



Better evidence, better outcomes

CENTRE FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICES STRATEGY

2012-2014

April 2012

Summary

introduction

The Centre for Effective Services (CES) is a small, relatively young all island organisation (established in 2008 in Republic of Ireland; 2010 in Northern Ireland). This first strategy sets a courageous vision and clarity about what unique added value CES can bring to deliver on our mission.

CES strategy is presented at a time of enormous change in Ireland, both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland. The global economic crisis has had a major impact in both jurisdictions resulting in reduced public spending in services including services for children, families, youth and communities. The strategy reflects this changed environment of 2008 when CES was established.

Running in parallel with the preoccupation with the economy is public discourse on the potential and importance of children for our future and the concept of sustaining strong communities with active citizens. This discourse also significantly influenced our thinking in the strategy.

The strategy has been developed on the back of an independent mid-term review of the Centre with an extensive consultation with stakeholders and analysis of the impact and our outcomes achieved in the formative three years. The key learning and lessons from the review have influenced the thrust and direction of the strategy.

The original core themes of the organisation – the importance of bringing evidence to bear in policy, services and practice; the need to connect the worlds of research with policy-makers and practitioners are reinforced in this new strategy. There is also an emphasis on the importance of focusing on the process of implementation across policy, practice and services.

CES wants to contribute to system-wide changes and improvements in outcomes in the lives of children. Developments flagged in the strategy include a broadening of the CES approach into other government departments and agencies concerned with children and families lives, namely in education, health and justice, including schools and health services. Area-based approaches, particularly to tackling disadvantage, which is a commitment in the programme for government, will also be a focus of the work in CES.

The strategy is closely aligned with the priorities in the public sector reform agenda, with its emphasis on joined-up government and services for its citizens in the most efficient and effective way.

The strategy will position CES to embrace the major changes in the world in which we work and provide direction and steadiness for our continued sustainability. We look forward to working closely with existing and new partnerships and collaborations in the implementation of this strategy.

This is a summary of the strategy. The full strategy document is available on our website <http://www.effectiveservices.org/about-ces/who-we-are-and-what-we-do>



Nuala Doherty
Director

strategy summary

overview

The Centre for Effective Services (CES) was established in 2008 in the Republic of Ireland, and in 2010 in Northern Ireland. The overall remit of the Centre was to provide technical and organisational expertise to promote and support the application of an evidence-informed approach to policy making and service provision across the island of Ireland. CES is part of an emerging body of intermediary organisations across the world. The Centre is funded jointly by The Atlantic Philanthropies, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government for an initial period of five years up to 2013. The staff complement of CES is now 18 people, which includes a number of part-time and shared posts across both jurisdictions. CES has also hosted three full-time graduate interns and five secondees from a number of Government Departments and Agencies.

Work to date has largely been focused over four key areas:

- policy advice and implementation support
- programme design, implementation and practice development
- evaluation, quality and outcomes
- knowledge and communications

Since its establishment in 2008, the external environment in which the centre operates has changed significantly. There have been changes in the political environment, changes in the economy, globally and locally, and we are living in a time of rapid social and technological change. These changes represent both challenges to and opportunities for CES in developing and implementing this strategy.

our vision

Our vision articulates the Ireland, North and South, we would like to see in the long-term. Many organisations and individuals are likely to aspire to elements of this vision.

Children, young people, families and communities fulfil their potential in an Ireland, North and South, that respects their rights, meets their needs, and implements what is known to make a positive difference.



strategy summary

our mission

Our mission sets out our fundamental purpose as an organisation – who we are and what we do:

CES works with others to connect and support the implementation of effective policy, efficient systems and good practice, using the best available evidence, so that children, young people, families and communities thrive.

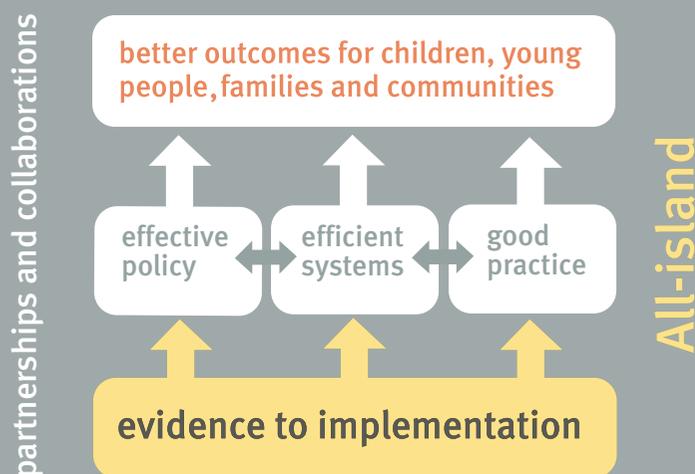
This mission statement captures the essence of what CES is about. We believe that the unique contribution of CES is based on the combination of a number of elements. These elements, taken together, make the CES approach unique.

The CES approach is about:

- connecting policy, systems and practice
- supporting implementation of effective policy, efficient systems and good practice
- influencing policy and practice so that they are informed by relevant evidence, and ultimately achieve better outcomes for children, young people, families and communities
- using (and supporting others to use) the best available evidence for the benefit of children, young people, families and communities.

One way of describing CES is as a *'think and do tank'*. We make relevant, usable evidence available to policy makers, service commissioners and providers. We help them to generate evidence through their own practices and work with them to support the implementation of effective policy, efficient systems and good practice. CES does not promote particular services, programmes or organisations. Our agenda is to achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people, families and communities.

The diagram illustrates the CES mission and the unique contribution that CES can make.



target outcomes 2012-14

CES has identified six high-level outcomes (around five areas) which the organisation plans to achieve within the lifetime of this strategy, i.e. by 2014. The first four relate to the levers of change which we identified (policy and systemic change; innovative service design and implementation; building knowledge, skills and capacity). The last two outcomes are crucial to enable our impact.

	lever/area	outcomes
primary levers of change	influence policy and systemic change	1 Key policies affecting children, young people, families and communities are more informed by evidence and their effective implementation drives systemic change
	champion innovative service design and implementation	2 Services working with children, young people, families and communities are applying relevant evidence from research, practice and service user experiences
		3 Innovative service design, redesign and implementation has enhanced the operational efficiency and effectiveness of services
	build knowledge, skills and capacity	4 Service providers and policy makers use enhanced skills, capacity and relevant evidence to inform decisions and develop services
enablers	promote partnerships and collaborations	5 CES has the necessary local, national and international relationships to tackle complex problems
	develop CES organisational effectiveness	6 CES has a dynamic all-island multidisciplinary team with effective organisational systems and a sustainable funding model

key terms
 evidence is defined as knowledge gained from integrating the best available research with the professional judgement of practitioners and service user experiences.

innovative services are new or existing services which provide solutions to problems, by applying knowledge and evidence, and are effective and efficient.

outcomes are defined as changes that occur in a person, group, organisation or population, which come about as a result of something else having changed or been provided (e.g. an intervention, a service or an initiative).

systemic change involves moving beyond thinking about individual organisations, single problems and single solutions to thinking about changes to systems (policy systems, education systems, social service systems, health systems). Systemic change is a cyclical process in which the impact of change on all parts of the whole and their relationships to one another are taken into consideration.



how we'll achieve our aims

Key policies affecting children, young people, families and communities are more informed by evidence and their effective implementation drives systemic change.

- Work on policy with Government Departments and public bodies, who directly impact on the lives of children, young people, families and communities (including Education, Health, Justice)
- Work with Government on the implementation of cross-departmental policies and strategies to support public sector reform
- Promote learning from prevention and early intervention initiatives in order to inform government policy and systemic change
- Support area-based initiatives in socially disadvantaged communities, working with people across the lifecourse
- Develop an all-island cross-sectoral initiative to support and improve Implementation.

Services working with children, young people, families and communities are applying relevant evidence from research, practice and service user experiences.

- Roll out the What Works Process
- Develop tools for practitioners at frontline and management level
- Work with practitioners to build evidence-informed approaches to their practice through the provision of practical support, training, networks and seminars
- Work with commissioners/planners to apply evidence-informed approaches to service design.

Innovative service design, redesign and implementation have enhanced the operational efficiency and effectiveness of services.

- Provide advice to services on how best to evaluate their impact and how best to apply evaluation findings
- Provide practical support to services on service design, redesign, and delivery
- Develop tools to support assessment, planning, evaluation and the use of evidence to inform practice
- Provide support to service providers, commissioners and planners on cost effectiveness.

CES is working with others to connect and support the implementation of effective policy, efficient systems and good practice, using the best available evidence, so that children, young people, families and communities thrive.

Service providers and policy makers use enhanced skills, capacity and relevant evidence to inform decisions and develop services.

- Plan, develop and implement a range of training events and seminars on the use of evidence, implementation, evaluation approaches, use of resources and dissemination
- Provide practical support to organisations on the use of evidence, implementation, evaluation approaches, use of resources and dissemination
- Produce a range of knowledge-based tools and materials.

CES has the necessary local, national and international relationships to tackle complex problems.

- Develop strategic relationships with a range of organisations to deliver on joint objectives and common projects
- Develop collaborative relationships with researchers and academics to utilise the existing Irish and international evidence base
- Develop CES as a hub for knowledge transfer and exchange
- Broker connections between policy makers, commissioners, service providers, and experts, locally and internationally
- Participate in and develop relevant networks which make efficient use of resources
- Source partners for consortia which can develop effective solutions to complex issues.

CES has a dynamic all-island multidisciplinary team with effective organisational systems and a sustainable funding model.

- Review CES governance structures to reflect new leadership challenges posed in next phase
- Realign CES organisation structures and processes to improve performance, flexibility and value for money
- Develop and implement a sustainable funding model for CES (core funding and self-generated)
- Expand CES graduate intern programme and secondment opportunities
- Develop and maintain network of local and international experts and associates
- Communicate CES work and learning to a range of audiences.



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