualifications.
- Data informed models which track students' needs and progression are seen as key to effective intervention.
- Community based approaches, with links to local industry, have shown potential to improve outcomes for students at risk of becoming disengaged from education.

Funding for alternative provision is generally provided through local councils or education boards. In some instances the provision is subcontracted to a private provider, often where there may be only one or a small number of students. In Northern Ireland, funding moves with the student when they move into alternative provision.

6. The Irish context: Mapping existing provision and providers

The working group identified 23 schools, centres or programmes who were delivering education for children and who were within the scope of the review[54]. In early 2018 a comprehensive questionnaire was sent to each of the settings and all were competed and returned to the working group for analysis.

The questionnaire sought information in relation to the education provider, the children who were provided for and the education provision itself. An example of the questionnaire is provided at Appendix 4. The findings are detailed below.

6.1 The Education Provider

6.1.1 Location

Of the 23 education providers identified within the scope of the review, 11 were located within the greater Dublin area. Two providers were located in each of Limerick City and County Tipperary; Cork was served by a YEP school, a Special Care Education Centre, a Life Centre and Cork City Learning Support Service. County Westmeath had a single provider.

iScoil and Alternative Learning Programmes provide education for children outside of mainstream education through a range of blended centres located throughout Leinster and Munster.

Two high support special schools one of which served the South East based between Kilkenny, Wexford and Waterford, and a second in Cork are included in this review but have since closed. At the time that this analysis was conducted, there was little evidence of organised education provision for children who were within the scope of this review in Ulster and in Connacht. A map of these out-of-school education settings is provided at Appendix 5.

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[54] Working group identified this in a scoping exercise in November and December 2017. It is noted that some settings which are included have either changed or closed and other settings have been set up since this time.

6.1.2 Patronage and Governance

In the main, the patrons[55] of out-of-school education providers were religious orders (nine respondents) or the regional ETB (eight respondents). At the time of the data collection, Tusla was the patron of the schools in Crannóg Nua, St. Canice's and Ballydowd Special Care Centres. The patronage of the education provision in Crannóg Nua and Ballydowd Special Care Centres transferred to Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB (DDLETB) in 2019, meaning 10 settings are now governed by a regional ETB. At the time of the data collection, Carline Learning Centre was set up as a limited company with voluntary directors and City Motor Sports Learning Centre was under the patronage of the Early School Leavers Educational Centre. These are now both supported under the Peter McVerry Trust.

Per the returns received all providers formally report to a BOM or the regional ETB within a governance structure. iScoil and the Alternative Learning Programmes are separate entities and do not have a patron but do report to a Board and Chief Executive in the case of iScoil and to DDLETB in the case of the ALP.
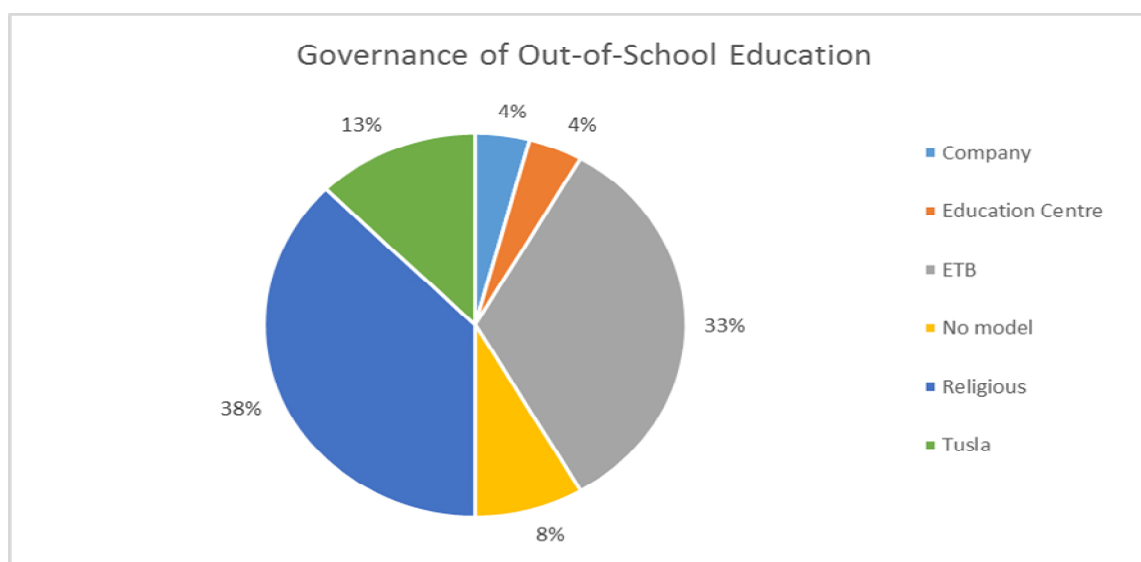
Figure 6.1 Bodies who govern out-of-school education providers as per survey returns

6.1.3 Funding

Funding for this provision is provided from a range of sources. The DE directly, and indirectly through the regional ETBs, was identified as the main source of financial support for out-of-school education provision. Tusla provides funding for St. Joseph's Clonmel, City Motor Sports, Carline, Cork Life Centre and Cherry Orchard Life Centre. Many schools and centres within the scope receive funding from religious bodies and from local support groups. Philanthropic bodies also provide a level of funding. Schools and centres have also received financial support through the Social Innovation Fund.

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[55] Patron as defined in the Education Act refers to the patron of a 'recognised school'. For the purposes of this report only, that definition will be extended to include out-of-school settings.

6.1.4 Teachers

All but one of the out-of-school education providers returned the number of registered teachers working in their setting. From the responses it is not clear how many of these teachers were full time, part time or volunteers.

The numbers varied from 12 registered teachers to two. On average there were six registered teachers per setting. These positions were both full time and part time or ETB sanctioned co-operation hours.

The responses reported that most teachers were sourced from DE funding, directly through pay grants and indirectly through the regional ETBs. Teachers were also sourced from local SCPs, Tusla and privately funded by trustees and centre funds.

Source of Teaching Provision in Out-of-School Education

- 28% Department of Education and Skills
- 50% ETB
- 7% Religious Trustees
- 3% School Completion Programme
- 6% Self Funded
- 3% Tusla
- 3% Volunteers
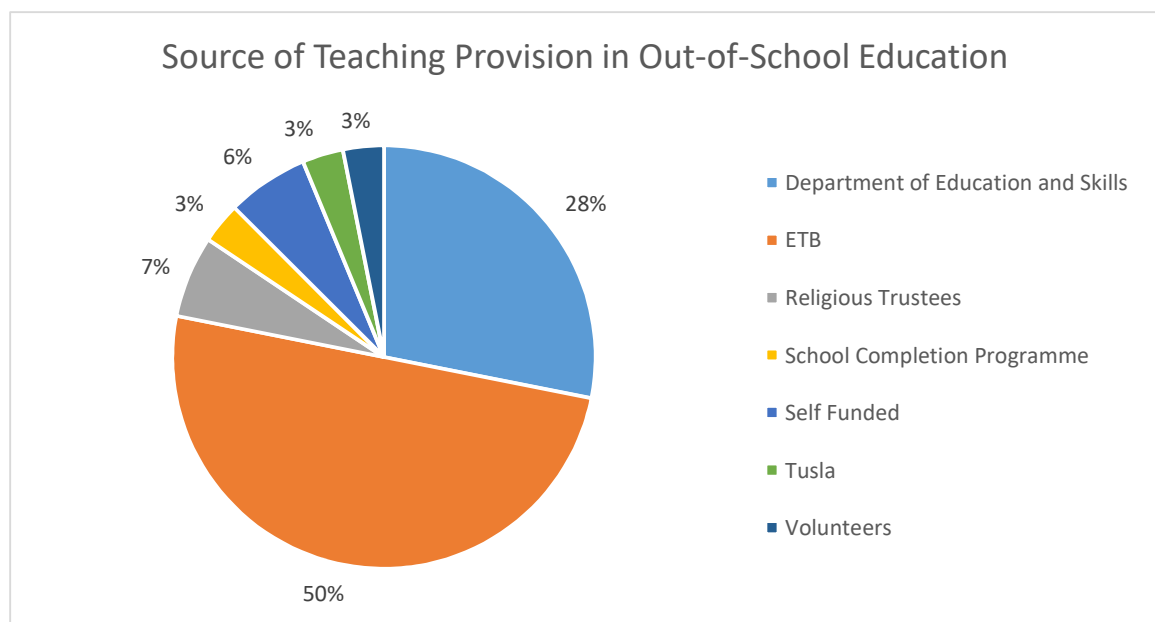
Figure 6.2 Sources of teaching provision in out-of-school education providers as per survey returns

6.1.5 Support Staff

All, with the exception of two of the respondents, have a range of support staff who provide administrative, ancillary and social and emotional support services. The data suggests that many of these providers deliver a range of wrap-around supports to their enrolment through the use of non-teaching staff. Examples of support staff provided were special needs assistants, counsellors, social workers, resource workers, tutors, bean/fear an tí, secretaries and cleaners.

6.1.6 Links to Schools

With the exception of two, all schools, centres and programmes who replied to the questionnaire reported that they maintained some level of links with mainstream schools. These links varied from informal and 'as needed' links to more formal relations through Tusla services, ETBs and through reintegration programmes. The responses

showed that the three strands of the TESS; EWOs, SCPs and HSCL scheme were important linkages between the out-of-school and mainstream environments.

6.1.7 Links to Agencies

All of the respondents to the questionnaire reported good links with Government Departments and agencies to assist them in the provision of educational and social supports. Tusla provides supports to schools and centres in terms of education welfare, alternative care and child protection and welfare. Amongst the other agencies and supports reported were the NCSE, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), NEPS and private providers.

All of the respondents had links with the DE. Some also maintained contact with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the State Examinations Commission in relation to certification and examinations. Links with local youth and community groups, the Youth Advocacy Programme, Children and Young People's Services Committees and other local services were evident in the responses. Some schools identified that they had links with An Garda Síochána through the Juvenile Liaison Officer Service.

6.1.8 Links with Parents

The response to the level of links with parents was positive with all respondents reporting contact with the children's parent/carer. In some instances this was on an informal level. However most had a formal educator–parent/carer relationship through regular parent teacher meetings, daily phone contact and through the use of community and family support workers.

One point to note on this is that the level of contact with the parents/carer of children is variable both between and across types of provision. The level of contact with parents is dependent on the nature of the placement and this is reflected in the variance of the responses. This emerges in the replies from the schools in the Special Care Units. Three replied that contact with parents was infrequent and only through Tusla or as recommended by a social work department. The responses from the two other schools showed regular and daily contact with parents. Those schools who only had contact with parents through Tusla or social workers were schools who had a residential care element.

6.2 Students in Out-of-School Education Provision

6.2.1 Enrolments and Places Available

All but one of the out-of-school education providers returned figures for the number of places available, showing a total of 532 places. Using the figures returned, a total of 470 students were enrolled in out-of-school education provision. Therefore it would appear, that at the time of the survey, there were 62 places available to students in out-of-school provision. However, respondents to the questionnaire showed a total of 81 students on

waiting lists to attend, with 32 students on a waiting list for one education provider. This anomaly may be due to geographical, perceived reputational, and/or referral reasons.

6.2.2 Breakdown of enrolment figures

The enrolment data returned by respondents to the questionnaire shows that at the time of the survey, 25% of those enrolled were female and 75% were male. This ratio does not reflect the enrolment in mainstream schools. The 2019/20 figures for mainstream post-primary schools showed that 49.5% of the enrolment were female and 50.5% were male[56].
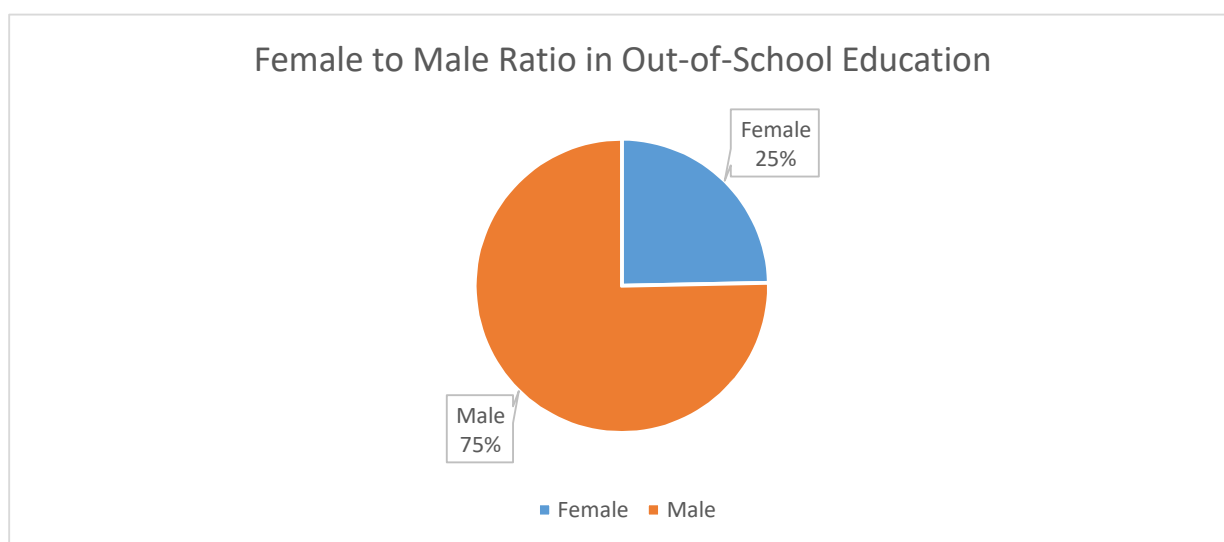
Figure 6.3 Ratio of female to male students attending out-of-school education providers as per survey returns

The survey respondents reported that of the 470 students enrolled, 38 students were Travellers. The responses to the questionnaire only identified three children who required support for English as an additional language.

6.2.3 Age Range

Education providers who responded to the questionnaire reported that they catered for ages ranging from 10 to 20 years. 13 of the 20 respondents catered for children up to the age of 16 only. Five catered for those up to the age of 17 years, with a further four catering for up to the age of 18 years. One education provider catered for those up to the age of 20 years, however the lowest age that they catered for was 14 years. This centre provides a Youthreach programme and a Back to Education Initiative programme and thus has a number of students who are older.

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[56] https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/63363b-data-on-individual-schools/

6.2.4 Enrolment and Referral Policies and Procedures

All of the education providers reported that they had enrolment policies and referral pathways in place. They, however, were not consistent in their nature and included one or a combination of:

- Referral from EWO
- Referral from other Tusla services
- Referral from school
- May enrol where no school place is available
- Referral from parents
- Child must be in care or be referred by the Courts
- In line with Youthreach enrolment policy
- Referral from social/family support workers
- Referral from HSCL or SCP staff
- Referral from local youth services

The returned information on policies and procedures for enrolment and referral showed no consistent approach and this is reflected in the referral sources for these schools, centres and programmes. Children were reported as being referred from a wide variety of sources. The majority were referred from Tusla Educational Welfare and Social Care Services, from mainstream schools and from parents. Students were also reported as being referred by local support groups and services. In some instances the children themselves could be the referrer. Students receiving education in special care settings may be referred to the unit by the court. Some reported that children may be referred from multiple sources.

With the exception of two respondents, it was reported that enrolment in out-of-school education providers happens on a rolling basis and children may be accepted during the school year.

6.2.5 Reasons for becoming disengaged from mainstream education

Out-of-school education providers reported a range of reasons for children becoming disengaged from mainstream education. Children may have had very poor attendance or been expelled from mainstream school. Many of the students were reported as experiencing severe emotional and social difficulties. The word cloud below shows the frequency of words appearing in the responses from education providers when asked for the reasons children were in out-of-school education. These reasons were mainly severe behavioural, environmental and social issues.

Figure 6.4 Reasons students become disengaged from school and attend out-of-school education providers as per survey returns

6.2.6 Special Educational and Additional Needs

The respondents to the questionnaire reported that 60% of the students enrolled in out-of-school education provision had been identified as having additional needs. In some instances these needs had been diagnosed in a mainstream setting. Respondents returned a wide range of additional needs and clinical diagnosis which were experienced by students. These needs were mainly social, behavioural and academic in nature.

The number of individual enrolments identified as having SEN within the out-of-school education setting varies from all of students in eight settings to just one student from an enrolment of 10 in one setting.

Discretion to deploy resources based on students' individual needs is devolved to schools under the new special education teacher allocation model[57].

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[57] Circular No. 0007/2019 Circular to the Management Authorities of all Mainstream Primary Schools - Special Education Teaching Allocation. Circular No. 0008/2019 Circular to the Management Authorities of all Post-Primary Schools: Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and the Chief Executive Officers of Education and Training Boards – Special Education Teaching Allocation

Most out-of-school education providers reported that they provide supports for students with SEN. The lower pupil-teacher ratio in the out-of-school education setting is the most common support available, with one to one teaching available in some settings. This is a consequence of the low number attending in the out-of-school education setting. Settings that are not recognised schools cannot apply for special needs assistants (SNA) from the NCSE. One out-of-school education setting, which is also a recognised school, reported having four SNAs. Some settings reported that they had counselling and therapeutic supports available. Almost all settings reported that they provided tailored and flexible support based on identified needs and student support plans to address learning, behaviour and crisis management. The responses to the questionnaire suggest that most of the out-of-school education settings were able to provide tailored supports to meet the individual needs of their student.

6.2.7 Exclusions and Suspensions from Out-of-School Education Settings

In most instances, the responses showed that exclusions in these settings were rare. The responses to the questionnaire identified that education providers in out-of-school education settings seek to find some resolution other than exclusion for children. Nineteen of the respondents reported between zero and two exclusions in the three years prior to the survey. Two of the respondents had five and four exclusions respectively over the three year period. In contrast one of the respondents reported 14 exclusions over the same period. This setting also caters for children and young adults up to 20 years of age in Youthreach and Back to Education Initiative programmes and therefore may prove an anomaly when compared with the other providers.

Suspensions have occurred in all of the out-of-school education settings in the past three years. 16 of the respondents to the questionnaire provided suspension figures for the past three years. On average, across the respondents, four children were suspended per out-of-school education provider each year. Suspensions were for a short period of time, often for a maximum of two days.

Bullying, violence, aggression and inappropriate behaviour were the most prominently reported discipline issues in out-of-school education settings. Almost all of the education settings reported some form of violence and aggression towards other students and staff as a reason a child has been suspended or excluded; only the two settings who provide short-term out-of-school provision and iScoil did not. Two instances of reported violence involved possession of a weapon. Inappropriate behaviour towards staff and other students also featured in responses. Bullying of other students, including online bullying is an issue which featured prominently as a reason for suspension and/or exclusion.

Mental health concerns and addiction issues were also cited as reasons students may be excluded or cease to attend.

6.2.8 Duration of enrolment

The survey responses showed that students were enrolled in out-of-school education for an average period of 18 months. In Youth Encounter Projects and in education provision within a residential setting, the data reported that it is possible that a student will be enrolled for up to five or six years. Programmes such as the Alternative Learning Programme and the Inspire Programme provide a six week out-of-school education

programme, which aims to reintegrate the student to mainstream school at the end of this period.

6.3 Education Provision in Out-of-School Education Settings

6.3.1 Length of Day/Week

Most of the out-of-school education providers reported that they operated a school day of five to six hours per day, similar to the mainstream primary school hours with some providing a shorter day on a Friday. Two of the centres reported that they provided a four hour learning day. One setting provided afternoon or part-time out-of-school education for two hours per day for junior certificate students and three hours for leaving certificate students.

iScoil reported that they provide educational supports for an option of an eight hour day, but in general provide between five and 20 hours per week to students. The survey responses showed that education was provided in out-of-school education settings for 25 hours a week on average.

6.3.2 Subjects Provided

English, Maths and Art were reported as being available in almost all of the settings. History, Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Woodwork, Information Technology, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Home Economics and Geography were available in over half the responding education providers. The top 15 subjects by availability are outlined on Figure 6.5 below.

15 Subjects Most Available in Out-of-School Education Providers	
Subject	**No. of Out-of-School Education Providers**
Maths	19
English	19
Art	19
History	13
Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)	14
Woodwork	14
Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)	14
Information Technology/Computers	13
Geography	11
Home Economics	11
Literacy	5
Cookery/Baking	5
Irish	4
Physical Education	4
Communications	4

Figure 6.5 The 15 subjects most available in out-of-school education providers are per survey returns

A broad range of practical based subjects were reported to be also available in these settings. Examples include sport and fitness, hair and beauty, hotel and catering, digital media and metalwork. Many of the classes available focused on everyday life skills such as SPHE, Home Economics, Personal and Interpersonal Skills, Wellness, Communications and Life Skills classes.

All of the respondents reported provision of literacy and numeracy supports based on individual need in their out-of-school education setting. Junior Certificate School Programme literacy and numeracy programmes were delivered in five settings. One to one literacy support was available in most out-of-school education providers. Inclusion of numeracy across the curriculum and practical day to day use were reported as encouraged in some of the settings.

6.3.3 Certification and Progression

Most of the education providers that responded to the questionnaire provided certification to Junior Certificate level and/or the Junior Certificate School Programme. Certification levels under the QQI model were available in 12 of the education providers. The Leaving Certificate was offered in four of 23 out-of-school education settings. A small number provided the Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. One setting reported offering a certificate for online professional development courses.

Certification Levels Provided	
Certification Level	No. of Out-of-School Education Providers
Junior Certificate	19
Junior Certificate School Programme	4
Leaving Certificate	4
Leaving Certificate Applied	3
QQI accreditation	13
Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme	1
Online Qualifications	1

Figure 6.6 Certification levels provided by out-of-school education providers as per survey returns

While certification rates for the Junior Certificate and the Junior Certificate School Programme appeared to be quite high among the respondents, using this as an outcome measure needs to be approached with caution. Students in an out-of-school education setting are frequently reported to study a small number of subjects to Junior Certificate or QQI accreditation level, although one centre has reported offering 15 subjects. Where QQI accreditation programmes are used the certification levels were quite high. Some of these were, however, QQI minor awards on an individual subject or on general learning.

The Leaving Certificate was not as prominent in the data returned. There were only two settings where at least one student achieved a Leaving Certificate in each of the three

years prior to the survey. According to the data returned, one centre had 1 – 2 students per year complete the Leaving Certificate and a second centre[58] had 7 – 11 students per year complete the Leaving Certificate over the 3 year period in question.

In the other 21 settings the Leaving Certificate was not achieved by any student over the same period. The Leaving Certificate Applied, where offered, has only seen a small number of students receive an award.

The various levels and range of certification makes it difficult to ascertain the success levels of each setting in achieving certification rates. Therefore, using achievement of certification may not be a reliable measure of success.

Students who go through the out-of-school education process, were reported to have progressed to a range of different environments. These include Youthreach programmes, community training, further education and training or mainstream schools. There was one setting where a small number of students progressed to university. The data also highlights that some students do not progress to further education and training or employment, have not engaged, have been referred back to the care of Tusla or their progress is unknown. In some of these cases addiction and mental health issues were reported to have affected progression.

6.3.4 After-Care Supports

Nineteen of the 22 respondents provided after care supports where required. Some education providers reported that they had their own counselling services and community workers who continue to support the student for a period following their progression on an individual needs basis. One setting reported using a collaborative approach to returning the student to mainstream school which may involve the student returning to the out-of-school education setting one day per week for a period. In general, the survey responses indicated an interagency approach to provide supports after the student has left the out-of-school education setting. Most providers worked with other educational programmes, Tusla, local community workers, youth workers and other supports to provide after care supports to the students.

6.3.5 Life Skills and Social and Emotional Supports

Twenty-one of the 23 respondents stated that they provided tuition and other initiatives on life skills. Programmes based around personal and interpersonal skills were provided across each of the out-of-school education settings. These programmes related to anger and conflict management, cooking, life choices, bill paying, leadership, resilience, wellness and other life skills.

Other programmes relating to career guidance and skills were available in some settings to develop the students' skills for career preparation. Other workshops develop manual skills such as small engine and boatbuilding workshops, cookery workshops and gardening classes.

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[58] This centre had 28 students in total who completed the Leaving Certificate over the 3 year period in question.

The need for social and emotional supports in out-of-school education setting is high as is evident from the reasons for referral to the settings, and from the additional needs reported in the questionnaire. Twenty-one of the 23 respondents reported making counselling and /or other supports available to students. Most of these provided a level of support within the education setting, with a link to an external support where required.

Internal supports took the form of an in-house counsellor, care staff, psychologist, guidance counsellor, development programmes and mentoring from teachers and staff. Education providers also worked with Tusla services, community workers, the HSE, Pieta House and other services to assist them in the provision of social and emotional supports to the students in the out-of-school education setting.

6.4 Summary of Data

The data collected suggests that the education provision in this sector is providing a service to meet the needs of a cohort of students who have not been able to cope with the demands of mainstream education settings. The positive response of the providers reflects the high level of commitment and engagement that there is in this sector and a recognition that there is a need for an alternative education model to cater for the complex needs of this cohort of students.

The centres, schools and programmes all reported provision of an individualised and flexible education programme to their students. These programmes also cater for life skills and social and emotional supports to help develop the academic and non-academic skills of the enrolment. These skills help prepare the students for life outside of the educational environment.

The survey indicated that education provision in this sector takes a community approach to provide wrap-around supports for the students in their enrolment. Links with local organisations, schools and the parents of the students were reported in the data. Availing of the supports of local agencies such as Tusla, CAMHS and An Garda Síochána is a positive approach to catering for the needs of their enrolment.

All centres reported that they provide a broad range of literacy supports in a range of settings, including one to one support. Centres reported that they took a flexible, needs led approach to literacy and numeracy. Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme and QQI accredited programmes were provided in the majority of centres. Following this, progression pathways differ depending on individual centres and courses offered, with most students moving to Youthreach or a mainstream setting. One centre reported four students progressing to University, while many others do not progress into any further education and training or employment. Risk factors for not progressing in an educational setting include addiction and mental health difficulties.

While students are completing Junior Cycle and Junior Certificate Schools Programme, this may only be in a narrow band of subjects, although 1 centre reported offering 15 subjects. The Leaving Certificate is offered in just four centres, with Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme/Leaving Certificate Applied in a further three. Because of the various approaches, levels and range of certification it is difficult to draw comparisons between outcomes across the different centres.

The location of out-of-school education providers are mainly in the greater Dublin, Cork and Limerick areas. However, retention data from schools generally shows that there are students not being retained in school in other areas where there is no suitable alternative provision for them to attend. There is not an accurate up to date centralised database to show where this cohort have gone to continue education, or if they have pursued this avenue; an analysis of outcomes of case referrals to Tusla EWOs would be useful to inform policy in this regard. It does however, show that the west and north-west of the country appear disproportionately underserviced in relation to the east, south and south west.

An analysis of the evidence reviewed highlights the need for out-of-school provision to be made available for a very small number of students whose needs or behaviours are such that they cannot cope with the demands of mainstream education. The data collection process highlighted the lack of a consistent approach in this sector. While it is recognised that students in these settings present with individual needs, there is a variety of approaches to governance, funding, patronage, referral and enrolment procedures, teaching and curriculum. The range and breadth of provision presents particular challenges relating to the oversight of the operation of this sector. There is also an issue in relation to equal access to funding, registered teachers and level of certification available to students.

The data from the education providers report that while the work in this area is positive and there are good results being shown in relation to meeting the complex needs of this cohort of the student population, there is a need to improve the structure of the provision. The current structures show an incoherence, in particular in relation to governance and funding. The data collected gave the working group an insight into the range of provision, the range of needs of those within the provision and the positive work being done for students who have become disengaged from mainstream education system. However, in order to delve further into the findings of the data collection the working group met and had an open consultation with a sample of practitioners in this field and, most importantly, with children and young people who are currently in or have passed through this provision.

7. Public Consultation: Managers of Out-of-School Education Settings

The working group met with the managers of four schools and centres who provide education for students who are not in mainstream education. The discussion with the four managers built on the data gathered through the questionnaire process. The discussions centred on a number of themes relating to education provision in the out-of-school sector, the reasons it is required and how it can be improved.

What is working well?

Each of the managers identified that the low pupil-teacher ratios and small numbers in their settings meant that they could deliver an education service to their students which they believed would not be possible in mainstream schools. They reported that many of the students who end up in out-of-school provision have struggled to cope with the larger classes and therefore the low student numbers in out-of-school provision may prove beneficial to their needs.

Examples of responses to this question were;

> *"The small numbers in the centre help the kids. Having a low pupil-teacher ratio, the kids who come to the centre find the large groups in mainstream an issue".*
>
> *"Small settings assist with anxiety issues."*

The managers did admit however that funding such low pupil-teacher ratios was difficult to maintain.

The managers also agreed that the flexibility provided in their settings, in comparison to mainstream provision, was a positive for their students. The settings allowed some leeway for students being late for example. However, the small numbers allow for this as it is not as disruptive to a class as it would be in a mainstream setting.

One manager noted the positive impact of being able to support students to complete the Leaving Certificate in an attached Youthreach Centre. The other managers all placed a focus on the possibility, or not, of their students progressing to complete the Leaving Certificate. Those that had a facility for their students to carry on within the centre and complete the Leaving Certificate saw it as a major positive. Those who did not have that facility felt it would be very beneficial to the students if they could do so.

What do you see are causing attendance issues in this cohort of students in the mainstream setting?

School refusal[59] was seen as a growing issue in the students who were coming to their schools/centres. The low numbers in out-of-school provision settings in addition to its individual approach to educating each student may better position these providers to deal with this.

> *"School refusal has become an increasing issue. We can deal with this on an individual basis due to the smaller numbers."*

These providers will follow up each student individually on a daily basis to make sure they attend, such as calling them, or their home, and providing transport for the student if they have not come in on time. The latter service would not be viable in some mainstream schools.

Many of the students who enter non-mainstream provision are from a challenging family background or often in residential care. The managers found that it was difficult for these students to maintain attendance in mainstream school.

> *"Kids can come from fractured home lives and education has also failed them."*
>
> *"The attendance of children who are in residential care are the most difficult. Where one stops attending it will affect the rest in the care centre."*

Often, if school is not going well for the child they will feel that education is also failing them and attendance will suffer. The nature of the out-of-school provision means they may be better able to deal with some attendance issues than mainstream schools.

> *"The social worker assists in developing the relationship with the kids and encouraging attendance."*

All of the centres reported that more boys than girls were becoming disengaged from mainstream education. All reported having a far higher proportion of boys, particularly

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[59] School refusal can be defined as the 'child motivated refusal to attend school or difficulties remaining in school for an entire day' (Lyons and Coulter, 2007). There are many reasons why a student may refuse to attend school or remain in school. These include fears originating within the school environment or family or community based concerns.

those who left in years one to three of post-primary school. They noted that girls tended to wait until after the Junior Certificate to leave school. One issue identified was that the girls who did leave school often had greater issues around anxiety based difficulties than the boys and required a greater focus and level of support.

The managers felt that most schools were doing all they could within their resources to help keep students in mainstream provision but are often unable to give the time and resources to some students who require it. They did see some issues around expulsions. While expulsions are not now common in mainstream schools, those students who are expelled or asked to leave a school may struggle to find other mainstream schools to accept them. The practitioners reported that, in their experience, there are cases where the student has left a school following some discipline issues prior to being expelled, and has had difficulty enrolling in another school.

> *"The reputation for children develops early in school and it is difficult for it to be changed. Once they leave one school it is difficult to get another due to the reputation which has developed."*

The managers felt that the ethos and leadership of schools influences their commitment to retaining every student who enrols and also influences whether they will take on students seen as 'difficult'.

What are the progression figures for students in out-of-school education provision?

The most frequently made point in this discussion was a belief that there is no joined up approach to tracking the progress of students across the education continuum.

> *"Each individual school will do its own piece but their needs to be a joined up approach to data sharing among Tusla, CAMHS, SEN, mainstream and alternative to ensure the best for all kids."*

The managers agreed that it was difficult to know what individual supports were required for students entering the provision and to track their progress after they left. All felt that a joint agency approach to information sharing in relation to students would help their needs to be met.

The other issue was related to the importance of having the availability and opportunity to pursue the Leaving Certificate in order to retain the students in education. The managers found that the students were unlikely to go back to mainstream school and the best opportunity was to go to local training centres. Where the Leaving Certificate was available results were quite positive with four students in one centre progressing to university.

What special educational and additional needs do young people in your centre/school have?

The working group discussed what SEN issues the managers were seeing in their settings. All identified that the majority of their students as having a special needs profile.

> *"Most have a behavioural diagnosis. We provide a low pupil-teacher ratio, one to one and have a community, family and academic approach to their education."*
>
> *"Asperger's, ADHD etc. are all apparent. We provide one to one supports. Our building however is not suitable to support physical disability."*
>
> *"Children who attend the school are designated as 'at risk'. We provide full time social worker support which is essential."*

The main issues emerging were in relation to behavioural difficulties associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder and other behavioural presentations where the student's behaviour had been described as posing "a risk to themselves and others".

All settings provide one to one support and have a community approach of wrap around social and behavioural supports. Only one setting had a full time social worker but felt that the benefits of their service was essential to the working of the setting.

The short-comings of home tuition supports in failing to support students to transition back to mainstream settings was also raised by the managers. They noted that students who were in home tuition were then transferring to the out-of-school settings and centres rather than returning to mainstream school.

> *"Anxiety is a huge issue and is leading to an increase in home tuition. Children are leaving home tuition and going to the centre rather than returning to mainstream."*

How would you improve out-of-school education provision?

There was agreement from all managers that further funding and resources for the centres are required in order to provide for the needs of the students who are receiving education in their settings. Some also felt that there was a need for a proper recognition of out-of-school education provision and for it to be properly provided for. One of the suggestions to cater for this is to track the funding and other supports to the movement of the student. The managers interviewed saw the lack of formal recognition as negatively impacting on their ability to recruit recognised teachers and to source continuous professional development for teachers and other staff. Below are a selection of the suggestions made by the managers in relation to these issues:

> *"Provide something to assist with transport costs. The increasing bus fares make it difficult for kids to travel to attend the centre."*
>
> *"It would help if the funding and supports moved with the child if they leave or are expelled from mainstream."*
>
> *"We need to recognise the legitimacy for the alternative sector and properly fund it."*
>
> *"We need to get access to training. We are not recognised as an alternative centre when it comes to training but we get referrals as if we are."*

Other suggestions centred on having a more collaborative and collegiate approach across the sector. The managers identified that centres and schools often operate on their own and do not network with others to identify best practice or new initiatives. It was suggested that those models which do work well should be identified and replicated.

> *"Identify models that work and replicate them elsewhere, where it is needed. We need joined up data to identify where the need is and what that need is."*
>
> *"We need to have networks of like-minded people. We all operate in our own areas but do not do enough to exchange ideas."*

The consultative process carried out by the working group with managers of out-of-school education settings in the course of this review provided an insight into the practical day to day reality of providing education for young people who have become disengaged from mainstream education. The comments from the managers reflected the committed and caring approach across this sector and the recognition of the need for a more structured alternative model to cater for the needs of this group of students.

8. Public Consultation: Children and Young People with Experience of Out-of-School Education Settings

'Listening to and involving children and young people' is a transformational goal of Better Outcomes Brighter Futures[60]. The process of involving children and young people in the development of policy which affects them is guided by the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making[61]. The working group felt that as part of this review, the voice of the children and young people who are currently attending, or have previously attended, out-of-school education settings would provide an important perspective and source of information and should be at the centre of the development of any future policy in this area.

The working group invited the managers of four centres to nominate current and previous students of their school/centre to meet with the group and participate in a discussion on issues relating to their education. The working group met with 10 young people ranging in age from 13 to 24 years whose experiences ranged from being a recent entrant to an out-of-school education setting to someone who had graduated with a Leaving Certificate five years previously. The discussion was facilitated by a member of the working group. In advance of their attendance, the young people were asked to consider a number of themes for discussion.

What was your experience of mainstream education?

Each of the young people who met the working group left school at post-primary level. They all felt that they had no connection with the school or the teachers. In particular they found that this contrasted with their experience of primary school and they found the transition to post-primary difficult. The difference in student population size and physical building size played a major part in the difficulty of that transition.

> *"I came from a small primary school to a post-primary with almost 1,000 students. I had no connection with the teachers and I wasn't able to talk to them about how I was feeling."*
>
> *"I couldn't concentrate with so many people in the class."*
>
> *"I couldn't handle the larger classes in secondary school. I stopped attending but in primary school I won awards for unbroken attendance."*

The change in class work and class length and structure was also a factor in the disengagement of the young people from the mainstream system. The change from

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[60] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/775847-better-outcomes-brighter-futures/
[61] https://assets.gov.ie/24462/48a6f98a921446ad85829585389e57de.pdf

having one teacher in primary to navigating multiple teachers and multiple subjects in secondary was also an issue.

> *"I found it difficult to just sit there for an hour."*
>
> *"I found it difficult to calm down after moving class room. I could not concentrate again."*
>
> *"I was falling behind because I couldn't write as quick as the others. The teacher didn't ask if I needed help and I was afraid to ask."*

The young people reported that the larger student enrolment in post-primary school means that young people like them are unable to receive the individual attention that they would have received in smaller primary schools. The young people also felt they did not have the same relationship with the teacher as they did in primary schools. In the cases of some of the young people the working group met, the change to post-primary meant that they were allowed to drift if they did not fit the education system provided.

> *"I was invisible in secondary school and my mental health deteriorated and I couldn't talk to anyone."*
>
> *"I was always in school but I didn't go to classes."*

Some of the young people felt that once they developed a bad reputation it stuck with them in the school, even when they tried to change their behaviour.

> *"I realised I needed to cop on when I went into third year but I had a bad name. I did the junior cert but I didn't get offered a place in transition year. I was only 15 and I struggled in fifth year with the older kids and the work. I was asked to leave over a piercing. I applied to other schools but they would not take me."*
>
> *"I had a reputation straight away based on my brother and cousin so I did things to get me notice."*

Some felt that the focus on exams was causing problems for children and young people like them who required more support. Some felt it caused anxiety which in turn led to a reluctance and almost fear of school. One student stated:

> *"I felt scare mongered into proving my worth through academia. I felt terrified of getting in trouble for small things even though I had only one experience of being in trouble. My anxiety ruled my life."*

How did you hear about the school/centre?

The majority of the young people the working group spoke with, reported being made aware of the out-of-school education setting through personal contacts. Others heard of it through the EWO or social worker. In one case the young person's mother remembered seeing a television programme about the centre and another just happened by chance to be in contact with someone working in the centre. This highlights the extent of the challenge in ensuring the provision of a coherent approach to meeting the needs of all students.

The young people also noted that even when they did hear about a centre/school the reputation of education provision was not good. They were seen as somewhere that was easier than mainstream school and was looked down on.

> *"My friend said the centre was easier but it had a bad name from those who look down on it."*

What are the good things about out-of-school education provision?

The biggest positives about the out-of-school provision, as seen by the young people, was that it provided them with the education environment that suited them. The out-of-school education settings provided shorter class times, smaller settings and better connections between students and teachers.

"I like the smaller classes. They allow the teacher to listen to me."

"The shorter class times are a real help, as well as being in the one classroom."

"I like the informal homely atmosphere."

"You know your teacher. If there is something wrong with you they know and help you."

"The teachers give you respect and you respect them."

"They don't give up on you."

The other main positive related to the extra freedom that the students had in relation to discipline and rewards. Young people in these settings liked that they were able to put forward their side of the story when there was an issue or that there was freedom from having a uniform. They also liked that when they did do well they were rewarded.

"We get to go to the beach or go swimming if we do well."

"The teachers level with you and punishment is only decided when you can give your side of the story."

What are the challenges for out-of-school education provision?

The young people who were in centres/schools that did not provide the Leaving Certificate felt that this was the biggest drawback. They felt they would struggle to go back to a mainstream school to do it and that the only progression route was to go to a community training centre. Where the Leaving Certificate was available, it was difficult for subjects to be provided to students at higher level. Most students in the setting were taking ordinary or foundation level and the resources were not available for teachers to provide higher level teaching outside of providing extra individual assistance in the ordinary level classes for those doing higher level.

The lack of continuity of staff in these settings is also seen as a challenge particularly in terms of the relationships that are built between students and teachers.

> *"They are all volunteers so if they receive a job offer they have to leave. It is difficult when you have developed trust with someone."*

Some young people felt the atmosphere around the centre and the reputation you can get for attending this provision is a downside of attending out-of-school education.

> *"There can be a bad vibe in the school if people are having a bad day."*
>
> *"There is a stereotype if you go to the centre."*

What was your best experience in the school/centre?

For all of the young people that the working group met with the opportunities which they received as a result of going to the centre/school were the high points of their attendance there. Some young people reported that the school/centre gave them a second chance at education and life, and this was their best experience.

> *"Just getting the chance to go back to school and have a second chance."*
>
> *"Getting the opportunity to do my Leaving Certificate."*
>
> *"Coming to the centre changed my life. I lost three close friends and God knows what would have happened me."*
>
> *"They persevered with me and waited for me to come out of my shell. They are the reason I am still alive."*

The opportunities provided to the young people by the out-of-school education settings were reported by them to have changed, for the better, the direction they were heading in their lives.

How has attending out-of-school education affected your family?

Each of the young people said that their attendance and achievements in the school/centre has had a very positive affect on their family life. When they were struggling in mainstream education or not attending school at all, their family life was at times challenging. In most cases it was reported that the health of the mother of the young person suffered due to stress and worry about their child, however this improved following their attendance at out-of-school education.

> *"I have less fights with my mam, I now make my family proud."*
>
> *"We are now a happy family. My mother wasn't sleeping when I wasn't in school."*
>
> *"It has improved the health of my family. My mother doesn't need to stress about me and my brother."*

The young people identified that the improvement of their attendance and performance in education had a positive effect on their home life.

What would you do to improve education for young people like you?

An important point the working group learned here was in relation to the term 'early school leavers' and 'out-of-school'. The young people felt that these terms did not accurately portray their situation. They were still in education and the mainstream system may not have worked for them but they were still learning and aspiring to achieve.

> *"We are not early school leavers, we are still learning."*

The young people felt that there needed to be a closer look at what education really is and the needs of the young people in education. They felt that the positive image projected by mainstream education did not accurately reflect their experience of the system and that education for a cohort of the enrolment was being lost. They did feel that these educational needs were being met in the centres/school they were attending.

> *"You need to see what education really is – what is put forward is not always real."*
>
> *"Come down to our centre and have a look at the good work. See the needs of kids and what is required to help them."*

The replies to this question focused on bringing what the young people saw as positives in the out-of-school provision into the mainstream setting. The young people felt that mainstream schools and their staff need to get to know the students better and develop a more welcoming environment for all their enrolment. They advocated a holistic approach to education, where it was not all focused on exam attainment. The young people also felt that classes are too long when coming from primary school and that rules around uniform do not need to be so strict.

> *"Get to know the kids more."*
>
> *"Have reduced length of classes, an hour is too long."*
>
> *"They don't need to be so strict on uniforms, piercings and tattoos. Just because I get a tattoo it doesn't kill my brain cells, I can still learn."*
>
> *"Exams are not the be all and end all."*

The consultative process carried out by the working group with young people in the course of this review provided a level of insight which would otherwise not have been available. It ensured the voice of the child was heard as an integral part of the review, and in particular the experiences and needs of the children and young people for whom the policies informed by this review will have the greatest effect.

9. Public Consultation: Interested Parties and Stakeholders

Over the course of the review the working group consulted with stakeholders and interested parties through a public request for written submissions and a consultative workshop. Forty six written submissions were received from a wide range of parties. The template issued for the completion of submissions and the list of all those who provided submissions are provided in Appendices 6 and 7 respectively. A number of stakeholders, education partners and educationalists were invited to a consultative workshop with the working group. A list of those who attended the workshop is provided at Appendix 8. The consultation process resulted in a wide range of contributions. Much of the information received as a result of this process endorsed the information and views expressed through the data collection exercise and the discussions with practitioners and young people in out-of-school education. There were a number of consistent themes which arose across both the submissions and the workshop.

The most prominent themes which were raised by stakeholders and interested parties in the submissions and the workshop are summarised below:

What is required in mainstream schools to help retain students?

- It was felt that while the work done in the past 10 to 20 years in relation to cross departmental and interagency supports for schools and families have been very successful in increasing the retention rates in mainstream schools, there remains however, a small cohort whose needs have not been met in the mainstream system.

- It was observed that the difficulty of the transition between primary and post-primary was seen as a major contributor for students becoming disengaged with the mainstream school system.

- Issues relating to mental health were also highlighted by some as a major contributor and need to be tackled and supported from early age to develop resilience and coping skills.

- It was noted that a community based holistic approach, which is available in the out-of-school education settings, is often missing from the mainstream school environment. Schools need to develop relationships with their students in order to provide a homely environment.

- Reduced timetables and home tuition were not seen by respondents as a successful solution to retaining or returning students to mainstream school.

What are the positives/negatives about out-of-school education provision?

- The smaller class sizes provided in the out-of-school education settings were seen by many as the major benefit of this provision. It was felt that this allowed a more hands on and personalised approach to meeting the needs of the student.

- The holistic, wrap around supports provided in out-of-school provision were seen as central to meeting the complex needs of their students.

- It was felt that without the out-of-school education settings, the needs of this cohort of the student population would be unmet, and would likely result in their complete disengagement from education.

- It was observed that out-of-school education often had a negative reputation or was perceived as in some way inferior to mainstream provision, despite the successes achieved within this part of the education sector.

- It was felt the current approach is unstructured and requires a coherent approach.

What should out-of-school provision look like in the future?

- There was an observation that an integrated approach to meeting the complex needs of children and young people who are at risk of, or have become disengaged from the mainstream system is required, drawing together the supports of the DE, Tusla, NEPS, CAMHS, NCSE and other agencies.

- A need for data to be shared between agencies was identified as necessary in submissions and discussion, in order for the required supports to be provided. There was also a view expressed by many of the participants that supports assigned to a student such as special needs and NEPS support, should follow the student when they move across education services.

- Many identified that there was an absence of access to out-of-school education provision in some regions of the country for children and young people who leave the mainstream school system.

- It was suggested that provision for students who leave the mainstream education system needs to be coherent, consistent and structured, with a clear governance model.

- There was a general observation that the complexity of the issues and processes underlying disengagement from mainstream school means that there is no single solution in this area. A tiered level of supports has been suggested ranging from additional support within the mainstream school to a provision of out-of-school education.

The contributions from stakeholders and interested parties, both written and verbal provided the working group with a broad spectrum of views. All of the submissions, viewpoints and suggestions were given due consideration by the working group and have assisted in informing the recommendations for any future supports and provisions for children and young people within the scope of this review.

10.   Review Analysis

This review was conducted within the terms of reference as agreed by the working group, having due regard to the level of provision in the sector for children and young people aged up to 16 years, to identify;

1. What does current provision for out-of-school education look like?
2. What should it look like?
3. How can the state provide for it?

In consideration of the terms of reference of the review the working group analysed the information gathered through the literature review, data mapping process and the public consultation process.

10.1 Meeting Needs of At Risk Students in Mainstream Schools

What does it currently look like?

Ireland has shown an increase in retention rates in education throughout the past ten years. Much of this is due to policies, such as the DEIS Plan and development of TESS (EWS, HSCL and SCP), which has seen a 6% increase in retention rates in DEIS schools since 2014 (Department of Education, 2021). Developments in school leadership, curriculum and wellbeing supports have also assisted. The mainstream school system, however, faces challenges in meeting the diverse and individualised needs of every student.

For a small cohort of children and young people with a high level of need, it can be difficult to remain engaged with education in a mainstream setting despite the provision of whole school and individualised support through the Continuum of Support model. The discussions with children and young people in out-of-school education settings suggests that this may be a particular challenge at post-primary school level. The transition from primary to post-primary school has been identified as a time of high risk for those with the most complex needs. As mentioned earlier in the report, data shows that the school experiences of students following transition from primary school, such as their interactions with peers and teachers, can have an effect in developing a negative attitude to school which affects attendance and engagement with education (Smyth E. , Off to a good start? Primary school experiences and the transition to second-level education, 2017).

What should it look like?

International evidence indicates that programmes focused on supporting transitions and meeting the diverse needs of students in mainstream schools are the most effective in retaining students. Ontario is a notable example of this, seeing a 13% increase in retention rates between 2003 (68.5% graduation rate) and 2010 (81.5%) following the introduction of the Student Success Strategy (Harper, Heron, Houghton, & O'Donnell, 2011). Looking at the states within Europe with a lower dropout rate from education than Ireland, a common theme is a strong vocational education sector. In states such as

Croatia and Switzerland a strong emphasis is placed on a work based learning approach guided by job market demands.

Discussions with students who are attending or have attended out-of-school education settings in the course of this review highlighted that a one to one approach and the development of a relationship with a trusted adult in the setting were key reasons for the positive change in their engagement with education. Schools are important settings in developing positive wellbeing and positive mental health, where emotional wellbeing may be an education end in and of itself. ESRI research on risk and protective factors in adolescent behaviour (Smyth E. a., 2021) highlights the important role schools and schools policies play in young people's behaviour and associated outcomes. The research finds that accounting for school social mix, differences between schools in relation to misbehaviour and truancy remained significant. It also finds that there are clear links between negative behaviour and negative attitudes to schools and disengagement from education.

Supporting transitions throughout the whole education continuum is also important to maintain positive student attitudes to education. A focus on transferring information on the students' learning level through the Education Passport[62] should be commonplace when transitioning between schools.

Internationally, most out-of-school provision places a strong focus on personal development and the development of relationships. This is clear from the Ecorys report on out-of-school education from 10 European countries which found improved relationships as a common theme across each country (Day, Mozuraityte, Redgrave, & McCoshan, 2013).

The children and young people all mentioned that their voice was not heard in the large environment of post-primary school, or indeed that they had a fear to speak up or ask for assistance. The student voice is a key part of developing good relationships in school which help students to be happy in their work, believe in themselves and feel supported.

How can the State provide for it?

A whole school approach to the wellbeing of children and young people should be applied to recognise the individual needs of students in coping with the complex social and emotional challenges of modern living. The Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines[63] outlines an approach to wellbeing in schools focusing on four areas of promotion; culture and environment, curriculum, policy and relationships and partnerships. A number of supports have been put in place to provide advice and guidance to schools in this area.

The DE Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)[64] and the Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide

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[62] https://ncca.ie/en/primary/reporting-and-transfer/education-passport/
[63] DE, NCCA (2017) *Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle 2017*
https://www.ncca.ie/media/2487/wellbeingguidelines_forjunior_cycle.pdf
[64] DE (2013) *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*
https://assets.gov.ie/24429/3b6f3db2de154ebaa1f69a0856c97c8e.pdf

Prevention (2013)[65] with a companion set of guidelines for primary schools (2015), were published and are supported in their delivery by NEPS and the DE Inspectorate.

In February 2022, a steering committee was established to review the DE's Action Plan on Bullying which was published in 2013 and to develop a new Action Plan.[66]

The review will take account of the significant developments and relevant research since the action plan was published in 2013. It will specifically consider cyber bullying, gender identity bullying and sexual harassment, among other areas.

The review will give detailed consideration to the recommendations contained in the *Oireachtas Joint Committee Report on School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health*[67] which was published in August 2021.

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023[68] sets out a child-centred, collaborative and evidence based approach to achieving better outcomes for children and young people. This strategy builds on the many guidelines and frameworks already available, setting out the ambition to ensure the promotion of wellbeing is at the core of the ethos of all schools and centres of education. In particular, it advocates the use of a Continuum of Support to provide evidence based, universal and targeted approaches for all, and for those at risk and for those with the most complex needs. Implementation of the Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice should be supported by building on existing good practice within mainstream education through a comprehensive continuous professional development programme for teachers.

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[65] DE (2013) Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention https://assets.gov.ie/25105/b32a40105ca541688f3ab73d9687cccb.pdf

[66] https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/51ad9-minister-foley-establishes-steering-committee-to-develop-new-action-plan-on-bullying/

[67] https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_education_further_and_higher_education_research_innovation_and_science/submissions/2021/2021-08-23_report-on-school-bullying-and-the-impact-on-mental-health_en.pdf

[68] DE (2018) *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023* https://assets.gov.ie/24725/07cc07626f6a426eb6eab4c523fb2ee2.pdf
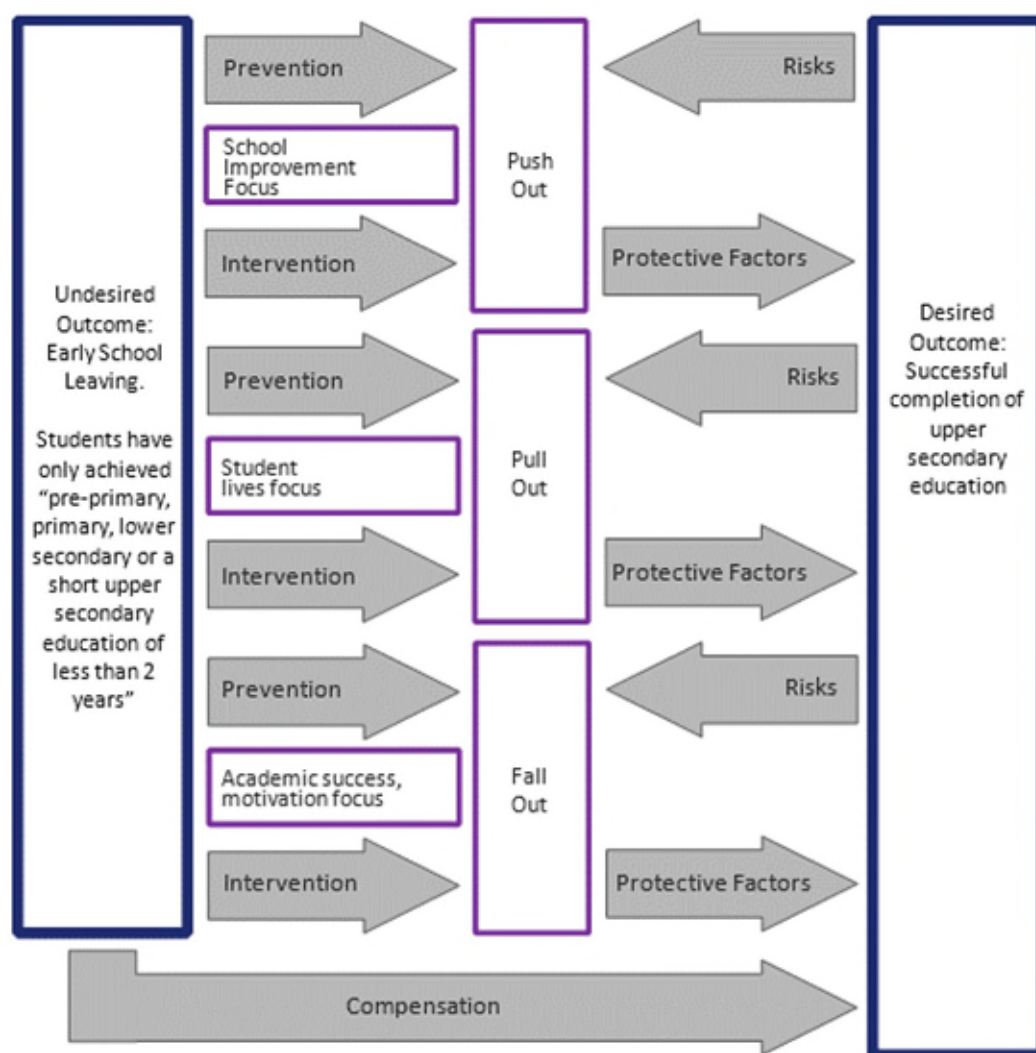
Figure 10.1 Model of forces and processes involved in Early School Leaving (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017, p. 12)

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) uses the above model of forces and process developed by Squires and Dyson, (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017) to illustrate the multiple factors and areas where school need to focus intervention and implement protective factors. This model considers the complex interaction of the different processes which may be involved for each individual young person. There may be both risk factors at the level of school organisation, the young person's own needs and personal situation and/or within the young person's relationship with the school and their learning. The DE has set out the Continuum of Support Framework which supports school to identify and respond to students needs across a continuum, providing support at whole school/classroom level, School Support and School Support Plus. This is used in the context of an individualised problem solving model which can be integrated with the model proposed by EASNIE illustrated above. Using this framework helps ensure that interventions are embedded within the Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice and that a continuum of intervention is available which includes whole-school preventive

strategies and interventions from classroom level to more intensive and individualised support. The student's response to intervention and needs are recorded and reviewed. The Student Support File contains the plan for targeted intervention and also provides a record of what is working and what further interventions may be required.

Countries in Europe with a lower non-completion rate than Ireland provide a strong focus on vocational learning, with students deciding on a work based or academic pathway following completion of lower secondary level education (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2019). While a replication of the system may not fit the current education system in Ireland, there has been an increased emphasis placed by the Government on transitions from post-primary to further education and training and apprenticeship schemes in recent years.

The Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science launched a new Action Plan for Apprenticeship in April 2021 (DFHERIS, 2021) which sets out to double the number of apprentice registrations per year by 2025, making apprenticeship a visible and viable option for people who learn best by doing or who may wish to earn while they are study for a qualification. The number of apprenticeship programmes is also expanding, with 35 programmes launched in the past 5 years bringing the number of programmes to 60 across all sectors of the economy, with a further 18 apprenticeships in active development as of 2021.

The establishment of the DEIS learners to FET network and formal arrangements to support transitions to further education and training under actions in the DEIS Plan (Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2017) show evidence of other positive developments in this area.

10.2 Structure of Education for Students at Risk of Becoming Disengaged from Mainstream Education

What does it currently look like?

The children and young people who participated in this review reported that, in their experience mainstream schools took different approaches to meeting the needs of students who were struggling to engage. What was reported in the discussions was that these approaches differed depending on resources and on school policy. The range of approaches leads to a mixed referral process for children and young people who eventually enrol in out-of-school settings.

The DE Continuum of Support model supports schools to identify those students who have greater individual needs, and using a tiered approach adapt the level of support provided to the individual student, moving from whole-school preventive strategies and interventions from classroom level to more intensive and individualised support.

What should it look like?

Internationally, a tiered approach to re-engaging students with education, beginning in the mainstream school, have shown positive results. The tiered approaches used in jurisdictions such as Ontario, Northern Ireland and Victoria, place an initial emphasis on in-school interventions, moving to short term out-of-school interventions if required and

long-term alternative or out-of-school education for exceptional cases (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2020) (Department of Education NI, 2014) (State Government of Victoria, Navigator Pilot Programme, 2017).

Recommendations supporting the use of a tiered approach were also made by stakeholders during the consultation process.

How can the State provide for it?

The range of short and longer term out-of-school education provisions identified within the scope of this review can be considered as an intervention for the small cohort of students whose needs may not be met following exhaustion of all interventions within the current Continuum of Support model. Projects such as Inspire, Alternative Learning Programme, St. John's Education Centre and others provide short term interventions. Others such as the Youth Encounter Projects and Life Centres cater for students for a longer period in the out-of-school environment, progressing to certification through either the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate or through the QQI model. Consideration will need to be given to the position of this provision in relation to the current three tier Continuum of Support model.

10.3 Education Provision in Out-of-School Settings

What does it currently look like?

The findings of the review suggest that out-of-school education settings are providing an educational and holistic service to the cohort of students that has not been able to cope with the demands of mainstream education settings. This service is designed to cater for the educational, behavioural and social development of the student. The benefits of the out-of-school education setting, as reported by the students who attended the workshop, are the ability to provide flexible, individual education plans with support on a one to one basis to students. This is also reflected in the Inspectorate report on the Education of Children in Detention and Care (Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate, 2017) which reported positive findings on the quality of classroom teaching and environments and the relationships between teachers and students.

Initial assessment methods, curriculum and availability of certification were found to vary between the out-of-school education settings. All provided an extensive range of literacy and numeracy supports, including one to one support. Progression pathways from the out-of-school education settings differed depending on the availability of resources. The positive wrap around approach to supporting the needs of children and young people in the out-of-school provision, provided through maintaining close links with Government departments, local agencies and organisations, schools and parents was notable over the course of the review. This is a positive approach to obtaining services for their students but often relies on the ingenuity of the leaders in the out-of-school education setting and the availability of services locally.

The various approaches, levels and range of certification make it difficult to draw comparisons between provisions. Common themes emerged however, regarding best practice.

What should it look like?

It is important to recognise that academic support is only one of a range of supports that children and young people in out-of-school education settings need. A co-ordinated interagency approach where all relevant partners work together to provide sustained integrated support to children in detention and care is essential. Strategies, such as the Student Success Strategy in Ontario were developed to not only provide a unified approach to meeting the needs of children who have become disengaged, but to also assist students with a holistic approach to maintaining their engagement in education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2020).

It is a recommendation of the Inspectorate's report on the Education of Children in Detention and Care (Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate, 2017) that an education and care plan which is transferrable across all settings is developed, providing a unified approach to meeting the needs of children in schools in Special Care and High Support Centres.

The value of individual education plans is internationally recognised in the provision of education for students with additional needs. In the international examples of out-of-school provision examined in this review, individual education plans to meet education and holistic needs, were developed with input from the student and other stakeholders in their education such as family, mainstream school and community.

The City Connects model in Boston formalises the collaborative approach to education, assessing the strengths and needs of each student in the school and connects students with a tailored set of supports and resources from inside and outside the school. (City Connects, 2016). While the City Connects model is applied in mainstream primary school settings, the formal structure of engagement with community agencies to provide a holistic approach to education, particularly for students at risk of educational disadvantage due to socio-economic issues, have been shown to enhance educational outcomes.

Links to local businesses and industry can also provide a context for education as shown in the review of a European pilot project on second chance schools (European Commission, 2001). This concluded that in some second chance schools, a link with local employers can prove beneficial to contextualise learning, reflect the needs of the young person and provide opportunities for work experience. This is an aspect of out-of-school provision which could also be incorporated into mainstream schools to increase engagement of at risk students.

How can the State provide for it?

An overarching framework for out-of-school education provision, to provide clear high level goals and plan the educational pathway for students enrolled in the provision, would provide a structured approach to meet the educational needs of children and young people who have become disengaged. The framework should also include the setting out of benchmarks or indicators against which the DE Inspectorate can regularly assess the level and quality of provision in out-of-school education settings. There may also be an opportunity for the development of an integrated inter-agency approach,

leveraging existing structures, systems and processes. Under the Education (Welfare) Act (s.14), Tusla has responsibility for carrying out *"an assessment of—*

> *(a)* the education that is being provided, or that it is proposed will be provided, to the child
> *(b)* the materials used, or that it is proposed will be used, in the provision of such education, and
> *(c)* the time spent, or that it is proposed will be spent, in the provision of such education"*,*

Under section 16 of the Act, the Minister [for Education] may, after consultation with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and such other persons (if any) as the Minister considers appropriate—

(a) issue guidelines, and

(b) make recommendations of a general nature,

to the Board[69] [Tusla], for the purpose of assisting the Board [Tusla] in determining whether a child is receiving a certain minimum education.

Section 14 provides that "Where the Board [Tusla], having received a report submitted under this section in respect of a child who is a student at a school other than a recognised school, is satisfied that the school is providing a certain minimum education to children who are students at that school it may, without carrying out any further assessments, register any or all of such children in the register, provided that the school concerned notifies the Board [Tusla] in writing that the children concerned are students at that school".

Hence there is currently a limited provision already in place to allow for assessment of education provision and for registration of students under section 14 of the Act on foot of an assessment of provision being carried out. The current guidelines regarding a certain minimum provision were set out by the DE in the *Guidelines on the Assessment of Education in Places Other Than Recognised Schools* (Department of Education and Science, 2003)*.* The assessment is not an inspection, such as that carried out by inspectors of the DE in recognised schools under section 13 of the Education Act 1998. The limited purpose of the assessment process is designed to respect the rights of parents with regard to the education of their children while at the same time ensuring that the State's obligations to ensure that children receive a certain minimum education can be fulfilled. It must be noted that the provision of a certain minimum education does not necessitate the use of any prescribed curriculum, the use of particular methodologies, or the inclusion of any specific subjects. The development of this framework in respect of alternative education settings specifically for those who have disengaged from the mainstream recognised school system is outside the scope of this review but would form the logical next step. This would involve a consultation with stakeholders on the proposed framework.

10.4 Governance of Out-of-School Education Settings

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[69] "National Educational Welfare Board" or NEWB. Tusla now encompasses the functions of the NEWB

What does it currently look like?

This review highlighted the unstructured nature of out-of-school education provision in the state. The survey shows a mix of oversight bodies and governance structures. Consultations with the practitioners in out-of-school education settings and other stakeholders identified that this is leaving the provision vulnerable in terms of funding, staffing and accommodation. This finding is in line with a review of similar provision in Great Britain (Tate & Greatbatch, 2017) which also highlighted the disjointed nature and lack of clear governing structures as vulnerabilities causing the system to not provide to its potential for students.

What should it look like?

The Inspectorate report on Education of Children in Detention and Care recommended that consideration be given for including the Youth Encounter Projects, schools in Special Care and High Support Units and Youthreach programmes under a rationalised management structure (Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate, 2017). A clear governing structure for out-of-school provision would establish a robust system to provide continuous educational support for students who are no longer in the mainstream education system. It would also allow for a greater collaboration and a coordinated approach to best practice development between settings. This was something which was suggested from practitioners in the consultations and was also a feature of many of the written submissions. This shows an awareness that there is a need to change the current structures of this provision.

How can the State provide for it?

A governance model, with a minimum set of standards for out-of-school provision, would allow for a formalised approach to funding and resourcing the sector. A structured provision of supports from the relevant Departments and agencies would develop a stable out-of-school education provision for students who disengage from mainstream schools. This would also allow for a formalised support model from the State to target supports where they are required. All settings should be subject to inspection from the DE Inspectorate and/or Tusla to assess the outcomes and the use of the resources in the setting. This will enable identification of best practice and strategies which work and may be able to be resourced in other areas.

10.5 Costs and Funding of Out-of-School Education Provision

What does it currently look like?

The unit cost per student in out-of-school education settings is difficult to calculate due to the range of funding sources but it is evident that the unit cost can vary. The current cost per student to the DE for a student in a Youth Encounter Project is in the region of €30,000. In schools in Special Care Units this could be as high as €75,000. Others such as Life and Line Centres rely on funding from a range of sources OECD Education at a

Glance 2020 measures Ireland's expenditure on post-primary education settings as US$9,445 (€7,800) per student annually (OECD, 2020)[70].

The data gathering exercises conducted over the course of this review identified that funding sources for provision in this sector are varied. The DE and regional ETBs are the major sources of funding. The table at Appendix 1 details the sources of funding for out-of-school education settings. Some settings rely heavily on the support of the community and voluntary sectors for resources. This leaves some of these settings vulnerable in relation to the long term financial viability. It also means that some settings can provide a better service to out-of-school students than others. The different governance models across the out-of-school settings means that unless the setting is one which are inspected by the DE[71], measuring the outcomes of the resources put into the settings is difficult.

What should it look like?

The overall approach to meeting the needs of children who have become disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged from the mainstream school system should be an interagency one. Departments and agencies such as DE, Tusla, NEPS, NCSE, ETBI and DCEDIY could provide a combined approach to support the provision of education and personal development in this sector in a more structured and formalised approach.

In mainstream recognised schools, coordinated use of the resources available to the school through the model of special educational resource allocation, the DEIS School Support Programme, SCP and HSCL schemes to provide a continuum of supports for students who are at risk of becoming disengaged from mainstream education is recommended.

The community and voluntary sectors should still play a large role in providing supports to schools and out-of-school settings to meet the more individual needs of this cohort of students. However, this support should be additional to the resources necessary to ensure the running of out-of-school settings and supports.

Funding for out-of-school settings and supports should be linked to outcomes and focused on enhancing settings ability to operate more effectively by using evidence-informed measures to reach their targets.

How can the State provide for it?

Where out-of-school setting meet set governance and accountability standards, this would allow for a formalised approach to funding and supporting out-of-school education provision. For some settings this may be achievable by the current management structure, but for others a transfer to a management body with experience and an existing set of governance standards may be more beneficial. Supporting this sector, for settings who meet defined standards, would allow for a more secure provision of education for those students who need it most.

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[70] See https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2020_5e4ecc25-en#page11
[71] Education in Special Care and High Support Centres are inspected annually by the DE Inspectorate.

There are long term added value and cost savings to be made through providing a structured approach to early intervention for children who have disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education. It is well documented that those with a history of difficulties at school and who are early school leavers are more likely to commit a criminal offence and spend time in prison (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2015). Oberstown Children Detention Campus report that the cost per placement for a child is €934 per day or €340,983 per year (Oberstown Children Detention Campus, 2017). The annual cost of a prison place is in the region of €68,000 (Irish Prison Service, 2018). There is strong evidence of benefits of providing early intervention for children who are at risk of not achieving their academic potential.

10.6 Location of Out-of-School Supports

What does it currently look like?

The mapping exercise of out-of-school education provision reported no evidence of settings in the west and northwest regions of the country. This does not necessarily mean that the service is required in these regions. The retention rates of students in these areas are generally in the higher percentages for Junior Certificate and above 90% for Leaving Certificate (Department of Education, 2021). However, there is evidence from the Evaluation of the National Youthreach Programme that there is an increase in the number of enquiries for students ages 15 and younger where other out-of-school services are not available (Smyth, Banks, O'Sullivan, & McCoy, 2019).

What should it look like?

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), the regulatory body for standards in education for Britain, have looked at how the characteristics of the students may influence if they leave school early and have developed a statistical model to estimate what proportion of students would be expected to leave each school (Bradbury, 2018). This is used in Britain to examine instances of off-rolling, or schools encouraging students to move, but a similar statistical model could also provide base data for decisions on the location of out-of-school resources. In rural areas, other solutions for out-of-school education may be required. Currently, on-line resources such as iScoil serve a purpose for students in home tuition programmes. This is an issue in states such as Ontario and New Zealand and alternatives such as distance learning and Supervised Alternative Learning Programmes, with a mix of independent learning and partial attendance at school are used in isolated areas (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2020). The issue of transport to out-of-school education settings was raised as a barrier for students by the practitioners in consultations with the working group.

How can the State provide for it?

A data based approach to the location and provision of out-of-school support may need to be considered to serve the needs of students in all areas and retain students in education. This approach could be used to identify the factors that influence the regional variations and inform the approach to addressing these factors, including school based factors. The analysis of referral data held by Tusla may assist in informing this to determine if there were schools which are in need of greater intervention at school level,

and a greater level of out-of-school provision required. Similarly analysis of retention data held by the DE may assist in highlighting regions with particular retention issues. Consideration will also need to be given to the suitability of different types of provision which may be provided where access to out-of-school education options are not readily available.

There is also the risk that, once a facility exists that it may generate referrals, whereas in other areas where such facilities do not exist that children are more likely to be retained in mainstream settings, and any analysis would need to take account of this factor.

10.7 Data and Information

What does it currently look like?

Mapping out-of-school provision for this review and obtaining an accurate figure of the number of students not in mainstream education proved difficult due to the lack of a single reliable data source.

Each school is also required under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 to have a School Attendance Strategy. The recording of attendance data is reliant on reporting by schools to Tusla. Twice a year schools report on children who have been absent from school for a cumulative total of twenty days or more or have been expelled. Schools also report the total number of days lost through absence by submitting an annual report on attendance at the end of the academic year.

What should it look like?

The DE Inspectorate report on the Education of Children in Detention and Care identifies the requirement of a centralised tracking system for each student as a means to transfer relevant data between mainstream schools and the out-of-school setting (Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate, 2017). This was also echoed by the practitioners in their discussion with the working group and in the submissions from interested persons and parties. Improved data recording and transferring is required to inform an outcomes based overall Education Strategy and Individual Education Plans.

Early intervention for children and young people who are at risk of disengaging from education is required in order to turn the tide and allow the student the opportunity to regain an interest in pursuing their educational potential. It should be noted that the DE enrolment database (POD and PPOD) is not designed to act as an attendance database. Students who have disengaged from school or who have been expelled will have been referred to Tusla (in accordance with relevant provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. The main source of data in relation to students who have disengaged from school is therefore held by Tusla in accordance with their statutory function in relation to school attendance.

While the DE requires that a school principal promptly updates the Primary Online Database (POD) or Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) when a student leaves school, the POD or PPOD system is designed as an enrolment system and it is not designed to flag or specifically collate data on children who show attendance issues and are at risk of disengaging from mainstream education. The reason for this is that

students' names would be retained on POD or PPOD even if they are noted as having been absent for a long period. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, provided for an element of tracking in the system, ensuring that students' names are retained on school enrolment databases until such time that they are enrolled elsewhere[72]. However, to have the best opportunity to address any issues of educational disengagement at the earliest stage, an active system of live or almost live reporting of attendance and tracking by Tusla of students referred to Educational Welfare Officers would need to be explored.

How can the state provide for it?

The data collection process of the review highlighted a lack of consistency in referral and enrolment procedures and policies in out-of-school education settings. Mainstream school involvement was not always evident in the transition from the mainstream school to the out-of-school education setting. Internationally, tiered approaches where students are supported through different levels of intensity until being referred to a short term, and in exceptional cases long term out-of-school support have shown improvement in retention in those regions. In regions such as Northern Ireland, Great Britain and New Zealand the mainstream school remains responsible for the student's education. The use of a tiered process allows for a clear referral route if required. Only in exceptional cases is long term out-of-school education used, however the goal remains to re-integrate the student in mainstream school (Harper, Heron, Houghton, & O'Donnell, 2011) (Tate & Greatbatch, 2017) (Department of Education NI, 2014).

A development of live updating would be important in early and targeted intervention. Live reporting of absences and of students at risk of becoming disengaged to Tusla would also support earlier intervention.

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[72] This is in accordance with the provisions in section 20(5) of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, whereby Principals are required to retain students names enrolled on POD or PPOD until such time as they are notified that the students have been enrolled in another mainstream school or have been registered as receiving education elsewhere, in accordance with the provisions of section 14 under the Act

11. Conclusion

An extensive mapping of the provision and consultation with students, practitioners, stakeholders and other interested parties helped the working group to develop a picture of the provision of education in out-of-school settings. This picture showed a provision which was managed and staffed by a committed and caring group of educators, catering for students who for a range of reasons had become disengaged from the mainstream education system. The working group's research identified a provision which was taking a holistic approach to education to provide wrap around supports for students, catering for their educational, social, behavioural and mental development.

Retention rates in mainstream schools are very high in Ireland and comparatively better than other countries by international standards. The small cohort of children and young people who have been referred to or are enrolled in out-of-school provision have a diverse range of needs. Based on the interviews conducted for this review, students have become disengaged from mainstream school for a variety of reasons, including social, behavioural and mental health issues. This review finds that the out-of-school education settings fulfil a valuable function, for a very small cohort of students, in providing the supports necessary to address these needs. The most frequently cited distinguishing support in these settings is a low pupil-teacher ratio and in some cases one to one support. Other supports and opportunities are provided through links with the community and Government departments and agencies.

However, the review also finds that there are inherent weaknesses in the sector due to the disparate management structures and financing of the settings. The lack of standardised structures in the current out-of-school provision leaves it vulnerable in terms of governance, funding and staffing. While funding is sourced from Government departments and agencies, many of the supports provided to the out-of-school education sector are dependent on local availability and the ability of the manager of the settings to source them. Data tracking of students' progress or requirements was found to be lacking, meaning that the development of out-of-school education provision has been quite ad hoc. This has led to a situation where some areas of the country are well-served by out-of-school provision while there is little or no provision in others, such as the west and north-west. The lack of informative base data, coupled with the disparate management structure, means that there is currently no coherent strategy for the out-of-school education sector. The review found that the number of students who re-engage with the mainstream school system is very small, and in many settings an opportunity to sit the Leaving Certificate exam is not available.

The working group concludes that while the current provision for out-of-school education is providing a service for a cohort of students which is not currently being provided in the mainstream setting, it needs to be provided in a more structured manner, on a nationwide basis. This service should be provided with a clear aim of, where possible, maintaining or returning the student to mainstream education provision. Following analysis of international best practice and a consideration of the views of stakeholders and interested parties the working group concludes that out-of-school education should be considered where interventions under the DE Continuum of Support model have been exhausted and a student remains at risk of becoming disengaged from education provision. As part of the implementation of the recommendations of this report, the

position of out-of-school education provision in relation to the three tier DE Continuum of Support model will be considered.

Out-of-school education provision should only be required for a very small cohort of students whose needs are such that they cannot be met, through all available supports, within the mainstream setting. The provision should encompass short term interventions, with a view to returning the student to mainstream school, and longer term alternative educational provision. Decisions on the location and provision of out-of-school education should be data-based and supported by a management structure and clear education strategy. Future out-of-school education provision should retain the most effective elements of the current provision and provide it within a more structured framework which ensures continuity with regard to the child or young person's education journey and access to appropriate education and training certification.

This can be delivered by putting in place defined governance standards for settings in the out-of-school education sector and robust registration criteria for such settings. This will provide improved structure, accountability and a stronger governance model for this sector. Requiring settings to meet a standard set of criteria in order to receive support, will provide greater security of funding, staffing and other supports. A better level of student tracking is required to provide a base for addressing the needs of this cohort of students and consideration should be given for further development of a student tracking model. Both mainstream schools and out-of-school provision need to avail of all available cross departmental, agency and community support to help students reach their full potential. Through targeting the students at risk earlier, identifying and supporting their needs within the current range of supports to mainstream schools, and aligning the current out-of-school education provision within a clear continuum of provision the State can better provide for students who have become disengaged or who are at risk of becoming disengaged from the mainstream system.

It is also acknowledged that, although the National Youthreach Programme is not covered under the scope of this review, in order to ensure that all students are provided with a pathway of support, education provision in Youthreach will need to be considered as the future arrangements for out-of-school education provision are established.

The final conclusion from the working group is that education provision for students, both in school and out-of-school, is best delivered by ensuring the voice of the child or young person is at its heart. This review has shown the diverse range of individual needs of students continue to change. The State, from policy makers to school staff, can only provide for those needs, now and into the future, by listening to students.

12. Recommendations

12.1 Framework of Support to Support the Retention of Students in Education

> This report recommends that a framework of support for students at risk of disengaging from education is developed which gives consideration to the position of short term and longer term out-of-school education provision in relation to the current three tier DE Continuum of Support model.

The findings of this review show that there are various forms of out-of-school educational support currently available. These are not, however, provided through a structured or joined up approach. It is the recommendation of this review that a structured, cross sectoral approach is developed to prevent the early leaving of students from education and training. It is recommended that consideration is given to how out-of-school education provision is positioned in relation to the DE Continuum of Support model (see Figure 11.1).

School
Support Plus
(for a Few)

School Support
(for Some)

Whole-School &
Classroom Support
(for All)
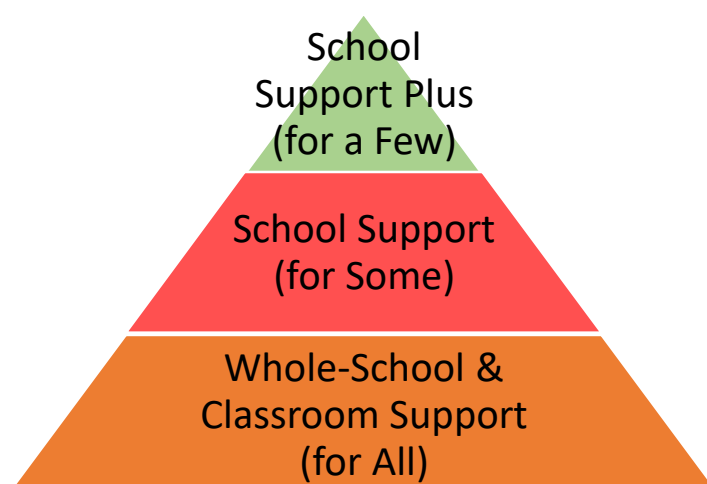
Figure 11.1 Three tier DE Continuum of Support model overview

The working group recommends that the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework of Practice of the DE inform the strengthening of practices in the mainstream schools to promote retention and attendance. It is further recommended that additional out-of-school support both short and longer term could form part of the interventions available for the small cohort of students who following application of interventions from the three tier DE Continuum of Support for Schools, remain at risk of becoming disengaged from education. At every level of the continuum practices need to be:

- Child/Young Person Focused
- Equitable, Fair and Inclusive
- Evidence-informed
- Outcomes focused
- Collaborative

The DE has set out the Continuum of Support framework to assist schools in identifying and responding to students' needs. The framework recognises that need for support occurs along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term. It recognises that students require different levels of support depending on their individual needs. Using the framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental and in addition to whole school/universal approaches they move from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support. The Continuum of Support enables schools to identify need and respond in a flexible way based on the principle that those with the highest level of need have access to the highest level of support. The Student Support File facilitates the recording of the graduated response taken by schools across the different levels of the continuum. It contains the individual Student Support Plans which record interventions and the student's responses to those interventions. It allows the school to track the progress of the student and supports the school in determining the level of support required. Supports and interventions provided at each of the tiers are detailed below.

Tier 1: Whole School and Classroom Support for All

Practices and supports at whole school and classroom level are focused on universal and preventative approaches such as, creating a positive learning environment through ensuring access to appropriate curricula and learning opportunities and through catering for different levels of ability, interests and learning styles. There is a strong emphasis on the development of whole school capacity to provide positive child-adult relationships in the context of which coping skills and emotional competence in children and young people and a sense of belonging to school are developed. Well established student support and guidance systems at post-primary level that facilitate listening to and responding to students needs are important in retaining students and providing them with a welcoming environment in which to learn. The findings of this review have shown that this is particularly important to support the transition between primary and post-primary or a student moving between schools.

It is important to have effective systems for promoting positive behaviour through positive relationships among teachers and students, peer support and effective student support systems. A consistent, fair and structured approach across the school in relation to routines and rules, and associated systems of reward and sanction add to the promotion of positive behaviour. Whole School preventative approaches involve all members of the school community engaging in a collaborative process to build a sense of belonging, security and connectedness to school through a positive school climate and participation in school and community activities.

The needs of these students should be addressed through a planned systematic response involving assessment, monitoring and reviewing of progress. The Student Support Team can work in collaboration with the SET team in this process. Individual students who may be considered to be at risk may be supported with a Classroom Support Plan, which records specific interventions used in the classroom to provide a constant and supportive approach.

Attendance and a whole school approach to retention, should be part of every schools School Self Evaluation.

Tier 2: School Support for Some

While most students' needs should be met through whole school and classroom based practices some students who are identified as having learning, emotional, behavioural and social support needs may require more targeted interventions. At the School Support level of the Continuum interventions for students who are identified as at risk of becoming disengaged from education are characterised by a combination of small group and individual approaches targeting identified needs. A co-ordinating teacher takes responsibility for the development, monitoring and review of interventions in close collaboration with the student support team, class and subject teachers, parents/guardians, and relevant DE supports (Tusla, NCSE, NEPS), outside agencies and community supports. It is important in this tier to provide the right supports at the right time to address emerging issues.

Tier 3: School Support Plus for Few

It is recognised that for the small cohort of students who have not responded as expected to intervention at School Support Level, a more intensive level of support is required. This is the group of students identified as the most 'at-risk' for disengagement from mainstream education and who require intensive, individualised, targeted intervention.

In order to understand the needs of these students, the school should take a holistic approach to identification of need and providing personal and academic support, guidance, mentoring, which involves community and other professional supports as required. Such an approach includes the child or young person and their parents/guardians, and uses the problem solving framework to gather further information to identify risk and protective factors. This data informs the development of an individualised Student Support Plan, which is reviewed following targeted interventions and revised or adjusted as required. Students at this level of the Continuum are likely to be those with the highest level of need and schools will consult with appropriate services and agencies, such as NEPS, HSE Services, CAMHS, and other outside agencies and community supports when devising the plan as is appropriate to the individual case. At key transition points, the needs of these students should be addressed through a planned systematic response involving collaborative assessment, support planning, monitoring and reviewing of progress. A collaborative approach involving the student, their parents/guardians and supports as required such as HSCL, SCP personnel, NEPS, Guidance Counsellors and others should be used to facilitate a smooth, informed transition within the mainstream system.

This report recommends that the position of out-of-school education provision in relation to the current three tier Continuum of Support model should be considered to ensure a formal approach to retaining all students in education, including those in the very small cohort whose needs may not be met within the continuum.

Where in-school interventions in the continuum of support model have not successfully retained the students' engagement in mainstream school education and attendance remains an issue, the Educational Welfare Officer should be informed. Ideally in such a scenario, if short-term out-of-school programmes are available they can be considered at this point. A regional analysis of need, informed by data, should form the basis of recommendations for development of such short term programmes.

A critical component of such programmes would be the reintegration support provided. This should focus on developing an individual plan in collaboration with the child or young person and the mainstream school, taking account of the learning from the intervention programme and identifying the school based supports which will be needed to maintain progress.

Short term out-of-school settings would be required to meet defined governance standards and robust registration criteria for such settings This will provide improved structure, accountability and a stronger governance model to ensure that education provision is meeting the level required in order to receive support.

Key goals of Short Term Out-of-School support are:

- This is a temporary support.
- Supports are devised to maintain connections with the mainstream school.
- Interventions are focused on supporting the student to foster a sense of belonging and to re-connect with their mainstream placement.

Following the application of both in-school and short term out-of-schools supports we are aware that there may still remain a very small cohort of student who continue to struggle to remain engaged with education. At this stage, an opportunity to attend longer term out-of-school provision may be considered. It is recommended that the aim of long-term out-of-school support should still be to reintegrate the student to mainstream education.

The student can only be referred to a long term out-of-school setting by the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). Until such time as a place is secured in an out-of-school setting for the student they will remain enrolled in the mainstream school. The EWO should ensure that arrangements are made to have the student registered on the Section 14 register and at this stage the student may be taken off the mainstream school enrolment database. However, this student should be followed up by Tusla until such time as they reintegrate completely in mainstream school, or turn 16[73]. The mainstream recognised

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[73] The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, envisaged that a child under the age of 16 years would either be enrolled in a recognised school, or on the register maintained under section 14 of the Act. The current system whereby the functions Educational Welfare Service is responsible for school attendance and Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service is responsible for maintain the section 14 register, means that there is a data gap between the two services.

school should liaise with the EWO and record this process on the POD or PPOD system, only removing the student from the enrolment once they have been informed the student has been enrolled on the Section 14 register.

The student should have an individualised support plan within a holistic and flexible atmosphere to meet their educational and personal development needs. Support can be provided on a one to one basis, together with social, behavioural and emotional supports within the individual programme. It is recommended that access to educational, psychological, special education and additional needs supports are available to these programmes.

Although the aim continues to be to reintegrate the student in mainstream education, certification must be available in long term out-of-school support settings to include Junior Cycle, Junior Certificate Schools Programmes and/or QQI certification.

The development of a framework is required to set out the support continuum for students who are at risk of becoming disengaged from educations which considers the position of out-of-school education provision, both short and longer term in relation to the current three tier Continuum of Support model.

12.2 Structure and Governance

> This report recommends that, standardised structure is required for the governance of out-of-school education provision. This review finds positively on the work which is carried out in out-of-school settings and it is important to provide stability to this provision. It recommends that all settings be supported by state funding to ensure its stability. However, in order to receive funding, out-of-school settings should be required to meet set criteria in relation to the level of education provision, level of teaching, referrals process and overall governance.

Where practical, the governance approach to out-of-school education provision should be standardised and that a set of minimum criteria is developed to define governance, structure, accountability and the provision of education in this sector. In order to set a formal standard for the education provision in the out-of-school education setting, this report recommends the development of an overarching framework for out-of-school education provision. While there are broad parameters set out in Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 in relation to education provision in non-recognised schools, the framework referenced here would encompass the overall requirements, governance and structures that alternative out-of-school settings would need to comply with, in order to qualify for funding by the DE. The establishment of an implementation group may be required to establish this criteria, which would also require a period of consultation with stakeholders.

Settings in this sector should be able to receive State support, but should also be required to meet a minimum set of criteria in order to do so. Given that education providers in this group all serve a common core function in meeting the needs of this small cohort of students, setting a standard for education provision in this sector would provide greater clarity in relation to the structure and role of these education providers

and their governance and relationships with relevant agencies and other services. This recommendation is in line with both the recommendations contained in the DE Inspectorate Review of Education of Children in Detention and Care and the DE Review of the YEP Schools (Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate, 2017) (Department of Education and Science, 2008).

An overarching framework for out-of-school education provision should provide clear high level goals and outcomes for students in out-of-school settings. These goals should be both in terms of educational and personal development, aimed at returning the student to mainstream education, and the strategy will form the basis for regular assessment.

The report also highlights the need to support the individual needs of students and that flexible and bespoke approaches, which have shown reported success in out-of-school settings, should be supported to address those needs. It is important that any framework allows for this flexibility in terms of education provision remains and that autonomy remains to meet local needs.

This report also recommends that all out-of-school education settings within the scope of this review be subject to advisory visits by the DE Inspectorate. To inform these visits the overarching framework should include indicators against which performance can be measured.

12.3 Referral Framework

> This report recommends that a referral framework is developed to provide clear structure, guidelines and accountability for the referral process through the continuum of support for the retention of students in education and training.

This framework should be clear on the requirements of the mainstream school in their responsibility for the education of the student. The referral process should be informed by the Student Support file. The referral framework should also form part of the attendance strategy in mainstream schools.

Any referrals to out-of-school settings should only come through the regional EWO. Clear and documented evidence of all actions taken to support the student in an effort prevent them becoming disengaged from mainstream education should be provided. A Student Support file should document a detailed problem solving process involving all relevant professional and educational support services. The file should outline all interventions put in place and the student's response to those interventions. A cross agency referral team, together with parent/guardian and mainstream school involvement, should assess if out-of-school education is the most suitable intervention for the student before they are enrolled.

A referred student should remain on the EWOs caseload, following enrolment in an out-of-school setting, until the student has been reintegrated to mainstream school. Where the student attends an out-of-school school education setting, under Section 14 of the Educational (Welfare) Act 2000, the child or young person's name must be registered and the standard of education being provided assessed by Tusla. Where the student is not registered by the parent, the EWO should act to ensure registration. The EWO, out-of-school setting and mainstream recognised school setting should liaise to ensure the student transitions are recorded at all stages on the POD and PPOD and the Section 14 registration systems.

12.4 Improved data collection and transfer

> This report recommends improvement in the current level of the data recording and transfer on the needs, supports, outcomes and attendance of students throughout the education continuum.

The first important step is the transfer of data between primary and post-primary schools, highlighting the needs of new students, in particular those which may be seen to be as risk of becoming disengaged from school. The NCCA Education Passport[74] should be used by all schools. This should also focus on the learning level of the student to inform the new school how to tailor teaching to suit the student.

A student's progress within the tiered approach of the Continuum of Support model should be recorded by the Student Support Team, detailing the interventions and actions taken.

Where a student has been absent for 20 consecutive days this information should be promptly referred to the Educational Welfare Officer. This report also recommends that this information should be recorded in a single database for ease of access and to monitor overall progress.

Where a decision is taken to refer a student to a short term out-of-school setting, the child should remain enrolled on the POD or PPOD system but an indicator added to show their attendance at a programme off the mainstream school campus.

Where a student requires a referral to a long term out-of-school setting a transfer of all relevant data to detail the needs of the student and interventions carried out to date should be exchanged between the mainstream school and the out-of-school setting. The EWO plays a key role in the transfer of data between the two educational settings and in ensuring the student is registered on the Section 14 register and notifying the mainstream school to remove the student from their enrolment.

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[74] https://ncca.ie/en/primary/reporting-and-transfer/education-passport/

With this in mind this report recommends that an ultimate aim for a real time database of student data to record attendance, student needs and supports, attainment and other relevant information should be explored. This will assist schools, and students, through transitions from primary to post-primary and through moving between schools, better informing their enrolling school of their needs, supports and abilities. It should also provide information to measure the success or otherwise of policy development and inform the development of subsequent policy to support students. This is in line with a similar recommendation of the Inspectorate Report on the Education of Children in Detention and Care (Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate, 2017).

12.5 Location and accessibility of short term and longer term out-of-school education provision

> The report recommends that consideration be given to the location and accessibility of short term and longer term out-of-school supports, to prevent the early leaving of students from education and training.

This should be done within the available regional education and student support structures and based on relevant data. The analysis of data held by Tusla in relation to referrals to the EWS and applications for registration under Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act may assist in identifying trends or highlighting specific areas where intervention may be required. Similarly, retention data and other information from the POD and PPOD systems held by the DE may assist in informing where specific needs exist. Consideration will also need to be given to the suitability of different types of provision which may be provided where access to out-of-school education options are not readily available. A scoping exercise to determine possible services should be carried out. Local need may differ between regions and a level of flexibility and autonomy will be required to meet this need.

12.6 Mapping resources available to provide support to students

> A recommendation of this report is the completion of a mapping of all support services available to schools to support the educational and personal development of their students to include all cross departmental, agency and community services.

An easy to access directory of all national and local supports available to schools would aid the whole school approach to support students who are identified early on as being at risk of becoming disengaged from education and also be beneficial to support across the other three tiers if required.

The development of a centrally held easy to access information resource which details approved regional services to support children and young people should be considered.

This would support all schools to develop a cross community approach to meeting the needs of their students.

Out-of-School Education and the National Youthreach Programme

The above recommendations set out a vision for future arrangements for out-of-school education provision for children aged 15 and younger. While the scope of the review did not include the National Youthreach Programme, it is noted that the ESRI review of Youthreach commissioned by SOLAS complements the work undertaken here. Written submissions were also received from a number of Youthreach settings (see appendix 7) It is important that the implementation of the future arrangements for this sector gives consideration to the provision of education in Youthreach to ensure that all students remain supported on their education journey. The National Youthreach Programme is under the remit of the DFHERIS since its establishment in 2020. The review group engaged with DFHERIS as the review was being finalised and DFHERIS will be represented on the implementation group which will steer the implementation of the recommendations of this report.

13.　Implementation plan

As noted at the introduction to this report, the research in relation to this review was conducted before the onset of Covid19. The review working group recognises that since March 2020, the education landscape has changed. The context of those changes and learnings from the provision of education during Covid19 will be taken into consideration as the recommendations of this report are implemented.

This review highlights the importance of the out-of-school sector in providing education for those students who have become disengaged from mainstream education. Often this is the last chance for education for students who have the highest level of need. Therefore, it is important that the recommendations of this review are implemented to provide for a defined standard of governance, education and support for this sector.

The first step towards implementing the recommendations of this report will be to put in place an implementation group to oversee the process and ensure each recommendation is progressed to completion. The implementation group should contain a representative cross section of expertise from relevant Government Departments and agencies, including DE officials, in relation to the provision of education in the out-of-school sector in line with the recommendations of this report. This implementation group should be put in place as soon as possible in order to progress the implementation of the recommendations.

Terms of reference will be agreed for this group but among its responsibilities will be:

- progressing the recommendations of the Review of Out-of-School Education Provision
- providing advice and agreement on the implementation of the recommendations in particular:

    o Develop a set of minimum criteria to define the governance, structure, accountability and education provision for the sector
    o Scope out any costs associated with the implementation of the recommendations
    o Identify enablers and/or barriers to implementation of the recommendations and advise on potential solutions
    o Develop an education framework for the sector
    o Develop a referral framework for students at risk of becoming disengaged from education
    o Overseeing the work of relevant working groups and/or subgroups
    o Ensure engagement with relevant stakeholders as required.

Implementation of recommendations:

1. *This report recommends that a framework of support for students at risk of disengaging from education is developed which gives consideration to the position of short term and longer term out-of-school education provision in relation to the current three tier DE Continuum of Support model. This approach offers a flexible framework within which schools and agencies can address a range of needs.*

The recommendation for the development of a framework of support for those students at risk of becoming disengaged from education, aims to provide an integrated continuum of support to ensure all students are supported to remain in education through the provision of available services in an interlinked, efficient and timely manner. The model aims to support each student to reach their potential and to ensure those in need of additional resources receive the correct support at the correct time.

The implementation group will work with the education partners, stakeholders and service providers such as NEPS, DE Inspectorate, Tusla, and the NCSE to develop a collaborative framework with a view to promoting an integrated approach to support students. This will take account of how the services will work together and with schools to cater for the needs of students, in particular those who are at risk of becoming disengaged from education.

In order to formalise this approach the implementation group will develop a framework which sets out:

1. Agreed goals
2. A continuum of support
3. The roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder
4. A mapping of how services can work together to enhance provision

Work on this framework should begin as soon as possible to allow the framework to be trialed and used to inform the approach of schools and education settings at the earliest opportunity.

2. *Assessment of the potential location and accessibility of short term and longer term out-of-school education provision, to prevent the early leaving of students from education and training.*

Alongside the development of a defined set of standards for out-of-school settings, consideration will be given to the location of out-of-school education supports. Currently these settings are mainly concentrated in urban areas in Dublin, Cork and Limerick. While the DE policy remains to retain students in mainstream education a balance is required to ensure that no student is left behind when they are not able to cope in this setting.

The implementation group, using attendance and retention data from Tusla and DE will carry out an objective analysis of the regional level of need. This will be further informed by an analysis of the existing resources available and local engagement to identify solutions in relation to accommodation, transport and other issues where required.

The initial analysis of attendance and retention data should begin within 4 months of the establishment of the implementation group. This will inform further engagement if required to assess local need and suitability.

3. *Scope out any costs associated with the implementation of the recommendations*

Based on the regional analysis undertaken in step 2, a localised assessment of costs and funding required to implement short term and longer term out-of-school education provision will be carried out, taking into account current provision already in place.

4. Develop a standardised criteria for out-of-school education in relation to the structure, governance and level of education provision in the sector.

The implementation group will have responsibility for the development of a set of minimum criteria to define the governance, structure, and accountability and education provision in out-of-school settings. This process will involve a period of consultation with stakeholders on the criteria. These criteria will set a standard which must be met in order to receive support from the DE and will also require consideration of structures to facilitate oversight of governance and funding.

An overall education framework will also be required to provide high level goals and outcomes for out-of-school settings. While there are broad parameters set out in section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, and minimum criteria will be defined to allow the setting receive support, the education framework will inform advisory visits from the DE Inspectorate. Therefore, led by the Inspectorate, the implementation group will have responsibility for developing this framework.

Work on both the minimum criteria and the education framework should begin as soon as possible within 6 months of the establishment of the implementation group. Existing settings may then consider aligning with the criteria and education framework set.

5. Develop a referral framework to provide clear structure, guidelines and accountability for the referral process through the continuum of support for the retention of students in education and training.

This referral framework will play an important role in formalising the existing progressive levels of support for a student who is at risk of becoming disengaged from education all the way through to referral to long term out of school education and document and evaluate the interventions put in place. This will be guided by the Education (Welfare) Act, in particular the requirements under Section 14 which requires any child receiving education outside of mainstream school to be registered with Tusla. The development of the referral framework will be overseen by the implementation group and will involve engagement with education partners and relevant stakeholders if necessary. The target date for completion of the referral framework is within 6 months of the establishment of the implementation group.

6. Improvement in the level of data recording and transfer on the needs, supports, outcomes and attendance of students throughout the education continuum.

The review highlighted issues in relation to information relating to students individual needs not moving with the student as they moved through the system or between settings. It also highlighted issues in relation to the recording of attendance data and the prompt referral of non-attending students to the EWS and similar issues relating to the prompt registration of students on the Section 14 register should they require to receive education outside a mainstream school.

The ultimate aim is to move towards a real time database for student data to record attendance, and educational progress. An initial step in this process will be to scope out the viability and cost of options to develop this model, including investigating the benefits of adapting existing resources or developing a new database. This process will be overseen by the implementation group with an aim to have the scoping process completed within 6 months of the establishment of the group.

> *7. Complete a mapping of all support services available to schools to support the educational and personal development of their students to include all cross departmental, agency and community services.*

The report highlighted the importance of wrap around supports for students who are at risk of becoming disengaged and the need for the application of these supports to begin early and when the student is in mainstream school. To support this the report recommends an easy access directory of regional supports which would be available to schools.

Some regional service bodies already have in place information relating to available resources on their web pages. The implementation group will explore how these can be further developed and communicated across the school community.

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Implementation Plan			
Objective	**Action**	**Department/Agency**	**Completed**
Provide oversight for the implementation of the recommendations and future policy in the area of out-of-school education	Establish an interdepartmental and inter agency implementation group to: Progress the recommendations of the Review of Out-of-School Education Provision Provide advice and agreement on the implementation of the recommendations in particular: • Develop a set of minimum criteria to define the governance, structure, accountability and education provision for the sector • Scope out any costs associated with the implementation of the recommendations • Identify enablers and/or barriers to implementation of the recommendations and advise on potential solutions • Develop an education framework for the sector • Develop a referral framework for students at risk of becoming disengaged from education • Overseeing to work of relevant working groups and/or subgroups • Ensuring engagement with relevant stakeholders as required.	DE, DE Inspectorate, NEPS, Tusla, ETBI, DFHERIS	Within1 month of publication of report.

Establish framework of support for students at risk of disengaging from education which is located within the continuum of support model to ensure all students are supported to remain in education through the provision of available services in an interlinked, efficient and timely manner.	Develop a collaborative model with a view to promoting an integrated approach to support students. This will take account of how the services will work together and with schools to cater for the needs of students, in particular those who are at risk of becoming disengaged from education.	Implementation group with involvement from DE, NEPS, DE Inspectorate, Tusla, the NCSE and other stakeholders	Within 3 months of the establishment of the implementation group.

	Formalise this approach in a framework which sets out: • Agreed goals • A continuum of support • The roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder • A mapping of how services can work together to enhance provision		
Assess the potential location and accessibility of short term and longer term out-of-school provision, to prevent the early leaving of students from education and training.	Using attendance and retention data from Tusla and DE, carry out an objective analysis of the regional level of need. This will be further informed by an analysis of the existing resources available and local engagement to identify solutions in relation to accommodation, transport and other issues where required.	DE, Tusla	Within 4 months of the establishment of the implementation group
Assess costs associated with implementation of the recommendations	Based on the regional analysis, carry out an assessment of costs and funding required to implement regional out-of-school education provision	DE, Tusla	Within 4 months of the establishment of the implementation
Develop a standardised criteria for out-of-school education in relation to the structure, governance and level of education provision in the sector	Develop a set of minimum criteria to define the governance, structure, and accountability and education provision in out-of-school settings. This process will involve a period of consultation with stakeholders on the criteria. Develop structures to facilitate oversight of governance and funding. Develop an overall education framework to provide high level goals and outcomes for out-of-school settings, which will inform advisory visits from the DE Inspectorate and Tusla	Implementation Group– engagement with Education Partners, Stakeholders as required Implementation Group Implementation Group	Within 5 months of the establishment of the implementation
Formalise the referral procedure for students at risk of becoming disengaged from education, to allow for an evaluation and documentation of interventions which are put in place to prevent disengagement.	Develop a referral framework to provide clear structure, guidelines and accountability for the referral process through the continuum of support for the retention of students in education and training. Develop a communication strategy for schools in relation to the framework, with the aim of supporting retention in schools	Implementation Group– engagement with Education Partners, Stakeholders as required	Within 6 months of the establishment of the implementation

Move towards the development of a real time database for student data to record attendance, and educational progress	As an initial step, scope out the viability and cost of options to develop this model, including investigating the benefits of adapting existing resources or developing a new database	Implementation Group	Within 6 months of the establishment of the implementation
Map all support services available to schools to support the educational and personal development of their students to include all cross departmental, agency and community services	Explore how existing resources and information points can be further developed and communicated across the school community	Implementation Group	Within 6 months of the establishment of the implementation

14. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Out-of-School Education Settings and Programmes in Ireland

Information below provided from the individual out-of-school education providers, the DE or from the relevant regional ETBs.

Name	Location	Patron	Enrolment	Registered Teacher	Other Staff	Referral Sources	Funding Sources
St. Paul's YEP school	Dublin 11	Crosscare	20	5	1 Bean an Tí, 1 Community Worker, 1 Youth Worker, 1 cleaner, Part-time teaching support	Schools, Tusla, EWO	DE, ETB
St. Augustine's Special School YEP	Limerick	Catholic Diocesan Archbishop	20	4		Schools, EWOs	DE, ETB, DCEDIY
Henrietta Street School YEP	Dublin 1	Catholic Diocesan Archbishop	19	5	1 Bean an Tí, 1 Social Worker	Schools, EWO, Social Workers, Youth Workers, Neighbourhood Youth Project, Bradóg, Parents/carers, Residential Care Homes	DE, ETB

St. Laurence O'Toole's Special School YEP	Dublin 1	Catholic Diocesan Archbishop	24	5	4 SNAs, 1 Youth worker, 1 Bean an Tí, 1 Caretaker	Schools, EWO, Tusla, CAMHS, Parents	DE, ETB
St. Kevin's School YEP	Cork	Catholic Diocesan Archbishop	18	5	1 Secretary, 1 Caretaker	Schools, EWO, Social Worker, Tusla, Parents/Carers	DE ETB
St. Canice's Special School	Limerick	Tusla	19	8	1 Part-time Administrator	Tusla Special Care and Residential Services, EWOs, CAMHS	DE, ETB
Ballydowd Special School	Dublin 20	Tusla	6	5	2 Support Staff	High Court	DE, ETB
Crannóg Nua Special School	Co. Dublin	Tusla	7	6	N/A	Tusla	DE, ETB
Sliabh na Ban (formerly St. Joseph's Ferryhouse)	Tipperary	Tipperary ETB	4	10	Access to Tusla Support Staff	Tusla	DE, ETB
Carline Centre for Learning	Co. Dublin	Limited Company (Voluntary Directors)	21	2	3 Social Care Workers, 3 part-time teachers, 1 Part-time Woodwork Tutor, 1 Part-time Maths Tutor, 1 Part-time Administrator	EWO, Schools, HSCL, SCP, Clondalkin Traveller Group, Juvenile Liaison Officer, Guidance Counsellors, Lucan Youth Service, Social Workers, Care Homes, Garda Diversion Projects	Clondalkin Drugs Task Force, DE, ETB

City Motor Sports	Dublin 8	Early School Leavers Educational Centre	12	4	2 Social Care Staff	Schools, EWO, Social Workers, Probation Service, Self-referrals	Tusla, HSE, DE, ETB
Cork Life Centre	Cork	Trustees – European Province of Christian Brothers	52	12	1 Part-time therapist, 2 Part-time counsellors, 1 Part-time Outreach Worker	EWO, CAMHS, Tusla, Drug Treatment services, Schools, SCP, Parents	DE, ETB, European Province of Christian Brothers, Tusla, HSE, Tomar Trust, Cork Foundation, Social Innovation Fund Ireland, Donations
Cherry Orchard Life Centre	Dublin 10	Trustees – European Province of Christian Brothers	8	6	1 Full-time and 5 Part-time support staff	EWO, SCP, Social Workers, Parents/Carers	DE, ETB, European Province of Christian Brothers, Tusla, OBI
Inspire Programme	Dublin 8	City of Dublin ETB	10	4.5	N/A	Schools, EWO, Social Workers, Tusla	DE, ETB
iScoil	Online (Blended Centres in Leinster and Munster)	N/A	48	9	1 Learning Technologist, 7 Tutors, 3 Mentors	EWOs	DE, ETB, Presentation Sisters, Social Innovation Fund Ireland
Alternative Learning Programme	Online (Dublin and Tipperary)	Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB	26	3	3 Part-time tutors, 6 Youth Workers	EWO, Tusla, Schools, Parents, Youth Services	DCEDIY
Foróige Early School Leavers Programme	Dublin 15	Dublin Dun Laoghaire ETB	10	0	1.5 Youth Officers	EWO, Tusla Social Workers, Community Youth Officers, Parents	DE, ETB, Foróige
Cork City Learning	Cork	Cork ETB					ETB

Support Service							
St. John's Education Centre	Dublin 11	Holy Faith Sisters and De La Salle Congregation	6	2	1 Secretary, 1 Parent Coordinator, 1 Cleaner	School	DE, Holy Faith Sisters, De La Salle Congregation
St. Anthony's Education Centre	Westmeath	Longford Westmeath ETB	11	6	1 General Support Staff	EWO, Schools	DE, ETB
Roscrea Education Centre	Tipperary	Tipperary ETB	30	9	1 Caretaker, Counsellor hours	Parents, Tusla, self-referral, CAMHS, School, Juvenile Liaison Officer	SOLAS funding managed by ETB
Coláiste Ard Álainn	Cork	This setting contributed to the review process but has since closed					
High Support Special School South East	Kilkenny	This setting contributed to the review process but has since closed					

Appendix 2 – Membership of Review Working Group

Name		Department/Agency[75]
Brendan Doody		Department of Education Inspectorate
Mary Hearty	Colm McGarvey	Special Education Section, Department of Education
Noel Kelly		Tusla, Education Support Service
Dr. Deirdre Keyes	Linda Tynan	Education and Training Boards Ireland
Micheál Killilea		Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Education
Caitriona O'Brien, succeeded by Mary Cregg		Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Education
Eibhlin O'Leary	Fiona McDonnell	Tusla, Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service[76]
Conor Rowley	David Logan	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth[77]
Martin Shiel		Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Education
Dr. Justin Sinnott	Aoife Walsh	SOLAS
Prof. Anne Tansey	Dr. Christine Chapple	National Educational Psychological Service

[75] The National Educational Psychological Service, Education and Training Boards Ireland, SOLAS and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth provided two representatives to the Working Group, alternating attendance at meetings.

[76] Tusla AEARS joined the membership of the review working group in 2021 following transfer of the service under the remit of the Minister for Education.

[77] Up to December 2021, since Tusla Education Support Service and Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service was under remit of Minister for Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth. From January 1st, 2021, these functions transferred to the remit of the Minister for Education.

Appendix 3 – Review Methodology

Desktop Research

Research in relation to the provision of education outside of the mainstream school setting was conducted using published research and statistics (see Bibliography for sources used). This research was conducted on a mixture of retention and attainment statistical data from the DE, and a number of published studies and other readily available research literature. This research provided a range of information on the current environment nationally and also on international best practice.

Scoping Process

Given the disparate range and types of education provision outside of the mainstream school model, the initial phase of the Review was a scoping process to understand what provision was available outside of the mainstream system. Members of the working group conducted the scoping exercise by identifying non-mainstream education providers in receipt of supports or assistance from the Departments or agencies. The providers were then assessed to identify if they fell within the scope of the review. This process identified 22 schools, centres and programmes which were within the scope. There were 388 students enrolled in these at the time of the review. A further setting was subsequently identified and contributed to the public consultation process of the review.

Data Gathering

In order to develop a better understanding of what the current provision for out-of-school education looked like, the working group carried out a data gathering exercise. This data gathering exercise was conducted through the circulation of a questionnaire to all schools, centres and programmes within the scope of the review. The questionnaire requested information in relation to the structure, governance and funding of the education provider, the students who are attending and the pedagogy of the education provision. The questionnaire was circulated to the 22 out-of-school education providers identified as being within the scope of the review. There was a 100% response rate to the questionnaire.

Stakeholder and Public Consultation

The working group held a public consultation event where the managers, staff, students and former students of four out-of-school education providers were invited to share their views and insights. A separate workshop session was also held with education partners and other stakeholders to provide the working group with a further layer of information in relation to the provision of education for those who have become disengaged or are at risk of becoming disengaged from the mainstream system.

The working group publically invited submissions from interested persons and parties for consideration in relation to its work. In all, 46 submissions were returned and were each given due consideration by the working group.

Appendix 4 – Questionnaire issued to out-of-school education settings

The School, Centre or Programme	
School, Centre or Programme Name	
Address	
County	
Eircode	
School, Centre or Programme Manager	
Email Address	
Year Established	
Patronage Model	
Governance Structure	
Funding Sources	
Support Staff Employed	
Links to Schools	
Links to other Agencies	
Links to Parents	
The Child	
Total Places Available	
Current Total Enrolment	
Girls Enrolled	
Boys Enrolled	
Current Traveller Enrolment	
Current Enrolment with English as an Additional Language requirements	
Current enrolment with Special Educational Needs requirements	
Type of Special Educational Need	
Age Range Accommodated	
Enrolment Policy	

Is Enrolment Rolling	
Referral Policy	
Referral Sources (Data for Past 3 Years)	
Reasons children are in the centre/programme	
Number of Children on Waiting Lists to Enrol	
Number of Students Suspended/Excluded (3 year Data)	
Reasons for Suspension/Exclusion	
Average Duration of Stay	
Longest Duration of Stay	
The Education Provision	
No. of registered teachers	
Other tuition provided	
Length of Day	
Total hours per week provided	
Source of Teaching Provision	
Subjects Provided	
Certification Level Provided	
Certification Rates (Past 3 yrs)	
Progression Data (Past 3 years)	
Literacy Initiatives	
Numeracy Initiatives	
Is there a Special Educational Needs assessment?	
SEN Supports Provided	
EAL Supports Provided	
Social/Emotional Supports	
After Care supports	
Life Skills Initiatives	
Are Training Allowances Paid	
If yes, who provides funds?	

Appendix 5 – Map of Out-of-School Education Settings
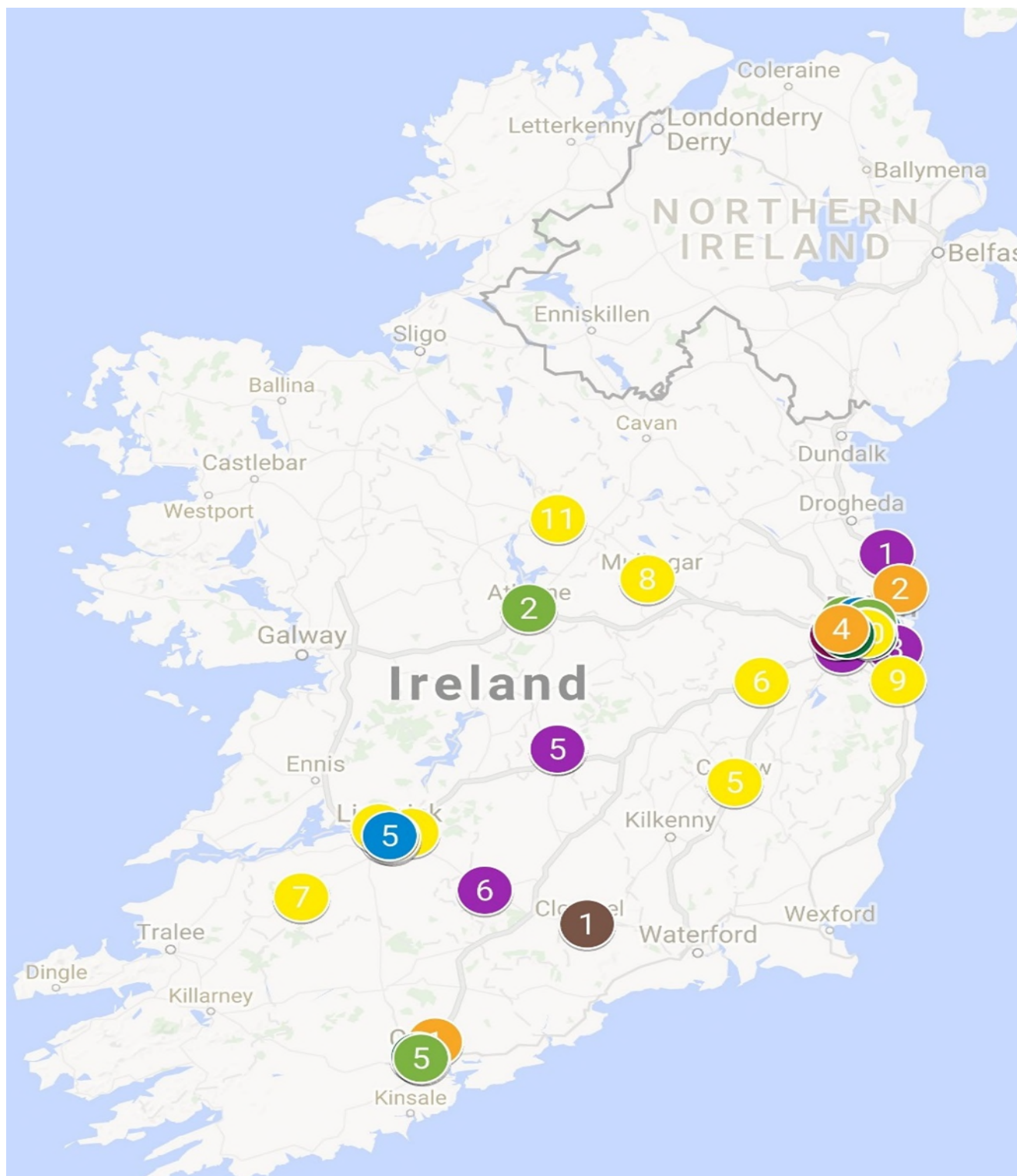
	Youth Encounter Projects	Region
1	St. Laurence O'Toole's Special School	Dublin 1
2	St. Paul's Youth Encounter Project School	Dublin 11
3	Henrietta Street School YEP	Dublin 1
4	St. Kevin's School YEP	Cork
5	St. Augustine's Youth Encounter Project	Limerick

	Education Provision in Special Care Settings	Region
1	Crannóg Nua Special School	North Co. Dublin
2	St. Canice's Special School	Limerick
3	Ballydowd Special School	Dublin 20

	Residential School	Region
1	Former St. Joseph's Residential School	Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

	Line Projects	Region
1	City Motor Sports Learning Centre	Dublin 8
2	Carline Learning Centre	West Co. Dublin

	Life Centres	Region
1	Cork Life Centre	Cork
2	Inspire Programme Education Support Service	Dublin 8
3	Cherry Orchard Life Centre	Dublin 10

	Other Education Settings	Region
1	Foróige Early School Leavers' Programme	Dublin 15
2	St. Anthony's Junior Education Centre	Athlone, Co. Westmeath
3	St. John's Education Centre	Dublin 11
4	Roscrea Education Centre	Roscrea, Co. Tipperary
5	Cork City Learning Support Services	Cork

	iScoil Blended Centres	Region
1	STEPS School Completion Programme	Limerick
2	King's Island Garda Youth Diversion Project	Limerick
3	Moyross Corpus Christi Youth Development Group	Limerick
4	The Factory Southside Youthspace	Limerick
5	Carlow Regional Youth Services	Carlow
6	Curragh/Newbridge Garda Diversion Project	Newbridge, Co. Kildare
7	Foróige Newcastle West	Newcastle West, Co. Limerick
8	Mullingar Youth Project	Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
9	Ballywaltrim School Completion Project	Bray, Co. Wicklow
10	South West Inner City Network Community Development	Dublin 8
11	Longford Youth Service	Longford

	DDLETB Alternative Learning Programmes (ALP)	Region
1	ALP Balbriggan	North Co. Dublin
2	ALP Brookfield	Dublin 24
3	ALP Dun Laoghaire	South Co. Dublin
4	ALP Ronanstown	Dublin 22
5	ALP Roscrea	Roscrea, Co. Tipperary
6	ALP Tipperary	Tipperary Town

Review of Out of School Education Provision

Template for Stakeholder Consultation

Respondent's Name	
Organisation	
Position	
Address	
Telephone	
Email address	
Date	

Part A Observations on current out of school education provision

Part B Suggestions for future out of school education provision

Submissions should be made within the scope of the review.

Written submissions may be in English or Irish.

Information in relation to this submission may be made available to any person who makes a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

To allow fairness of opportunity to each respondent, submissions should be no longer than 1500 words inclusive of Parts A and B. Submissions which are longer than this may not be considered.

Submissions should be made by email (Microsoft Word or equivalent) entitled '*Organisation Name/Acronym-*Out of School Review Submission' by 5pm Friday 6th April 2018 at the following e-mail address: outofschoolreview@education.gov.ie

Part A-Current Out of School Education Provision

Observations / Comments on the current provision for out of school education within the scope of this review

Part B-Future Out of School Education Provision

Suggestions for the future provision of education for children disengaged or at risk of disengaging from mainstream education as identified in the scope of this review

Appendix 7 – Interested parties or persons who submitted written submissions

	Name or Organisation
1	Amy de Marco, Deerpark CBS, Cork
2	Ballymun Anseo School Completion Programme
3	BeLonG Youth Group
4	BEST Ballymun School Completion Programme
5	Blanchardstown Early School Leavers Programme
6	Blanchardstown Youthreach Programme
7	Camara Ireland
8	Childhood Development Initiative
9	Cinnteach
10	City of Dublin ETB Inspire Programme
11	Colaiste Ard Alainn, Special Care School
12	Connect Family Resource Centre - Louth
13	Cork City Learning Support Services
14	Cork ETB Youth work
15	Cork Life Centre
16	Cork North West City School Completion Programme
17	D17 School Completion Programme
18	D7 Children and Youth Action Group
19	Dublin South City Partnership
20	Dun Dealgan School Completion Programme
21	ECO UNESCO
22	Ennis School Completion Programme
23	ETB Ireland
24	Galway Roscommon ETB
25	Henrietta Street School
26	iScoil
27	KDYS Youth Services
28	Kilbeggan Youthreach Programme
29	Limerick Clare ETB
30	Longford Community Resources
31	Lucan Youthreach Programme
32	Navan School Completion Programme
33	Raheen Woods Steiner ALPHA Project
34	St. John's College, Le Fanu Rd School Completion Programme
35	St. Joseph's Residential School Ferryhouse
36	St. Louis' Primary School School Completion Programme
37	St. Paul's Youth Encounter Project
38	STEPS School Completion Programme - Limerick
39	Tallaght Youthreach Programme
40	Teachers Union of Ireland
41	Tusla Alternative Education
42	Tusla Education Welfare Officer, Carrick On Shannon

43	Tusla Education Welfare Services
44	XLC Project, Waterford
45	YMCA - One2one Mentoring
46	Youth Work Ireland

Appendix 8 – Public Consultation Day: Stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Susan Carpenter	Catholic Primary Schools Management Association
Colin Clarke	Irish Second Level Students Union
Janet Colgan	Tusla Educational Welfare Service
Bernadette Cullen	Education and Training Boards
Bríd de Brún	Joint Managerial Body
David Duffy	Teachers Union of Ireland
Moira Leydon	Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland
Maeve McCafferty	Irish National Teachers Organisation
Sarajane McNaboe	Co. Longford Youth Service
Áine O'Keeffe	Tusla School Completion Programme
Sinéad O'Neill	Education Welfare Officer North West Region
Liz O'Sullivan	National Parents Council Primary
Emer Smyth	The Economic and Social Research Institute
Linda Tynan	Education and Training Boards

Appendix 9 – Clarifications to Report

Following publication of the report in May 2022, one of the contributors to the review questioned the manner in which their data was used in the report. On foot of those communications, the following changes have been made:

The amendments/clarifications added are as follows:

Section 6.3.3 of the review (Certification and Progression), figure 6.6 correctly refers to the fact that the Leaving Certificate was available in 4 centres. However the text in the preceding paragraph states: *'The Leaving Certificate was offered in three out-of-school education settings'.* This has been amended.

Section 6.3.3 (Certification and Progression), a clarification has been added noting that one centre offered 15 subjects at Junior Certificate and had 28 students complete the Leaving Certificate over the 3 years of the review period.

The relevant piece of the review reads as follows (new text in red)*:*

'*While certification rates for the Junior Certificate and the Junior Certificate School Programme appeared to be quite high among the respondents, using this as an outcome measure needs to be approached with caution. Students in an out-of-school education setting are frequently reported to study a small number of subjects to Junior Certificate or QQI accreditation level, although one centre has reported offering 15 subjects. Where QQI accreditation programmes are used the certification levels were quite high. Some of these were, however, QQI minor awards on an individual subject or on general learning'.*

'The Leaving Certificate was not as prominent in the data returned. There were only two settings where at least one student achieved a Leaving Certificate in each of the three years prior to the survey. According to the data returned, one centre had 1 – 2 students per year complete the Leaving Certificate and a second centre[78] had 7 – 11 students per year complete the Leaving Certificate over the 3 year period in question.

In the other 21 settings the Leaving Certificate was not achieved by any student over the same period. The Leaving Certificate Applied, where offered, has only seen a small number of students receive an award.

The footnote states as follows '*This centre had 28 students in total who completed the Leaving Certificate over the 3 year period in question.*'

Section 6.4 (Summary of data – fourth paragraph) the report stated that one centre reported a student progressing to University following Leaving Certificate, while many

others do not progress into any further education and training or employment. This has been amended to:

'One centre reported four students progressing to University'

Section 6.4 (Summary of data – fifth paragraph) has been amended and the text in brackets […] deleted, in order to be consistent with the changes earlier in the report:

While students are completing Junior Cycle and Junior Certificate Schools Programme, this may only be in a narrow band of subjects, although 1 centre reported offering 15 subjects. The Leaving Certificate is offered in just four centres, with Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme/Leaving Certificate Applied in a further three. [In centres where Leaving Certificate was reported as offered, only one student had achieved a Leaving Certificate in each of the three years prior to the survey, with only a small number of students having attained a Leaving Certificate Applied].Because of the various approaches, levels and range of certification it is difficult to draw comparisons between outcomes across the different centres.

Section 7 (Public Consultation – What are the progression figures in out-of-school education provision?) of the report it states: Where the Leaving Certificate was available results were quite positive with four students in one centre completing the Leaving Certificate last year. This has been amended to *'Where the Leaving Certificate was available results were quite positive with four students in one centre progressing to university.'*

One other change has been made to assist with consistency of the document:

- Highlighted text boxes in Chapter 12 summarising the recommendations have been added in Chapter 1: Executive Summary under *recommendations* and presented in a similar manner *i.e.* text boxes for clarity and consistency.

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