Role of research in evidence-based policy and practice

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Experience:

- Independent Social Researcher for the last 20 years
- Department of Children, Disability and Equality and Hub na nÓg- member of panel of researchers and facilitators
- Ombudsman for Children Panel of Researchers and Policy Specialists
- Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR)
- National Researcher foe EU Youth Dialogue
- National Correspondent for Youth Wiki

What is evidence-based policy-making?

▶ **Evidence-based policy-making is:**

- the analysis of policy choices based on objective evidence and research;

- this is achieved through ensuring both that high quality empirical evidence is available and accessible; and

- evidence is used to inform the policy-making process.

Benefits and limitations of evidence-based policy making

Benefits:

▶ Effectiveness

▶ Efficiency

▶ Accountability

Limitations:

▶ Evidence depends on context

▶ Might not work in other contexts

▶ Specific findings used too quickly/widely

Implications for policymakers, service-providers, funders, practitioners

- Require skills to engage critically with evidence to use it effectively

- Recognise limitations of research

- Important to engage with a variety of different, and sometimes conflicting, sources of evidence

OECD definition of evidence-informed policymaking:

- *"A process whereby multiple sources of information, including statistics, data and the best available research evidence and evaluations, are consulted before making a decision to plan, implement, and (where relevant) alter public policies and programmes"* (OECD, 2020).

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▶ It is also important that the evidence utilised captures the views and experiences of those directly affected by policy, including children and young people.

Evidence-based policy-making in youth policies

EU Youth Strategy:

▶ *"The EU Youth Strategy should be evidence-based and anchored in the real needs and situations of young people. That requires continuous research, knowledge development and outreach to young people and youth organisations."*

Irish context: Evidence-informed policymaking, planning, intervention

▶ Focus on evidence-informed policymaking in national policies

▶ *Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People -* 7 actions to strengthen data and research development

▶ Cross Government Children and Young People's Research Programme

▶ Growing Up In Ireland: National Longitudinal Study of Children

▶ *'What Works'* Ireland Evidence Hub: includes an interactive area-based geo-mapping system to inform policymakers' decisions regarding service planning and delivery

▶ Children and Young People's (CYP) indicator set: comprehensive collection of indicators relating to the lives of children and young people aged 0–24 years in Ireland

Examples of research impacting on policy and practice

▶ Growing Up in Ireland Study

▶ Traveller and Roma Education Strategy

▶ LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy

Impact of the Growing Up in Ireland Study on policy and practice

About the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) Study

▶ GUI is the national longitudinal study of children in Ireland

▶ Set up in 2006

▶ 19,000 families involved to date

▶ Tracks children from birth to 18 years

Allows Government, policy makers and researchers to:

▶ track changes over time;

▶ monitor impacts of policies/services on children and young people;

▶ use data to inform public policy.

How the Department of Children used GUI data

To inform public policy on issues such as:

- Doctor use among children

- Childcare and cognitive outcomes

- Obesity and overweight

- Transitions from primary to post-primary school

- Parenting and infant development

- Mother's return to work and childcare choices

- Development of First 5: A whole of government strategy for babies, young children and families

How other Government Departments and agencies used GUI data

▶ **The Department of Health's** Healthy Ireland policy framework

▶ **The Department of Education** in a review of career guidance in schools

▶ **The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment** in funding research with the Commission on Communications Regulation on mobile phone ownership and academic performance

▶ **The National Council for Special Education** to estimate the prevalence of special educational needs (SEN) and examine outcomes for children with SEN

▶ **The Health Research Board** for an upcoming in-depth longitudinal project on drug use among young people

Traveller and Roma Education Strategy

Research and consultations undertaken for the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy

▶ Literature review

▶ Public online consultation

▶ Targeted consultation: education strand

▶ **Targeted consultation: Traveller and Roma children and young people**

▶ Targeted consultation: Traveller and Roma families and communities

Consultations with Traveller and Roma children and young people

68 Traveller and Roma children and young people consulted

54 (79.4%) young Travellers and 14 (20.6%) Roma young people

Aged 11 – 23 years

Youth Advisory Group – 2 meetings

8 consultations: 4 in-person, 4 online

Key findings from consultations with Traveller and Roma young people

Preferred primary to secondary school

Some experienced racism and discrimination from teachers, principals and other students

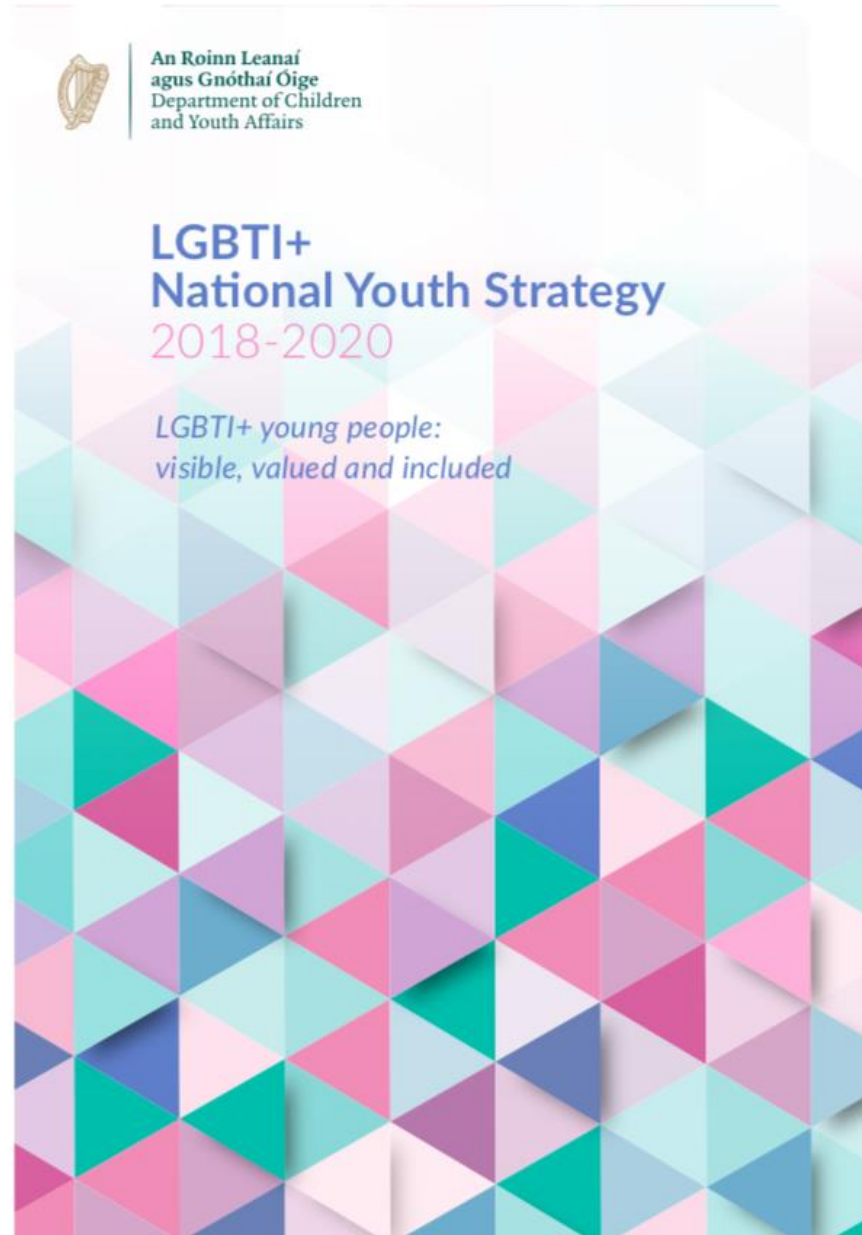More learning and language supports needed

Teach more about Traveller and Roma cultures in school

Influence of research on the strategy

- Children and young people's views were considered when developing the strategic actions, specifically those relating to improving educational experiences with particular attention to transition points.

- **Action 2.4:** Support Traveller and Roma children and young people at the transition points of our education system. In particular, focus resources on transitions to post - primary school and progression and retention beyond year three of Junior Cycle into and through Senior Cycle and to the Leaving Certificate examination. Provide guidance to and support and encourage schools to identify the specific guidance related needs of the Traveller and Roma communities and include strategies to meet the specific needs of this cohort within the whole school guidance plan.

LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy

LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy Development Process

Oversight Committee

Youth Advisory Group

Environmental Scan

Research Reports

Literature

Data & Information

Youth Consultation

What's good about being LGBTI+?
What are the issues?
What needs to change?

Stakeholder Consultation & Open Call for Written Submissions

What challenges are there?
What opportunities exist?
What are the key priorities?

Youth research influence on policy

▶ Youth Advisory Group (YAG) was set up to advise on the strategy development process

▶ Survey of 3,882 young people in Ireland

▶ Consultations with 172 young people

▶ Research findings from the literature review, survey and consultations directly inputted into the strategy

▶ YAG gave input on specific actions for implementation of the strategy

▶ Service providers and professionals responsible for implementation of actions presented their plans to the YAG for feedback ahead of the actual implementation

▶ Department of Children continually got views of young people for any revisions or changes to the strategy

Strategic Goals

- Goal 1 - Create a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for LGBTI+ young people

- Goal 2 - Improve the physical, mental and sexual health of LGBTI+ young people

- Goal 3 - Develop the research and data environment to better understand the lives of LGBTI+ young people

Thank you!