**Wexford Children and Young People Services Committee**

**Equality and Human Rights Statement**

**Introduction**

This statement demonstrates our commitment to equality and human rights for all children and young people especially those who are vulnerable. It informs the implementation, ongoing review and evaluation of the WCYPSC plan in a manner that reflects available resources and alignment with Better Outcomes Brighter Futures - The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014-20).

We work to bring the concepts of equality and human rights to life in all aspects of our work for children and young people in County Wexford. This can be in relation to gender and gender identity, civil status, family status (carers and lone parents), age, disability, sexual orientation, race (migrants and Black and minority ethnic groups, including Travellers and Roma), religion, and socio-economic status.

By honouring this statement we fulfill our obligations under the Irish Human Rights Equality and Commission Act 2014 (S.42) to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights.

**Our Values**

Five valuesunderpin our commitment to equality and human rights. We bring these values to our work with children and young people so as to advance the promotion and achievement of equality, and the fulfillment of human rights.

**1. Dignity** is about how we value human worth. It is about the esteem in which we hold children and young people and their value in society. Dignity involves understanding and appreciating difference and diversity among children and young people.

**WCYPSC** seeks to ensure that all children and young people are valued and respected.

Through our work we aim to ensure that:

* All children and young people in institutional and community settings are nurtured and cared for.
* All children and young people in the education system are valued.
* Organisations develop their capacity, understanding, resources and knowledge to respond appropriately to the needs and aspirations of children and young people.
* There are places of safety and protection for children and young people in emergencies, including for children and young people in situations where domestic violence occurs.
* We have appropriate facilities for the detention of young people.

**2. Inclusion** is about children and young people feeling a sense of belonging and connection within their community. Inclusion involves actively involving and consulting with children and young people and listening to their views. Inclusion requires creating systems and processes to encourage and facilitate participation.

**WCYPSC** seeks to ensure that children and young people feel included and valued.

Through our work we aim to ensure that:

* The attitudinal, organisational and cultural barriers to inclusion of children and young people are identified, challenged and changed for good.
* Opportunities for active participation by children and young people are promoted and supported, and that children and young people have access to and connection with their peers, communities, and society.
* Proactive measures are taken to reach children and young people who live in rural or isolated areas.
* Proactive steps are taken to enable participation in society and independent living for children and young people with disabilities.
* All children and young people have access to necessary supports and services to meet their needs, e.g. health, educational, recreational, etc.

**3. Democracy** is about children and young people having a voice, being involved in decision-making and having an opportunity to participate in civil society. It involves accountability to children and young people from those in positions of leadership and power.

**WCYPSC** seeks to ensure that the voice of the full diversity of children and young people is sought, listened to and responded to in its own work and in the work of all other organisations and agencies in County Wexford.

Through our work we aim to ensure that:

* The necessary inclusive, educational and community approaches are developed and implemented to ensure the voice of children is sought and heard.
* There are ample meaningful opportunities created for children and young people to input effectively into decision-making.
* There is accountability to children and young people within the range of relevant organisations and services that serve the needs of children and young people.
* Opportunities and pathways are created for children and young people to engage with political structures.
* A culture and environment is created and nurtured where children, young people and their families feel able and encouraged to speak up and raise issues about policies and procedures.

**4. Autonomy** is about children and young people being and feeling involved in making decisions for themselves. It involves freedom, independence and empowerment of children and young people. Autonomy is about children and young people having choices and control in their interactions with their community and wider society.

**WCYPSC** seeks to ensure that children and young people are supported and encouraged to feel a sense of autonomy and involvement in decision making about matters relating to their lives.

Through our work we aim to ensure that:

* Children and young people, in County Wexford, have the capacity and support, including family supports, needed to be involved in decision-making for themselves
* The necessary structures are put in place to enable and encourage children and young people to formulate their views and communicate them and that real choices are available to them in their lives
* The challenges and barriers that limit choice making for children and young people are clearly named and addressed, e.g. poverty, stereotyping, literacy, mental health and discrimination.
* Supports are in place for children and young people and their families to help them in making choices that affect their lives and wellbeing.

**5. Social Justice** is about fairness and balance in relation to access to resources for all children and young people. It requires placing attention on who benefits in relation to employment and social goods such as education, health, and accommodation and ensuring that this is fair and transparent. It is about children and young people being encouraged and enabled to contribute to the society in which they live.

**WCYPSC** seeks to ensure that children and young people are empowered to actively participate and effect change, that outcomes are enhanced for all children and young people, and, in particular, that the physical health, mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is enhanced.

Through our work we aim to ensure that:

* There are preventative initiatives and improved access to and outcomes from mental health services to support the well-being of children and young people.
* Supports and services to meet the physical health needs of children and young people, particularly in relation to preventing obesity.
* Provision of and access to services for children and young people, in particular education supports and youth and community services.
* Access to accommodation and a safe home for children and young people.
* Opportunities available to children and young people to access training and employment.

**How We Bring this Statement to Life in Our Work:**

This statement serves as a set of guiding principles to bring an equality and human rights focus to the work of WCYPSC. The values underpin and shape the implementation and ongoing review of our WCYPSC plan. We return to them regularly as a reminder of the spirit and intentions that drive our work to serve and support children and young people in County Wexford.

2nd February 2018