

VALUING CHILDHOOD – CHERISHING CHILDREN

a 12 year strategy to make
Ireland the best place in the world
to be a child



Barnardos

EVERY CHILDHOOD LASTS A LIFETIME

an ambitious long term strategy for children in Ireland

The 1916 Proclamation resolved that the sovereign independent State it sought to establish would cherish "all the children of the nation equally". This is a phrase which has resonated with Irish people ever since, but in the early decades following independence, Ireland struggled to realise this aspiration due to economic and social constraints.

However, over the past ten to fifteen years significant progress has begun to be made. This has included:

- The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The provision of increased resources as the economy has grown, coupled with a substantial reduction in the number of children experiencing consistent poverty.
- The development of the National Children's Strategy.
- The creation of the Office of Ombudsman for Children and the National Children's Office.
- Important legislative change including the Child Care Act, 1991 and the Children Act, 2001.

Nevertheless, children in Ireland in 2005 still experience many threats to their healthy development and the most vulnerable have not yet experienced the full benefit of our recent economic progress. According to official figures 66,000 children continue to live in consistent poverty, 19% of our children leave school before completing the Leaving Certificate and at least 1,000 children each year fail to make the transition from primary to secondary school. We have some of the youngest drug addicts and the highest levels of underage binge drinking in the EU, while there are many children whose lives are shattered by conditions of abuse, neglect, discrimination, violence, exploitation and homelessness.

Children's lives and their opportunities vary widely in Ireland today. For some children, left without sufficient support and intervention, their futures seem bleak and their lives can quickly spiral into a futile existence without hope. This diminishes all of us.

But this can be changed if we want it enough – and the real progress that has been made in the recent past can give us the confidence that if, as a society we do care enough about it, we can realistically look forward to celebrating the centenary of the Proclamation in 2016 in the knowledge that we have, finally, realised the aspiration of the founding fathers of the State. **Barnardos' Vision is an Ireland where childhood is valued and all children and young people are cherished equally.** And, because Barnardos can influence but cannot bring this about on its own, we want others to share this vision so that we can work together to make it a reality.

Barnardos' mission is to challenge and support families, communities, society and government to make Ireland the best place in the world to be a child, focusing specifically on children and young people whose well-being is under threat.

"I love coming to the Barnardos' breakfast club because it's warm, the food is nice and we have fun." *Child attending a Barnardos' breakfast club, aimed at supporting children at risk of dropping out of school early.*



our strategy

To achieve our mission we are now embarking on a 12-year strategy and investment programme, which seeks to contribute to:

- The building of a society whose cornerstone is the needs and rights of children and young people.
- Placing children at the centre of our constitution, laws, policies, planning and our services for children and families.
- Acknowledging that proper care and nurturing of our children is a crucial investment in the future social and economic development of our society.

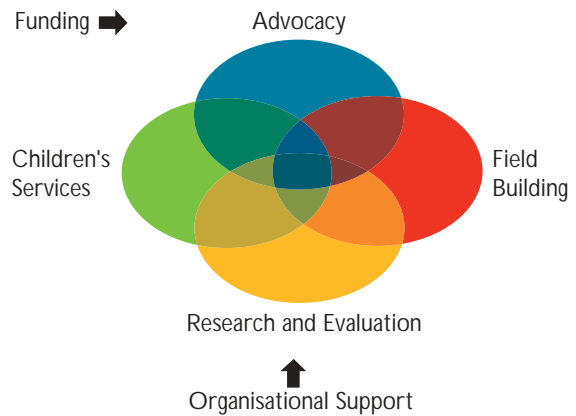
Barnardos, with the support of many partners, expects to spend over m100 million over the next five years. Approximately 60% of this expenditure is represented by income from a variety of statutory partners with the remainder to be raised from private sources – this includes significant investment from key funders, including The Atlantic Philanthropies.

This investment programme will:

- Significantly build on our existing programmes for vulnerable children and their families, providing the opportunity for Barnardos to reach world-class standards in terms of proven best practice and effective results.
- Focus on early intervention and prevention in our services and, through advocacy, achieve a shift in how resources are provided which values prevention and early intervention.
- Ensure all activity is driven by the needs of vulnerable children, and achieves the best results possible.
- Establish parent and child centres where there is the greatest need throughout the country.
- Invest in research to bring the best solutions to children's needs and underpin the quality and the relevance of our services and our advocacy.
- Promote children's needs and rights by working together to build a strong coalition of support to transform provision for children and young people in Ireland.

- Influence additional funding for the sector from public and private sources to ensure that our vision for children and young people in Ireland is realised by 2016.

Valuing Childhood – Cherishing Children is underpinned by investment and activity in six essential pillars – Children's Services, Research, Advocacy, Field-building, Organisational Support and Funding.



Fundamentally the plan seeks, through coherent and focused activity, to guide a series of achievements that will ultimately result in Ireland becoming a world leader in the way we respect and protect the rights and interests of all children.



CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Barnardos' services will be led by the needs of children, working with a "whole child approach" – involving families and community. Our services will work with children aged between 0-15 and aim to achieve positive outcomes for their educational, emotional and social development, especially focusing on children whose well-being is under threat. Our services will value and respect diversity.

We will do this by:

- Focusing on children's needs within a clear developmental perspective.
- Incorporating a needs-led, positive outcomes perspective into all work.
- Building on what we do well.
- Avoiding duplication/fragmentation of service delivery by working in partnership with statutory, voluntary and community partners.
- Investing in changing service design based on best practice experience.
- Creating capacity within Barnardos' children's services by investing in learning and development of all staff and developing management capacity.

Parent and child centres will offer needs led and outcomes focused services in three key areas:

- **Best Start** (0-4) providing support to vulnerable children in their early years focusing on healthy development and school readiness.
- **Best Chance** (5-9) supporting vulnerable children in mid childhood focusing on improved learning and development outcomes.
- **Best Choice** (10-15) helping vulnerable children make a successful transition to young adulthood focusing on best life chance outcomes.

Parent and child centres will be located in areas of greatest need and services may be offered on an outreach basis connecting to a "hub".

ADVOCACY

Through reviewing a wide range of children's needs and existing advocacy gaps alongside Barnardos' competences, we have identified four priority issues for our advocacy:

- Child Poverty
- Child Protection
- Educational Disadvantage
- Alcohol Abuse

In addition, our advocacy positions will be based on three cross-cutting concerns:

- Children's Rights
- Implementation of the National Children's Strategy
- Inclusion – for children excluded from full participation in society for example by reasons of race, family circumstances, poverty or ethnic or social origin.

Barnardos' experience as a service provider is critical in adding authority to our advocacy positions. Our vision for 2016 demands that advocacy be a priority for Barnardos in the future. In order to strengthen our capacity to maximise impact, a new Advocacy Department is being developed to realise our vision for children.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Research and evaluation will become a key support in enhancing the quality of our services and advocacy. Through the appointment of research staff we will develop our culture of outcomes-focused work and our capacity to commission and manage research projects. Being able to demonstrate 'what works' and 'how it works' will support our advocacy to invest resources in prevention and early intervention. Research will also be undertaken to identify and quantify unmet needs and to propose effective responses. We will also undertake randomised control trials to scientifically examine the effectiveness of a number of service models with a view to their subsequent replication.



FIELD-BUILDING

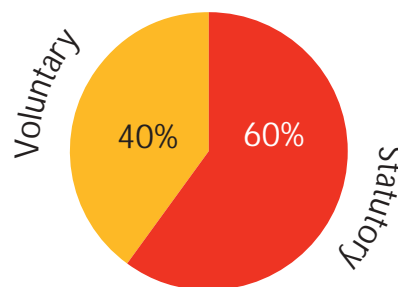
To achieve our ultimate vision for children and young people we are committed to strengthening the children's sector in Ireland. We are committed to a collaborative approach to stimulate and enhance service provision, build effective advocacy and strengthen the functioning of the sector. Barnardos has a substantial track record of 'field-building' – supporting the development of organisations both locally and nationally, including local management committees, the Children's Rights Alliance and the Irish Association of Young People in Care.

ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

To support the effective development of these strategies, Barnardos plans to put in place world-class systems, processes and skills. We will update our financial procedures and systems, our Information, Communications and Technology capacity and our Human Resources supports.

FUNDING

Over the next five years we will spend in excess of m100 million. We are embarking on a major fundraising programme so that by 2010 we will have sufficient long-term statutory and voluntary funds to meet the needs of our 2016 goals.



"I felt like a failure. I am unemployed looking after three young children, with a very low income. Everything felt hopeless. I wanted to stay strong, but I felt nothing. My kids have grown up quickly and ended up comforting me. I couldn't afford to treat them when they had been great to me. The mother's group in Barnardos has helped me build my self-confidence, making me believe in myself and gave me practical skills to look after my children. Without my family and Barnardos I don't know how I would have coped. I don't feel like a failure anymore and I am making a difference for my children's future."

Jessica, mother of three attending a Barnardos Mother's Group.



about Barnardos

- Founded by Dubliner Dr Thomas Barnardo in London in 1866. In 2005 as we mark the centenary of his death Barnardos in Ireland continues to be inspired by his idealism, commitment to children and social entrepreneurship.
- Barnardos began working in Ireland in 1962, becoming a fully independent organisation in 1989.
- We invest more in community services in Ireland than any other children's charity, and currently work with 12,000 children and families throughout the country.
- Barnardos in Ireland is part of an international family of Barnardos organisations in the UK, Australia and New Zealand.
- Barnardos has grown substantially and has a national presence becoming a pioneer in the field of children.
- Barnardos has played a key role in many non-governmental and statutory initiatives to improve the lives of children in Ireland.
- Barnardos ran an award-winning advocacy campaign "Every Child Matters" aimed at highlighting the issues facing children in Ireland today.
- *Valuing Childhood – Cherishing Children* shows that Barnardos is here for the long-term with an ambitious 12-year plan to achieve an Ireland where all our children are cherished equally by 2016. This plan reinforces our commitment to ensure Ireland becomes the best place in the world to be a child.

About Stephen

Stephen is six and he's in big school. His head itches constantly from head lice and the infections he gets from scratching. Stephen only recently got his first bed. In school he is teased and bullied. Stephen is very quiet and prefers the company of adults to other children. He doesn't speak about his family. Stephen is often hungry in school. It is hard for him to concentrate on reading and writing. He is often sick with no resistance to the ordinary colds and coughs of childhood.

Barnardos works with over 12,000 families and Stephen and his family are just one of those who need Barnardos' support. There are many more families who need our help and yours to give Stephen and others the Best Start, Best Chance and Best Choice.

"I would like to congratulate Barnardos on its plan *Valuing Childhood – Cherishing Children*. I welcome the concept of us all – individuals, organisations and government – pulling together for the greater good of children and the focused approach you have taken in setting ambitious long term goals".

Emily Logan, Ombudsman for Children.

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