



Evaluation of Children Services Planning and Information Project

2004 - 2007

Final Report

This project's outputs have been commended by Ministers in both jurisdictions as "two important initiatives which aim to support integrated planning focusing on outcomes for children and families"

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project which was supported with the aid of European Union INTERREG IIIA funding was established with an overall aim of establishing structures to jointly assess and plan services for children and young people at a cross border level. The project was led by a Board consisting of service planners and information specialists representing all the catchment areas from within CAWT and with direct inputs from CAWT Development Centre officers.

Throughout the life of the project there was a series of engagements with key stakeholders in the form of conferences and presentations aimed at seeking views, briefing on progress and influencing, especially those at a strategic level. There were two main tangible products arising out of the work of the project. These are the "Framework for Integrated Planning for Outcomes for Children and Families" that was developed and piloted by the National University of Ireland, Galway and the interactive website (Outcomes for Children) that maps services and measures outcomes that has been developed by Matrix. Project Board members developed the concepts involved, based on a review of best practise. Both of these were produced in collaboration with external consultants.

The project did experience a number of challenges through the five year life of the project. These included a number of personnel changes and working through a period of reform both to health and social care policy and structures. There was a significant interplay between the external policy environment and the project, leading to an ultimate focus on the development of tools that support an integrated approach to planning services based on agreed outcomes.

This project was not managed using a PRINCE project management approach. A large part of the work involved was undertaken directly by the members of the Project Board. They demonstrated significant commitment and enthusiasm for achieving the final outcomes of which they are justifiably proud.

This project has obtained a high profile. The launch held in April 2008 was attended by Ministers from both jurisdictions who are responsible for children and who commended the outputs that they described as being "two important initiatives which aim to support integrated planning focusing on outcomes for children and families".

It will be important that the products of this project are owned by the service planners and those responsible for delivering services to this group within the CAWT region and that they are implemented in a systematic and planned way.

EVALUATION OF THE CHILDREN SERVICES PLANNING AND INFORMATION PROJECT 2004-2007

1.0 Background/Context

1.1 This project was stimulated by discussions held at a meeting/seminar sponsored by Cooperation and Working Together (CAWT) in 2003 at which a number of the parties to the project were in attendance. At this stage work had been undertaken in N. Ireland by Ann Godfrey, Southern Health & Social Services Board (SHSSB), Eamon McTernan, Western Health & Social Services Board (WHSSB) and others on the development of children and young people services planning on an interagency basis since 1999 through a Family Support Model. This work had been undertaken by these service planners as part of Health and Social Services Board's response to their statutory responsibility for Children's Services Planning within N. Ireland. No similar arrangements existed within the Republic of Ireland at that time. However the challenges regarding information systems and the exchange of information had been highlighted in the Report of the Review Group (1998) on the West of Ireland Farmer case. The participants who became involved in this project were of the view that there was a need for evidence based planning and significant enhancement of childcare information systems. It was agreed at this meeting that children services planning could be mutually beneficial work on a cross border basis.

1.2 Based on discussions arising out of this meeting a successful application for funding was made by representatives from the four health authorities in existence at that time with responsibility for services in the CAWT area. The project which is the subject of this evaluation has been funded through EU INTERREG IIIA. It

aimed to enhance the planning arrangements for children's services within the CAWT region through collaboration, sharing of information and joint working of the agencies responsible for these services within the catchment area.

1.3 The main objectives set for the project were:

- To create a sustainable multi-agency cross-border exchange forum to share information on policy, practice and planning of services for children and young people.
- To develop specialist cross-border networks e.g. information officers and planning officers to commence a process of joint working by sharing examples of good practice in developing, measuring and recording performance indicators for the monitoring of the effectiveness of services.
- To explore best practice in sharing information on the context of planning for children and young people e.g. Children's Services Planning in N. Ireland, to enable consensus on best practice in terms of planning children's and young people's services, based on commonly agreed outcomes, indicators and associated datasets for planning services for children and young people.
- To facilitate the exploration, development and replication of robust methods of assessing need, which can be used for undertaking, needs assessment on a cross-border level that in turn will assist in the potential to respond to need at a cross border level.
- To facilitate cross-border training initiatives on planning and the use of information for children and young people's services.

1.4 Prior to and during the life of this project a number of important policy developments were arising. In the Republic of Ireland a ten year National Children's Strategy 2000-2010 set out an agenda for "an Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential". The strategy identifies three goals based on the involvement of children, understanding their needs better through research, evaluation and information, and providing them with

quality support. The Agenda for Children's Services, A Policy Handbook (2007) was published by the Office of the Minister for Children. It sets out high level outcomes for children in Ireland and proposes at policy level that children's services in the Republic of Ireland should adopt an outcomes-based, needs-led approach to planning and implementation of service provision.

1.5 The foundation for the N. Ireland strategy is set out in "a healthier future A Twenty Year Vision for Health and Wellbeing in Northern Ireland". This document identifies a range of emerging challenges and sets a range of key outcome targets for children's services. This vision is consolidated within the Children and Young People's Strategy for N. Ireland 2006-2016. An emphasis is placed on the desire to create an environment within which children fulfil their full potential. This focus on outcomes is highlighted in the Minister for Children and Young People in N. Ireland, Marie Eagle's forward in the strategy. She states that "Over the course of the next ten years we will strive to produce improved outcomes for all children and young people. We will also want the gap in outcomes between those who do best and those who do worst to narrow".

1.6 This project was undertaken during a period of development in the thinking in relation to planning for children's services nationally and inter-nationally. Core themes were emerging from these developments which influenced the final direction taken by the Project Board. These themes included developing services aimed at supporting children and their families in keeping with work undertaken in N. Ireland by McTernan E. and Godfrey A. (2006). This included the involvement of communities and relevant agencies in the planning of services and models of integrated children's services planning emerging in England and Scotland. Furthermore there were development of frameworks of involvement and accountability for the delivery of services based on agreed outcomes such as the approach developed by Hogan et al in the State of Vermont in the United States of America. Many of these developments were directly influenced by the contents of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2 Evaluation Methodology

2.6 The specification for this assignment set out the inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes of the Project that were to be assessed through the evaluation. The terms of reference for the evaluation were to;

- Review the original aim of the project and how well the project has achieved this aim.
- Examine how the project set out to achieve its aim and how effective this method was, including the effectiveness of the management of the project and the communication plan developed to support the implementation of the project.
- Examine the overall impact of the project in terms of it having its intended consequences, positive and negative; and what difference it has made.
- Identify the main outcomes of the project including its potential for sustainability and mainstreaming and the lessons learned from the process of implementing the project.
- Examine how effectively the project has been disseminated, understood and integrated by the key stakeholders.

2.7 The methodology put forward as part of the tender for the evaluation was modified out of necessity and commenced initially with a review of all documents and minutes made available to the evaluation team.

2.8 All documents relating to the establishment and management of the project have been reviewed. These included the Project Initiation Document, minutes of Board and Sub-Group meetings, correspondence with CAWT, tender documents and the products arising out of the work.

2.9 A range of discussions were held with key individuals (N=9) involved in the management of the Project and the delivery of the products arising from its work. These discussions involved the Project Chair, Project Board members, the current CAWT Programme Manager, the current CAWT Acting ICT and Procurement Manager (both of these officers had been acting as the CAWT representatives during the final year of the project) and

the Matrix representative, the company engaged to develop the “CAWT Web Based Mapping Application”. These discussions concentrated on tracking the developments within the project, the successes achieved, the challenges faced and how these were managed. These discussions were also used to clarify issues or gaps identified as part of the document review and to cross check interpretation of the outputs, seeking evidence to verify where this was available.

2.10 An assessment of the products/outputs of the Project was carried out against the proposed outputs as set out in the initial application for funding. The evaluation team also considered the outputs against the re-aligned aim and objectives as set out in the “CAWT Children’s Services Planning and Information Project, Paper, on Change of Direction for the Project”.

This phase of the evaluation included:

- An examination of any multi-agency cross border forums established for the exchange of information on services for children and young people.
- A review of the documents relating to the assessment and planning tool based on research and best practise.
- A review of the report on the pilot for the assessment and planning tool.
- A review of the arrangements for training on the use of the assessment and planning tool.
- A review of the arrangements for dissemination of products arising from the project and the level and range of participation in the various events.
- A review of the information system developed in collaboration with Martix.

2.11 In the final stage of the evaluation a review of the plans to use the products arising out of the project has been undertaken.

3 Process Adopted

3.6A Project Board was established consisting of representatives from each of the service areas in the CAWT region. Each service area was represented by a Senior Manager or Service Planner and an Information Officer. The Principal Research and Development Officer represented HSE West. CAWT Development Centre identified representatives who linked with the project, assisted with the delivery of some of the products and who were in attendance at Project Board meetings. There were a number of changes to the representatives on the Project Board and from the CAWT Development Centre through the five year life of the project. In total six different individuals from CAWT were involved in linking with this specific project. Initially the intention was to rotate the Project Chair on a six month basis and this did occur for the first couple of years, with this role being fulfilled for the final period by the Acting Director, Children and Family Services, HSE Dublin North East.

3.7A Project Manager was originally appointed during 2004, and remained in post for approximately six months. Following the resignation of the Project Manager, the Project Board took a decision not to replace the post and agreed to utilise some of the resources from the Project Manager's post to support the information staff in the four areas to deliver their requirements. The reasons put forward for this decision was the lengthy recruitment process, the difficulties any new appointment may experience in gaining an understanding of the complexities of the project and the recognition of the impact this may have on achieving the project aims and objectives.

3.8 This project was not formally project managed in keeping with the PRINCE methodology. There is a Project Initiation Document available and minutes of a range of meetings held throughout the life of the project.

3.9 Mr. Con Hogan, Vermont USA worked with the Project Board on an informal basis as a mentor. Drawing on his direct experience of outcomes based planning as the former Director of the Vermont Agency of Human Services; Mr. Hogan offered advice, guidance and contacts to the Project Board at various stages of the Project's five year lifespan.

3.10 Throughout the project there were a number of meetings with key interest groups and a study visit was conducted to Vermont. Much of the work involved in bringing forward the outcomes from the project was directly undertaken by members of the Project Board.

3.11 The Project Board arranged to contract out the development of two major products of the project i.e. the “Web Based Mapping Application” and the “Framework for Integrated Planning for Outcomes for Children and Families”. The development of the later product included some pilot work. This pilot work was undertaken by the Child and Family Research Centre, NUI. It involved three components; Initial Group Meetings (N=3), Local Pilot Sites Work (N=3) and a Pilot Model Consultation. This work was carried out during September- December 2007.

The tendering process for this contracted work was managed by the supplies services for HSE, Dublin North East.

3.12 The products of the project were formally launched at an event held on 17 April 2008 and some workshops have been held by Project Board members within their work areas to raise awareness of the planning tool.

4 Evaluation Findings

4.6 This project developed its aims and objectives based on discussion arising out of a one day CAWT sponsored meeting held in 2003. All of the service areas within the CAWT region were involved in developing the proposal which successfully attracted funding under the European Union, INTERREG IIIA Programme for Ireland and Northern Ireland 2000-2006. This support was confirmed in a Letter of Offer, dated 30 March 2004.

4.7 The project was managed by a Project Board made up of representatives from the four health authorities for the geographical areas responsible for the commissioning or delivery of children's services within the CAWT region. The Evaluation Team are of the view that the level of representation and

participation from all the areas was a major factor in the success achieved within this project. The representation included individuals who had a professional remit and an information officer from each area. There was also a CAWT Development Centre representatives linking with the project. From the information available and minutes of meetings there appears to have been a lack of clarity within the Project Board in relation to the role played by the CAWT Development Centre representatives throughout the project. The representatives have been classified during some of the discussions and in some material to hand as being a member of the Children's Services Planning and Information Project Board.

- 4.8 There was significant commitment and enthusiasm for the project given by Project Board members. This is evidenced by the significant outcomes achieved in the absence of a Project Manager. They are proud of a number of the outcomes arising from the work; especially the planning tool and the Web based mapping system. The evaluation team are aware of the level of interplay between the project and the developing planning approach being adopted within both jurisdictions. The level of commitment and cohesion was of necessity increased beyond the departure of the Project Manager. At this point Project Board members accepted direct responsibility for the work required to deliver the products arising.
- 4.9 There were a number of changes in personnel involved at Project Board level and representing the CAWT Development Centre during the life of the Project. These changes did present a number of challenges including; difficulties in relation to continuity, capacity difficulties, and changes in the perceived expectations and accountability between the Project Board and CAWT.
- 4.10 The Project Board engaged a Project Manager for a short period during 2004 in keeping with the proposal and funding arrangements for the project. The departure of the Project Manager led to a number of planned and unplanned consequences as follows:

- This was a landmark event in the life of the project which could have resulted in an abandonment of the project.
- A decision was taken by the Project Board not to replace the post.
- This latter decision resulted in the Project Board taking on the Project Manager's responsibilities and engaging directly to a much greater extent in the delivery of the products arising out of the project.
- There was reported increased cohesion between Project Board members, and an increased commitment to achieve an outcome from the project. This resulted in a greater workload for members than would have been initially anticipated.
- A decision was taken to utilise some of the resources from the Project Manager's post to support the information staff in the four areas in the delivery of their requirements.
- A number of products developed from the project were produced with significant inputs from external consultancies.

4.11 The project was not project managed in keeping with PRINCE2 methodology as set out in section E of the Grant Application Form – Part B. Training was provided for the Project Board by the CAWT Development Centre on project management at an early stage of the project. A review of the documents to hand identify that work had commenced on project documentation including a Project Initiation Document (PID), Stage Plans and a Risk Log. However the documentation was not maintained in keeping with the frequency set out in the PID beyond the discontinuation of the Project Manager post

4.12 The project was undertaken during a period when the health service structures changed in the Republic of Ireland and planned changes in N. Ireland. This was an anticipated constraint identified in the PID. The changes do not appear to have adversely impacted on the work of the project.

4.13 The initial plan was to rotate the Chair for the project on a six monthly basis and this pattern was maintained for the first couple of years of the project. Thereafter the Chairs position was

occupied by the Acting Director Children and Family Services, HSE, Dublin North East. The reasons put forward for this change in arrangements included the project required continuity at that time and the representative for HSE Dublin North East was prepared to continue in the role. The post holder was in a position to dedicate some administrative support to the project. On the basis of the information gathered, the evaluation team conclude that while the rotation of the chair may have enhanced the level of engagement/commitment from those on the Project Board at service planning level, it is not a model that contributes to continuity.

4.14 The minutes of the Project Board meetings and discussions with the Project Chair identify that there were difficulties in relation to the availability of financial statements for project meetings and for keeping track of expenditure against budget during the middle period of the project's life. At the later stage of the project the CAWT Development Centre representative arranged for the transfer of the budget to HSE Dublin North East which is reported to have been a more satisfactory arrangement.

4.15 There was a significant modification in the aims and objectives for the project during the five years of the project. There is correspondence on file identifying the changes and setting out the following rational for the same:

- The absence of a Project Manager.
- The interaction between the project and senior policy makers in both jurisdictions.
- The evolving policy arising out of the children services strategies in both jurisdictions.
- The potential offered by developments in information technology, and
- The changing demands arising out of structures created by the governments in both jurisdictions.

These changes to the project objectives raise a number of questions in terms of the delivery of projects which are of an intellectual, policy/practice development nature, particularly when they run over a number of years at a time of political and

service context change. Some of the stimulus for the changes to the planned outcomes/outputs for this project was generated by discussion and feedback arising at a project conference held during November 2005. The evaluation team are of the view that these changes identify at least issues that need to be recognised and addressed by all parties to this and other projects at the outset:

- There was not a sufficiently robust examination of the aims and objectives for projects at the planning stage carried out by CAWT. There was also an absence of a sufficiently robust risk analysis carried out by the Project Board which may have assisted in identifying the need to modify the aims and objectives to respond to political and service changes.
- There were capacity problems experienced during the project which could have reduced the potential outcomes and outputs from the project. These arose as a result of the departure of the Project Manager, the restrictions on recruitment to posts in the HSE, temporary redeployment of some Project Board members during the life of the project and to a lesser extent restrictions placed on non clinical travel within the HSE. In spite of these restrictions the Project Board delivered a range of outcomes which are identified later.
- The letter of offer dated 30 March 2004, states at 4.1 that any significant or anticipated changes to the project must be notified to the relevant authorities and that continuation of assistance will be subject to written approval from the Departments in both jurisdictions. There does not appear to be a clearly defined process in place for testing proposed changes to the project with CAWT officers and the funding bodies. While the evaluation team have an undated correspondence in place outlining the changes and the rationale for these, there is no evidence available that they have been approved.

4.16 The application and Letter of Offer for this project set out a clear expectation that the project would be managed in keeping with the PRINCE 11 methodology with all relevant documentation

including a PID, Stage Plans, Risk Analysis and End Stage Plans being produced. These requirements were also identified by the CAWT Development Centre officer during a presentation to the Project Board on 25 November 2004. There was a PID document produced which included some of the initial stage plans, but beyond the Project Manager's resignation, the project was largely managed without the stipulated PRINCE 11 methodology supporting documentation. It must however be noted that even in the absence of the use of formal project management, the overall aims and objectives were achieved albeit outside the planned timetable.

4.17 The project was supported by an external mentor whose contribution has been described as being very helpful; however this relationship was on an informal basis with no clear definition agreed on the role to be fulfilled.

4.18 There were a number of tensions in the relationships between the Project Board and the CAWT Development Centre representatives at various times in the life of the project. The evaluation team are of the opinion that this was a result of a lack of clarity in relation to roles, responsibilities and expectations by all parties to this relationship. This tension became particularly evident at the later stages of the project when the new CAWT Development Centre, Programme Manager sought evidence that the project had been managed in keeping with the conditions set out in the application for funding and the Letter of Offer. From the examination of documents to hand and from discussions with the key parties involved, the evaluation team have established that the Project Board were of the belief that easement on the requirement to follow PRINCE 11 project methodology due to the absence of a Project Manager, had been implicitly accepted by a sequence of CAWT Development Centre representatives. The evaluation team are of the opinion that the CAWT Development Centre representative's role in relation to monitoring projects needs to be clearly understood by all parties. They are also of the view that there is an element of confusion in some instances as to whether or not this role is fulfilled as a Project Board member or if they are in attendance at Project Board meetings.

4.19 The absence of a Project Manager for the majority of the project's lifetime highlighted a number of issues in relation to the post. These included:

- The level of salary on offer for a post that had a high specification.
- The relationship of the salary band to other posts in the jurisdictions.
- The complexity of the task.
- The relationships to be managed, and
- The logic associated with the successful candidates work base given the plan to rotate the chair for the project.

4.20 The majority of the work undertaken was as a result of the direct contributions from individuals on the Project Board, with two of the main products being delivered with the assistance of external consultancies. The project also benefited from support and inputs from an external mentor engaged on an informal basis. The group worked as two sub groups with both coming together to organise and deliver a number of key events organised to engage with stakeholders, launch the main products and promote the use of the products at both strategic and operational levels. While there was no communications group or written communications plan, the Project Board members considered influencing stakeholders as a key aspect of the work of the project and did manage the communications function through a range of activities:

- They provided regular updates to the CAWT Children's Services Sub-Group while that group existed.
- They provided updates which were included in the CAWT annual reports and CAWT in Action newsletters.
- They arranged publicity around the conferences organised as part of the project.
- They kept their organisations informed and engaged with the project.

The evaluation team are of the view that all concerned committed significant time to working on this project. The very

significant outcomes from the project are in no small way as a result of the hard work and expertise of the Project Board members.

4.21 The information specialists on the Project Board engaged in a range of activities including the development of a baseline report (March 2006), engaging with the external consultancy in the development of the Web based mapping system and the delivery of a number of presentations before and after the launch of the main products in April 2008. There are minutes of meetings which plot progress on work and the difficulties encountered. These included:

- The absences of an information officer from HSE Dublin North East for a period.
- Dealing with differences in the availability of information against indicator.
- Definition across the catchment areas, and
- The management of the relationship and deadlines for the work undertaken by the external consultancy.

In common with the other products arising out of this project there were slippages against the planned deadlines. A decision was taken to use some of the resource available within the project budget to free up time for these individuals to work on this aspect of the project.

4.22 The service planners and managers on the Project Board concentrated on the development of the thinking and researching around the concept of planning for outcomes and engaging communities in this process. There appears to have been much interplay between the development of these concepts and what was happening in other locations especially the model in use in Vermont, USA. This development was also happening at a time when both jurisdictions were developing strategies for planning children services based on the same concepts. The evaluation team are aware that some of the individuals on this sub group were working at regional/national level either within their substantive or seconded roles and were using their influence in the development of these strategies. However it is not possible to gauge the level of direct impact the work of this project had on the ultimate shape of the strategies.

Group members also led the relationship and the nature of the product developed by the National University of Ireland (NUI), Galway. The service planners and managers had undertaken much of the literature review, developed the planning concepts and worked in collaboration with NUI in the production of the "Framework for Integrated Planning for Outcomes for Children and Families". Members of this group also chaired the Project Board throughout the project, led the conferences/meetings held and the study tour to Vermont.

4.23 The project has successfully engaged with a wide range of stakeholders especially at the later stages of the project. The information available identify that these events were well attended and served a useful purpose in engaging stakeholders in the development of the concepts, sharing progress and promoting the final products. The official launch of the products from the project in Armagh, 17 April 2008 was a high profile event attended by Ministers with responsibility for children in both jurisdictions. Following the launch, Project Board members have been invited to present elements of the project at a range of events including an international show casing of the project at the Forum on Prevention and Early Intervention for Children and Youth, sponsored by the Office of the Minister for Children in collaboration with the Atlantic Philanthropies, Croke Park, Dublin, May 2008. Individual Project Board members have also engaged in the promotion of the planning tool within their own geographical areas in preparation for a planned implementation phase.

4.24 A decision was taken by the Project Board to engage external consultants to develop two products for the project i.e. The Integrated Planning Model and the Web Based Mapping System. The tendering process for both pieces of work was managed by the Supplies Department of HSE, Dublin North East. Both invitations to tender attracted a number of bids which were assessed against agreed criteria by panels made up of representatives from the Project Board, CAWT Development Centre officers and the Supplies Department. The evaluation team are advised that for the Web based system there were two suitable submissions and that the contract was awarded to a

company, Matrix, on the basis of price. There were four tenders assessed for the development of the planning tool. Minutes of the Project Board meeting following the selection of the successful tender submitted by NUI, records that in addition to meeting the tender specification, the experience within their team and the links with Queens University, Belfast were the factors that influenced the selection. The evaluation team are of the view that perhaps there were opportunities to progress this process earlier which could have reduced the level of slippage on the timetable for the project.

4.25 A specification for the WEB BASED MAPPING APPLICATION dated June 2006 set out the requirements for the information system with the award of the contract being communicated in an undated letter addressed to the Business Development Manager, Matrix. Attached was a Service Level Agreement between the project and Matrix, requiring Matrix, to provide the deliverables as described in their proposal dated 15 August 2006. This included an agreement to host the software for an initial period of 6 months. The Matrix representative was to act as Project Manager, working with a Project Group consisting of the Information members of the Project Board. Matrix would be responsible for adherence to a range of milestones including a timeline. The Project Board of 23 November minutes include reference to the awarding of this contract and that work had commenced "to release a range of boundary data" to the company to facilitate the development of the system. A review of minutes of Project Board meeting and discussions reveal a number of problems and failures to meet deadlines were experienced in the delivery of this Service Level Agreement. The Matrix representative was required to attend the Project Board to explain the reasons for these delays. An exploration of these difficulties with Matrix as part of this evaluation has resulted in a number of explanations being put forward:

- The system had a number of unique features in relation to the size of the datasets and base mapping to be disseminated over the World Wide Web.

- The availability of data and the absence of an information officer for a period in HSE Dublin North East caused difficulties.
- There were a number of difficulties converting maps for the Rep. of Ireland area to make them web friendly.
- There were difficulties encountered when developing the relationship with Google.

There were also a number of extensions to the original contract with Matrix for additional elements of work agreed with the Project Board. All parties to the contract express the view that the final product exceeds their original expectations.

4.26 A contract was established between the HSE Dublin North East and NUI for the development of the planning tool for this project. This was signed off in a correspondence dated 29 May 2007. A review of the minutes of meetings and of the documents produced as a result of the agreement reveals that the products were satisfactorily supplied in advance of the launch held on 17 April 2008. Included within the work on the development of this tool were a number of events to meet with subgroups, meetings with community representatives at three settings and written feedback from a range of targeted individuals. A review of the report on this piloting work appears to identify a number of issues:

- Some of the meetings involved relatively small groups of individuals which may not be representative of the groups that should ultimately be involved in an integrated planning process for children's services.
- The concepts of integrated planning and planning for outcomes were relatively foreign concepts and that the material was considered complex to those involved.

It is the opinion of the evaluation team that this pilot work may prove to be of greater benefit when considering an implementation of the planning tool.

4.27 As part of this project, four Project Board members participated in a study trip to Vermont, USA and produced a report on the learning from this, which was widely distributed. This

study trip contributed to Project Board members understanding of the practical application of outcomes based planning and was considered very useful by them at that stage. In addition it widened the network for the Project Board. From a review of the report and discussions with participants the evaluation team are of the opinion that there was useful learning gained on how integrated planning works in practice which will probably be of greater value at an implementation stage, locally, of the products.

4.28 When assessing the outputs/outcomes from this project, the first finding is that while there was modification to the objectives as set out in the short paper entitled “Change of Direction for the Project” the evaluation team have established evidence that most of the original objectives for the project continued to be relevant and that the outcomes planned or unplanned addressed the objectives set.

4.29 There were a number of forums established to deliver this project. These included the two groups within the Project Board who worked on the two main products arising out of the project. Whether or not multi-agency cross border forums for sharing information on policy, practice and planning of services for children and young people are sustainable as a result of the work undertaken as part of this project, will depend on a successful implementation of integrated planning and use of information.

4.30 Contacts have been developed as a result of the work of this project in the form of the relationships established formally and informally through the Project Board and the range of conferences and meetings attended by a wide group of policy makers and planners.

4.31 As part of the work on the project a literature review was undertaken by the Project Board and NUI. This was complemented by input from the external mentor who brought practical experience of using the concepts to the project. There was an active interplay between the work of the project and the developing policy in both jurisdictions. The main outputs of the project in the form of the planning tool and the information

system were commended to a wide range of interest parties at the official launch of the products in Armagh on 17 April 2008. At the launch Mr. Brendan Smith T.D. Minister for Children in the Rep. of Ireland stated; "I want to welcome the work of Cooperation and Working Together in the development of these two important initiatives which aim to support integrated planning on outcomes for children and families. The *Integrated Planning Model for Outcomes for Children and Young People* has been designed to provide a framework for integrated planning for outcomes for children and families which is relevant to policy makers, service managers and practitioners. It will assist in ensuring that children are placed at the centre of all our work. The complementary *Outcomes for Children* website is an interactive website that maps services and measures outcomes for children and young people in the border region. The website will be a valuable tool in identifying the location of services and measuring the impacts of our children and young people services". This endorsement from the highest level indicates support from the Ministers in both jurisdictions, however, the value of the tools will only be realised when they have been successfully utilised in practice after implementation within the CAWT region and the entire services in Ireland.

4.32 The products have resulted in the development of tools for the assessment of need for this client group that are based on practice already in use in other jurisdictions.

4.33 While the project has not specifically delivered cross border training on the use of the planning tool and the information system, both have been described and demonstrated at the launch of the project in April 2008. Project Board members have also been invited to present the same material at a range of meetings and continue to fulfil such commitments until the time of this evaluation. A number of Project Board members have advised the evaluation team that they have undertaken some piloting sessions using the tools as part of their core work.

4.34 There is a projected under spend of circa. £15,000 against a realigned budget for the project. The initial budget was

reduced by £50,000 in March 2006 which reflected the changes to staffing and the arrangements for developing the products. There were some issues relating to the budget information available to Project board which are referred to at 4.9.

5 Conclusions

5.6 This project was stimulated by discussions arising out of a CAWT event and a common interest and commitment from a group of professionals who were engaged with children's services. The Project Board included representatives from all of the CAWT catchment areas. Project Board members have demonstrated significant commitment to the delivery of the products arising out of the project.

5.7 There were a number of personnel changes in both the CAWT Development Centre and at Project Board which adversely affect continuity throughout the project. The project did not have a dedicated Project Manager for the majority of the project's tenure. This resulted in a greater work load being absorbed by members of the Project Board and the two main products being delivered in collaboration, through contracts with a commercial organisation and a university.

5.8 This project was delivered without adherence to the expected project management discipline and experienced difficulties with meeting planned deadlines.

5.9 There was modification to the aims and objectives to the project. These were at least in part stimulated by the changing external environment and policy for children's services during the life of the project. There is no clear documented approval for these modifications.

5.10 There were a number of tensions between the parties to the project during its five year life span. Some of these were stimulated by changes to the budget and a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities. There were also differences in expectations regarding the level of project management discipline required to support the project. There were challenges

in managing the contractual relationship with the commercial organisation involved in the development of one of the products.

5.11 There was significant engagement with key stakeholders throughout the project, with Project Board members taking the view that influencing policy makers was a central component of the project. The project has delivered on a number of high profile products which could be used in planning and judging the value of children's services.

5.12 The products arising from the project have been formally launched and the project has officially ended. However unless there is any implementation phase much of the benefits of the work concluded could be lost. Such an implementation phase needs to be project managed and needs to take account of the changing health and social care structures in both jurisdictions.

6 Recommendations

6.6 There is a need for clarity about the roles and responsibilities between CAWT Development Centre and projects. This should include whether or not the CAWT representative to projects should sit on the Project Board or be in attendance while acting as the monitor for CAWT Development Centre and the funding bodies. There should also be clarity in respect of the role to be fulfilled by other specialist from the CAWT Development Centre supporting projects such as those with a specific expertise or brief in areas including Information Technology, Human Resources or Finance. The evaluation team would also recommend that the representative participating at Project Board level should be of sufficient seniority and experience to be in a position to make decisions relevant to projects on behalf of the CAWT Development Centre or to have such decisions made quickly.

6.7 There is a need to consider carefully and refine if necessary the aims and objectives for this type of project at the outset and to have these written as measurable products. We recommend that the CAWT Development Centre should lead such a robust examination of the aims and objectives at the initial planning

phase and when funding has been secured, prior to the commencement of work on the project. This examination should include consideration of the capacity to deliver on the planned outcomes/outputs, the structure planned to lead the project and the support required for the project. Any refinements need to be agreed with all relevant parties without undue delay.

6.8 The CAWT partnership organisations need to take ownership of projects. They also need to give due consideration to the priority to be placed on the work and ensure that they appoint onto the Project Boards, suitable personnel with sufficient time and suitable support to manage the project effectively.

6.9 Project Board members need to understand clearly their responsibilities to ensure that projects are delivered on time, within budget and in keeping with the terms set out in the Letter of Offer or any amendment to these arrangements agreed with the funding body during the life of the project.

6.10 The CAWT Development Centre needs to provide clear and consistent guidance for Project Boards and Project Managers, ensuring that they fully understand their responsibilities for defining, planning, monitoring and managing their projects.

6.11 Projects of any significant size need to be project managed. The Project Board will need to give consideration to the level of experience, expertise and skills required within the Project Board and from a Project Manager to deliver on the agenda set for the project. Historically the project assistance for CAWT projects has tended to have been recruited to be based at an area of their choice and at a salary linked to the health service salary bands of the successful applicant's jurisdiction base. They also are managed by the service provider responsible for that base. This arrangement does raise a number of issues which warrant careful consideration for future projects. There are often significant differences in the salary structures between the jurisdictions which may attract or deter a good field of applicants for such posts. Consideration should be given to evaluating the posts for salary purposes on the basis of the complexity of the job, the skills required to deliver and paying a single salary band

irrespective of the base of the successful candidate. Consideration should also be given to having the post holder/s reporting to the Chair of the Project Board.

6.12 It is probably inevitable that there will be external environmental changes which may impact on projects particularly where projects run over a number of years. It is clear from the Letter of Offer for this project at 4.1 that the Departments of Health in both jurisdictions require written notification of any significant proposed or anticipated change and that continuation of funding will be subject to written approval from the same bodies. The evaluation team would therefore recommend that the CAWT Development Centre work out an agreed procedure for seeking clearance for any such change. This procedure also needs to have an agreed process that would result in early feedback on any proposed changes to projects which would not lead to prolonged delays or interruption to the work on projects. When this procedure is agreed it should be shared with Project Boards for all projects managed through CAWT.

6.13 While the evaluation team recognise that key individuals involved in projects may not necessarily be involved for the entire life of a project for a variety of reasons, they would not recommend the rotation of the Chair for a project as a matter of routine. Such an arrangement can cause difficulties in respect of continuity. The evaluation team would recommend that the Chair should be selected on the basis of their enthusiasm for the project, their skills and their capacity to fulfil the role. This responsibility should not be considered by their organisation as an “add on” to their substantive role, but as part of their role with recognition of the time involved undertaking the functions required to lead the Project Board and the project. The evaluation team also recommend that careful consideration needs to be given to the support required to deliver projects and that this is planned at the outset. Such support may include project management, financial support and perhaps support from contracted external consultants such as was required to assist with the delivery of the two major products delivered as part of this project.

- 6.14 Many complex projects may require external quality assurance. Such external inputs are often provided by a range of individuals with relevant experience in the field. Where such external individuals are engaged whether or not they receive payment for their contribution, the evaluation team would recommend that there is a clear agreement with them in relation to the role that they will fulfil in respect of supporting the project.
- 6.15 The products arising out of this project need to be implemented if the full benefit arising out of this development work is to be realised. The evaluation team understand that support has been secured through CAWT for the implementation of the integrated children's services planning tools. We would recommend that ownership for the implementation of the project from all the organisations responsible for planning and delivering children's services needs to be secured at the outset. Furthermore that the implementation must be formally project managed using a recognised project management methodology.