

The Children's Fund

Expert Panel

Meeting

Tuesday 28th February 2023

Minutes

Attendance (Expert Panel): Professor Sheila Greene (Chair), Dr. Deirdre Horgan, Professor Saoirse Nic Gabhainn, Dr. Karen Smith, Professor Robbie Gilligan, Dr. Muireann Ní Raghallaigh, Alice Malone, Dr. Noelle Spring

Secretariat: Janice Donlon, Assistant Principal Officer, Child Rights Policy Unit, DCEDIY

Apologies: none

Guests: Kate Levey Principal Officer Child Rights Policy Unit DCEDIY

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Kate Levey opened the first meeting of the expert panel by welcoming all panel members and thanking them for agreeing to sit on the panel. Kate provided some background information on her role in the department and on the origin of the commitment of the Children's Fund and the decision to use an expert panel in this manner.

It was noted that all members had been nominated by colleagues within the Department and the intention was to bring a broad range of expertise to the panel. Kate concluded by thanking Professor Greene for her commitment in taking up the role of chair and wished her and the panel well in their work.

2. Round of Introductions

Janice Donlon spoke briefly on her role as secretariat to the panel and provided some housekeeping information to the panel. The Chair then proceeded to invite the panel introduce themselves. Kate Levey excused herself from the meeting following the round of introductions.

3. Opening remarks from Chair

The Chair provided some brief opening remarks to welcome all panel members and set out the opportunities the panel has in delivering on the tasks at hand.

4. Terms of Reference/Objectives

The Chair presented the draft terms of reference to the panel and they were read through. A discussion took place and a decision to make a minor wording amendment to the terms of reference was agreed. The secretariat will make this amendment and same to be circulated to all panel members as agreed final terms of reference.

A query was raised in relation to the length of duration of the panel and whether it would be for a defined period only. The secretariat noted that there was no defined duration of the panel within the terms of reference but that it was noted in the draft ToR that the panel would be in existence until the launch of the Children's Fund. Given the recurring nature of the fund there may be further requirements to reconvene the panel for future iterations of use of the fund.

As a point of clarification the Chair asked all panel members to be considerate of potential conflicts of interest during the work on the panel. No conflicts of interest were declared by any panel members.

It was noted by the panel there did not seem to be specific expertise present in relation to travellers and whether this was an area that needed addressing? The secretariat noted that in forming the panel DCEDIY reached out to a number of experts across relevant areas but not all were available to the panel. The Chair agreed that the panel would not be further expanded at this stage but that if specific expertise were required it would be considered how best to address this need.

5. Discussion #1 –Methodology

A discussion took place on the methodology and principles guiding the work of the panel. Principles discussed were additionality, adding value to existing work and sustainability. The idea of creating something evidence based with impact and opportunities to create something innovative were also discussed. The principle of additionality and the scaling up of existing projects was also discussed as a potential way to use the fund.

The Chair noted that the discussion on methodology would also feed into the next discussion point on potential beneficiaries. A comfort break with refreshments was taken at this point.

6. Discussion #2- Determining beneficiaries for the fund

The Chair led this discussion and opened the floor to the panel. Matters that were discussed included the use of deprivation measurement tools, known marginalised groups, how to prioritise different levels of disadvantage.

The Chair also noted the importance of honouring the memory of those that had been in mother and baby homes and to be mindful of this as potential beneficiaries are discussed. The secretariat noted that her division is working closely with the Mother and Baby Home Division in the Department. A commitment has been made to keep the survivor group informed of the work of the expert panel through a quarterly newsletter which they currently receive. A webpage on gov.ie will be developed to provide information and updates in relation to the work of the panel and the fund as it progresses and this will go live once survivor groups have been informed via the newsletter.

The issue of stigma as a common theme was also discussed by the panel.

The panel agreed that they would like to explore the area of lone parents and the children of lone parents as potential beneficiaries here.

The panel discussed the need for additional evidence on existing supports available to this group and potential gaps that have been identified. The secretariat agreed to provide relevant papers to the panel in order to progress the discussion further.

7. Roundup of discussion

The Chair provided a brief summary of discussions and it was agreed that the next meeting would seek to progress the work of this meeting and focus on the types of projects/programmes that the fund may be used for.

There was a request for any relevant information in relation to the new Child Poverty and Wellbeing Unit in Dept of Taoiseach; the Secretariat noted this request.

There was a request from panel members for an update on the successor framework to Better Outcomes Brighter Futures. The Secretariat agreed to provide a short presentation on this work at the next meeting.

8. Next steps and meeting dates

Next meeting dates were discussed and a change of time to 11am-1pm was agreed by all panel members. The Chair thanked all for their contributions and the next meeting will be held on Thursday 30th March in Miesian Plaza.

Actions

Action	Person
Terms of reference to be amended and circulated	Secretariat
MBH Action Plan Annual Report to be circulated	Secretariat
Research papers to be circulated to panel members prior to next meeting to aid further discussion	Secretariat