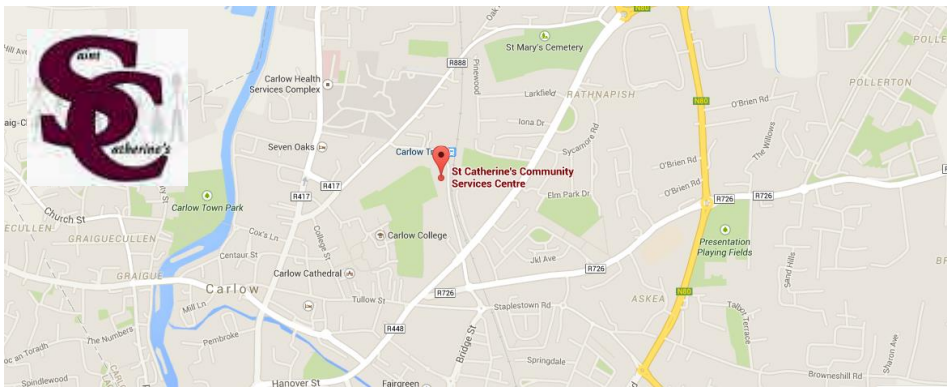


St Catherine's Community Services Centre Strategic plan 2019-2022



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1. Introduction

1.1. Background to St Catherine's Community Services Centre

In February 1974, Carlow Community Services Council was formed to identify the needs of residents living in Carlow Town and surrounding areas of County Carlow. Twenty-five organisations attended its first meeting. In 1975, Carlow Community Services Council engaged a social worker. The same year, Bishop Patrick Lennon, bishop of the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin, donated the old Mercy Convent Boys Primary School to the Council and this subsequently became St Catherine's Community Services Centre (referred to as St Catherine's). The building was extended in 2002.

Over the past 40 years, St Catherine's has responded to the needs of residents of Carlow town and beyond which has resulted in providing services for people at all stages of the lifecycle.

In 2014, St Catherine's opened a new childcare service on the Kilkenny Road.

St Catherine's mission is to provide quality services responsive to local needs based on equality, diversity, justice and inclusion with a view to empowering and enriching individuals, families and communities in Carlow and its environs.

Aims

- To ensure work is responsive to local needs with respect for equality, individuality and diversity.
- To empower people to take control over their own lives and to participate fully in society
- To reduce the barriers to participation of those most at risk of exclusion, poverty, and disadvantage.

The strategic objectives of St Catherine's are:

- To involve and consult participants, target groups and local community in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of all programmes and activities.
- To work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies and community groups to ensure an effective, coordinated and strategic response to local needs.
- To proactively encourage and facilitate the participation and activation/empowerment of those at risk of exclusion, poverty, and disadvantage.
- To do this through the provision of information, support, community and developmental education.
- To promote and support voluntary work as a means of providing services and to recognise and value the role and work of volunteers.
- To evaluate and plan the work of St Catherine's on a regular basis in order to ensure that it remains responsive to identified need.

1.2. Summary of services

St Catherine's Community Services Centre (St Catherine's) is a community organisation with charitable status (CHY12882) based in Carlow town. The centre delivers a wide range of services to communities, groups and individuals on a local, countywide and regional basis that are responsive to identified needs. The main services provided by St Catherine's are:

- Early years childcare in St Catherine's and in the Kilkenny Road Community Childcare and Family Centre.
- Family support including the Teen Parent Support programme and the Family Access and Support programme with Tusla.
- Education, training and development programmes including life-skill training, preparation for work programmes and pre-development community education programmes such as Learning for Everyday Life, Preparation for Work, Moving On Programme for Mothers, Making Connections, the Carlow Catalyst programme for Women and the Digital Skills for Citizens Programme.
- Traveller programmes including community development, family support, Traveller men's health and primary health care.
- New communities support including refugee resettlement programmes and international women's groups.
- Meals on Wheels and Socially Monitored Alarms Service for older people living in a number of areas of county Carlow.

1.3. Methodology

The following methodology was adopted in undertaking the consultation phase which informed the strategic plan.

Review of existing strategy

The previous strategic plan was reviewed.

Focus groups

Focus groups were held with the board of directors, staff and service users.

Semi-structured interviews with co-ordinators

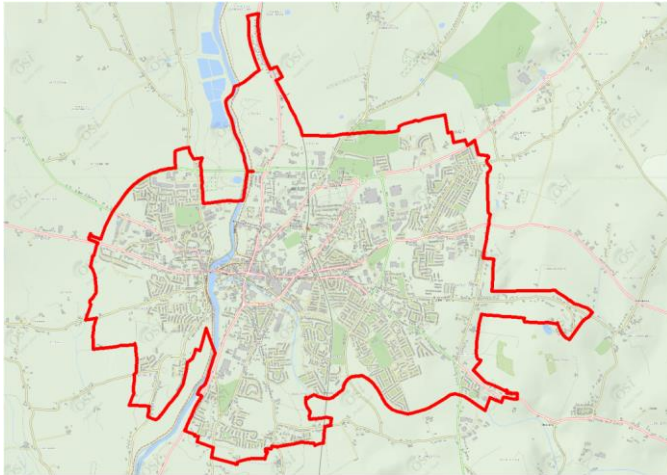
Interviews were held with the all of the programme co-ordinators and managers.

Consultation with funders and external stakeholders

Interviews were held with 23 senior staff of state agency and local development organisations. In addition, written feedback was secured from a senior staff member of both one state agency and one external stakeholder.

2. Context

The following section gives a brief demographic and socio-economic profile of Carlow Town and its environs, the boundaries of which are shown below¹. The data is derived from the 2016 census.



2.1. Demographic profile

In 2016, this area had a population of 24,272, consisting of 11,940 males and 12,232 females. This amounts to a 5.4% increase in the population since 2011. The population of pre-school age (0-4) was 1,907; primary school-going age (5-12) was 2,946; and secondary school-going age (13-18) was 1,855. There were 2,488 persons aged 65 years and over. The number of persons aged 18 years or over was 17,564.

There were 9,038 private households in this area in April 2016, of which 2,226 were single person households. Of the 5,878 families in the area, 1,494 were couples with no children.

Nationalities

Non-Irish nationals accounted for 16.5 per cent of the population of this area compared with a national average figure of 13.0 per cent. Polish (1,478 persons) were the largest group, followed by UK nationals (1,038 persons). The number of UK residents has increased from 461 persons in 2011 which equates to a 125% increase over this period. The number of Polish people living in Carlow Town decreased from 1,629 residents in 2011.

Labour force and education

There were 11,406 persons aged 15 years and over in the labour force and of these, 78.5 per cent (8,961 persons) were at work. This is an increase of 4.7% on 2011. The unemployment rate for this area was 21.4 per cent compared with a national average rate of 14.8 per cent.

¹ http://census.cso.ie/areaprofiles/areaprofile.aspx?Geog_Type=ST&Geog_Code=35006

Of the 7,362 persons aged 15 years and over who were outside the labour force, 34.4 per cent were students, 20.3 per cent were looking after the home/family, and 30.9 per cent were retired.

Of those aged 15 years and over whose full-time education had ceased, 11.2 per cent were educated to primary level only or less; a further 18.8 per cent attained second level as their highest level of education while 27.9 per cent were educated to third level.

Pobal HP Deprivation Index

Tusla personnel mentioned the need for family services to be provided in rural areas of County Carlow. This section of the profile identifies the areas of the county characterised by being disadvantaged.

The *Pobal* HP deprivation² index deems areas (either Electoral Divisions or small areas) that score between: -20 and -30 as being very disadvantaged; -10 and -20 as being disadvantaged and 0 and -10 as being marginally disadvantaged (marginally below average).

In County Carlow, only 13 of the EDs were marginally affluent. Therefore, 41 (76%) of the EDS were either marginally disadvantaged (marginally below average) or disadvantaged. Hacketstown and Muinebeag Urban are two EDS that are disadvantaged.

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² The index provides a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area using data compiled from various censuses. A score is given to the area based on a national average of zero and ranging from approximately -40 (being the most disadvantaged) to +40 (being the most affluent)

3. SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with St Catherine's and in implementing the strategy.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed and skilled management/ staff • Good governance • Effective partnerships with community organisations and state agencies • Good reputation among community organisations and state agencies. • High level of contact with community which gives confidence to state agencies • Capacity to work with socially excluded social groups • The capacity and willingness to adapt to change • Organisational scale and one-stop shop • Good reputation within communities for providing quality services • Financial status has improved • The location of the facility • The number of volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of space • Reliance on annual funding • No incentive to secure non-state funding • No formal outreach to a number of communities and groups in Carlow town. • No resources to operate in rural communities • Insufficient promotion
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good reputation amongst state agencies • Competitive tendering • Planned centre extension will alleviate pressure on space and allow the provision of new services and programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive tendering could result in competition from the private sector • End of state programmes • Potential implications of introduction of National Childcare Scheme

The first strength is how the management and staff of St Catherine's possess a range of skills and expertise which contribute to the needs of service users being addressed. The second strength is that individuals on the board and its subcommittees have the necessary core expertise that enables St Catherine's to both effectively oversee the implementation of the strategy and govern the organisation. The third is that St Catherine's is considered (by both community organisations and state agencies) as an ideal organisation to partner with in delivering programmes and services that meet the needs of a range of marginalised social groups. The fourth strength, linked to the previous strength, is that St Catherine's has a good reputation among community organisations and state agencies operating in Carlow Town. The fifth strength is the high level of contact with residents of marginalised communities and communities of interest, including Travellers, which gives confidence to state agencies of the impact that St Catherine's is having on the lives of the target groups. The sixth strength is the acknowledgement among community organisations and state agencies that St Catherine's has the capacity to work effectively with a number of members of socially excluded groups. The eighth strength was acknowledged by state agencies that St Catherine's is open to embracing change. The ninth strength is the benefits to service users resulting from providing a range of services in one location. The reputation among communities for providing quality services constitutes the tenth strength. The eleventh strength is that financial situation has strengthened

over the past number of years. The penultimate strength is the centre's location which is situated between a number of schools. The final strength is the number of volunteers that the centre recruits annually.

There are six main weaknesses facing St Catherine's. The first weakness is the lack of space to accommodate any new programmes and services. If there was a sufficient space, it could enable staff to work more productively. The reliance on annual funding, the second weakness, stymies St Catherine's capacity to plan and is a concern to staff. The third weakness relates to lack of incentive for St Catherine's to secure additional funding from the private sector for fear of current levels of state funding being cut. In addition, private funding can be inconsistent. The fourth weakness pertains to the lack of resources to engage in outreach work in disadvantaged communities. This absence of outreach work reduces the likelihood of individuals experiencing multiple issues which prevents them from participating in initiatives outside of their community. The fifth weakness, due to a lack of resources, relates to St Catherine's not having a presence in rural areas, particularly disadvantaged areas. The insufficient level of promotion of St Catherine's constitutes the final weakness.

With regard to opportunities, the strong reputation among state agencies could enable more resources to allow for the setting up of new initiatives being allocated to St Catherine's. Second, the strong links between St Catherine's and community organisations could provide opportunities to develop responses to respond to issues and meet needs encountered by disadvantaged communities and communities of interest. Third, the strong reputation of St Catherine's among state agencies could be a contributing factor in being awarded competitive contracts. The proposed planned extension will alleviate the pressure on space. In addition, it will allow the provision of new services and programmes which meet the needs of members of St Catherine's target groups.

Regarding threats, the advent of commissioning may result in competition from the private sector to St Catherine's, regarding the delivery of its existing programmes. Also, if any of the existing activation funding programmes were ended, this would have an adverse impact on St Catherine's financial sustainability. Finally, the proposed new National Childcare Scheme could have an adverse impact on the financial sustainability of the St Catherine's service. Under the new programme, the full-day-care subvention will be only be granted to households where a parent is participating in education/training – 'stay at home' parents will not be eligible for the full day rate³.

³ DCYA 'Affordable Childcare Scheme Childcare Support Bill Frequently Asked Questions' December 2017

4. Organisational structure

4.1. Legal structure

Established in 1975, St Catherine's Community Services Centre (referred to in the report as St Catherine's) is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee without share capital and has charitable status. The charity number is CHY 12882. Its board of directors includes representatives with a wealth of expertise in business management, public administration and in the governance of community and voluntary organisations, as outlined below.

Name of Board Director	Position on board	Area of expertise
Adrian Dunlevy	Chairperson	ACCA Accountant, business, charity governance, social housing
Brian Buckley	Treasurer	Accountant
Frank Comerford	Secretary	Charity governance, local development, and social housing
Marian Duffy	Director	Education, childcare, community development
Eamonn Ellis	Director	Education, local development and sports
Maura Dowling	Director	Social services, household financial management/indebtedness
Sean Scanlon	Director	Family support, youth work and social work
Fr. Tom Little	Director	Charity governance, childcare, community development

Andrea Dalton attends board meetings to give a staff perspective. Andrea is not a director of St Catherine's Community Services Centre CLG.

4.2. Governance

Board of directors

The board's priority is to determine the overall strategy for St Catherine's and monitor its implementation, and to ensure that it is adapted to take into account emerging needs and changes in the external environment.

Audit Committee

The audit committee, which is accountable to the board of the directors, has the following duties.

- Review internal financial controls and undertake risk management.
- Liaise with the Auditors.
- Present financial reports to the Board.
- Complete an annual compliance checklist.
- Assess financial stability of operations.
- Advise the board if there is a perceived threat that may jeopardise the stability of the organisation.

Director of Services and Management Team

The Director of Services has overall responsibility for the implementation of the strategy and for the management of the operations. He manages a number of programme co-ordinators who are responsible for the delivery of a range of services and programmes.

5. Strategic aims, key objectives, and core actions

St Catherine's vision is of a Carlow where all individuals, families and communities can enhance their lives and achieve social inclusion. St Catherine's believes that its most effective contribution to achieving this vision is in supporting members of disadvantaged communities, be they geographic or interest-based, to avail of a range of family support services and pre-development programmes which provide participants at all stages of the lifecycle with the confidence, attributes and skills to successfully participate in a range of civic, educational, social and economic activities which enhance their quality of life.

5.1. Strategic aim 1- Deliver quality services and programmes

Objective 1.1 - Continue to provide existing services and programmes that meet the needs of residents of Carlow

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Continue to provide existing education and training programmes.	Maintain current numbers of participants who do not have educational qualifications, or who are experiencing other barriers such as English language proficiency and support them to attend pre-development educational and training programmes in preparation for progression to mainstream/formal education provision or into employment.
Continue to provide quality childcare services.	Number of children of families from disadvantaged communities is maintained. Secure the support of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs' Better Start Quality Development Service.
Continue to incorporate and develop family supports as part of education and development programmes including childcare services.	Records kept of family support interventions.
Co-ordinators and staff participate in training which increases their capacity to provide a quality service to service users.	Training plan for staff in place.
Design a recruitment and retention plan to attract and retain volunteers to the Meals on Wheels service.	Recruitment and retention plan for volunteers in place.
In consultation with volunteers, identify training needs, on an annual basis, in order to assist St Catherine's to provide a quality service to service users.	Annual plans for volunteers completed.

Objective 1.2 - Enhance the accessibility of services to individuals who are participating in them

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Strengthen relationships with other organisations that would be prepared to publicise St Catherine's services e.g. credit unions, other community and voluntary organisations, and with religious congregations.	Meetings held with key stakeholders.
Consult with a number of residents in Carlow from lower socio-economic backgrounds who do not use the service with a view to identifying the reasons why they do not use the service (see outreach actions in section 2.2)	Consultation completed and findings analysed.
Address barriers identified, where possible, from above consultation with residents.	Plan in place to tackle the identified reasons and barriers for not attending services.

Objective 1.3 - Increase the capacity and activity levels within current service delivery

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Extend St Catherine's and/or seek additional space to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional office space for existing and new services. • Increased Kitchen space. • Additional canteen facilities. • Additional group and one-to-one meeting space. • A family resource room. 	Additional facilities and services in place.
Develop a fundraising plan to source funding for the extension of the centre.	The plan is devised.
Identify and respond to emerging social and functional needs for new communities and migrants to promote integration and take up of services, in consultation with other relevant local agencies	Discussions held with local agencies and needs met, where identified.
Increase the capacity of staff of St Catherine's to conduct Meitheal meetings.	Staff receive on-going training and refresher training on the Meitheal model, as required.

Objective 1.4 – Broaden the coverage of St Catherine's services

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Support the development of the Tullow Road Community Hub as a potential outreach base for St Catherine's services.	Support provided to the Tullow Road steering committee.
Research the feasibility of delivering pre-development programmes with an activation focus targeting groups such as NEETS (young people not in education, employment or training) and the long-term unemployed.	Need identified and discussions held with potential funders.

Objective 1.5 - Monitor and evaluate service provision on a regular basis

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
All programmes maintain the Logic model of evaluation.	Maintenance of current system for collating data for the Logic model.
Continue to review and evaluate educational and training programmes.	Reviews documented every time a programme concludes.
Ensure the service user's voice is heard through more structured consultation.	Evidence of consultation in place.
In conjunction with KCETB and DEASP, conduct a pilot tracking project of a cohort of participants who start accredited educational programmes in St Catherine's.	The process has commenced.
Conduct a review of St Catherine's operations every three years, as part of the strategic planning process.	Report completed of review every three years.

Objective 1.6 - Ensure the impact of the services provided is captured

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Introduce the Outcomes Star measurement programme ⁴ .	A method of measuring impact has been selected.

⁴ <http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/using-the-star/see-the-stars/community-star/>

5.2. Strategic aim 2- Support organisational development

Objective 2.1 – Implement new services and programmes

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Explore the potential of hosting physical activity initiatives for older people in County Carlow.	Consultations held with older people and relevant local agencies.
Link in with local agencies that are working with, and target members of, a range of social groups (including new communities) with a view to encouraging them towards future engagement in St Catherine's education and training programmes and other relevant services that meet their needs.	Discussions held with local agencies and links are in place to promote and support referrals.
Examine the feasibility of establishing a CoderDojo club for children who do not have access to computers on a daily basis.	The extent of the need would be measured.
Review national state agency strategies to ensure that St Catherine's programmes are consistent with and complementary to the thrust of these strategies.	National strategies and funding initiatives and programme reviews are reviewed including – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further Education and Training Strategy (2014-2019) • Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy for Children and Young People (2014-2020) • Pathways to Work: The Implementation of the EU Council Recommendation for a Youth Guarantee • 50-Point Action Plan Pathways to Work (2013) • South East Traveller Health Unit (2015-2020) • Department of Childcare and Youth Affairs Affordable Childcare Scheme and Capital Investment Programmes. • Department of Children and Youth Affairs after schools' regulations. • Possible review by Solas of the Local Training Initiative.
Examine the feasibility of establishing a counselling service funded by the HSE and Tusla.	Funding applications submitted.
Support the on-going development of celebrations and visibility of Traveller culture such as Traveller Pride and Ethnicity Day events.	Examples of Traveller culture visible within St Catherine's and annual events to promote Traveller culture to the settled community held.
Support the Traveller community to examine the feasibility of a local structure around horse ownership.	Discussions held with Travelling community and relevant local agencies.
Hold discussions with Tusla to secure funding to employ a dedicated family support worker. Following discussions with Tusla, submit a funding proposal.	Funding proposal submitted.

Explore methods of identifying volunteers with relevant skills and experience which would contribute to the development of St. Catherine's and its services.	Working group established. New volunteers in place.
The reengagement process to become a QQI approved accreditation centre is extremely arduous and would require a considerable level of funding/resources to complete. The advantages and disadvantages of submitting an application as part of the QQI re-engagement process will be undertaken.	The analysis will be completed.
Work with Tusla Social Work department to increase the level of family support and practical parenting supports to families availing of supervised access visits under the Tusla and St Catherine's Social Work Access and Family Support programme.	Increased level of family support interventions.

Objective 2.2 – develop a plan to engage in outreach and community capacity building

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Broaden the role of family support worker, provided funding is secured for such a position, to undertake outreach work to engage hard-to-reach families and communities.	Job description of work includes outreach work.
Discuss with representatives of Tusla the possibility of extending family support service to other communities.	Discussions held with Tusla.
Develop an outreach plan with current staff so that the relevant members of staff undertake outreach work on a planned basis.	Outreach plan finalised.
The above plan would identify how relevant staff would engage with parents whose children are attending early years centres and schools.	Cohort of parents engaged.
Explore funding opportunities to recruit a community development worker.	Identify potential sources of funding.
Form a steering committee to agree an approach to identify the areas most in need of community development interventions, if funding is secured to employ a community development worker.	Steering committee formed (if funding sourced).

Objective 2.3- Ensure best practice in governance is adhered to

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Ensure St Catherine's is fully compliant with both the Code of Governance for Community and Voluntary organisations and the Charity Regulatory Authority's requirements.	Achieves full compliance with the Governance Code and the Charity Regulatory Authority's requirements.
Develop a board succession plan to identify and induct individuals who would have the skills and values suited to becoming directors of St Catherine's.	Time allocated to an agreed number of board meetings to discuss succession of board members.

Objective 2.4- Build on existing programmes

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Engage with parents whose children are attending the after-school service to strengthen their capacity to support their children at school.	Interventions held with parents (which is dependent on the recruitment of a family support worker).
Examine the feasibility of extending one or both of the early years services to operating on a 52-week basis.	The analysis is completed.
Conduct a review of Childcare services in light of the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS).	Review completed.

Objective 2.5- Augment the capacity of St. Catherine's in addressing HR issues

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Employ a part-time HR co-ordinator to deal with HR issues.	The post is filled.

Objective 2.6- Establish relationships with stakeholders

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Forge relationships with relevant departments of Carlow Institute of Technology and Carlow College, St Patrick's, with a view to undertaking research in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefits to service users of providing a wraparound service to service users experiencing disadvantage. • Developing a tracking system which can monitor the progress of people who complete activation and education programmes in St Catherine's. 	Meetings held with key individuals in Carlow Institute of Technology and Carlow College, St Patricks.

5.3. Strategic aim 3- To strengthen St Catherine's sustainability

Objective 3.1 – Research the suitability in tendering for activation programmes

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Examine the capacity and risks applying for competitive tenders from DEASP to deliver activation programmes.	Meetings with DEASP and other relevant stakeholders held.

Objective 3.2 – Submit funding applications to relevant EU funding programmes

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Continue to conduct research into relevant EU funding programmes.	Report completed on EU funding programmes.
Submit applications to relevant EU funding programmes.	Funding applications submitted.

5.4. Strategic aim 4 - To increase St Catherine's profile

Objective 4.1 – Continue to build the profile of St Catherine's

ACTION	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Increase awareness of the work of St Catherine's in Carlow.	Increased coverage in the local/regional print and social media.
Maintain website and update it as new developments occur.	Website upgraded.
Strengthen relationships with state agencies and other funding agencies.	Continue to update agencies on a regular basis through holding meetings and submitting reports.
Amend relevant sections of the annual report to make it more readable for the general public and load onto St Catherine's Facebook page.	Sections of annual report loaded onto Facebook page.
Appoint a staff person to maintain and promote Facebook page and website.	Person appointed.

Appendices

Organisations consulted

Aontas
Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre
Barnardo's
Carlow Children's and Young People's Services Committee
Carlow County Council
Carlow Regional Youth Services
County Carlow Childcare Committee
County Carlow Development Partnership
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection
Forward Steps Family Resource Centre
HSE, Ardú Substance misuse team
HSE, Social Inclusion
Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board, Adult Education
Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board, Training Services
Solas
Tusla, Child and Family Agency
Treoir/Teen Parents Support Programme