

Dr. Niall Muldoon Ombudsman for Children



“I’m a Child First.....”

**IRISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL
WORKERS CONFERENCE 2020**

Online - 16 Oct 20



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do leanaí
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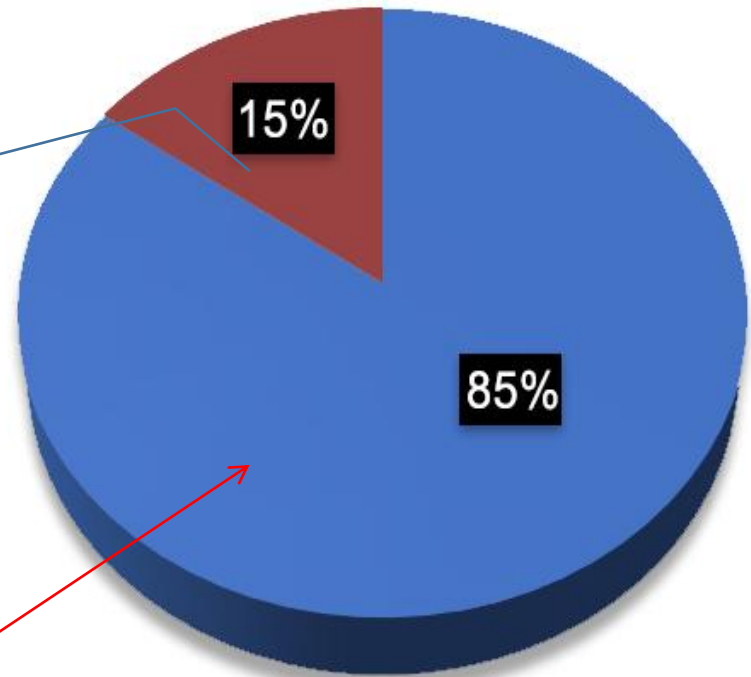
- Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002
- Independent statutory body
- Presidential appointment
- Direct accountability to the Oireachtas





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“THE SYSTEM”



Outside the System &
Flexibility Required

SYSTEM WORKS

STORY OF MOLLY

- ABANDONED at birth – 16 years with Foster Family.
- DEPENDENT on her foster carers for feeding, toileting, bathing, and dressing.
- THE WHOLE CHILD - We found that neither the HSE nor Tusla saw Molly as a child in care **AND** a child with a disability.
- LACK OF CO-ORDINATION = services & supports from both organisations were insufficient and delayed through arguments about funding.
- 471 OTHER CHILDREN LIKE MOLLY – but neither Tusla nor the HSE could ensure adequate supports were being provided.

THE SYSTEM

Import of Social Workers

- **Ironic'** - “It was her link social worker who came forward and said, ‘You should report this to the Ombudsman for Children,’” said Ms McKenna-Keenan. She agreed with committee member [Sean Sherlock](#) TD it was “ironic” that a Tusla social worker advised the foster mother to make the complaint against two State bodies, one of which was their own employer” (Irish Times, 16Jan18, Kitty Holland)

Import of Foster Carers

- “It is imperative that every effort is made to support all the exceptionally committed foster carers that are looking after children with moderate to severe disabilities. The alternative is these children would be facing a life in residential care.
- “However, in order to provide the appropriate support **there must be consensus among those involved as to who these children are.**”



MOLLY'S STORY



Molly Two Years On

In 2018, we published Molly's case a story of a girl with a severe disability in foster care who was not receiving the supports she needed.

We found out there were 471 other children like Molly.

Two years later

- These children are no longer invisible
- Tusla and the HSE are working better together
- Molly is still at home in a loving family environment

- × The HSE still cannot agree with Tusla on who these children are
- × More respite is needed
- × Relationships with carers must be valued and maintained

How can the HSE plan for a child's care, if they don't know who they are?

Tusla has identified 477 children with a diagnosed disability in their care.

Two years after committing to do so, the HSE cannot agree on who these children are.

The HSE has 9 Community Health Organisation (CHO) areas

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 4/9 | CHOs identified children |
| 1/9 | CHOs working with Tusla on care planning |

2019

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 5/9 | CHOs identified children |
| 3/9 | CHOs working with Tusla on care planning |
| 5/9 | Beginning work |

2020

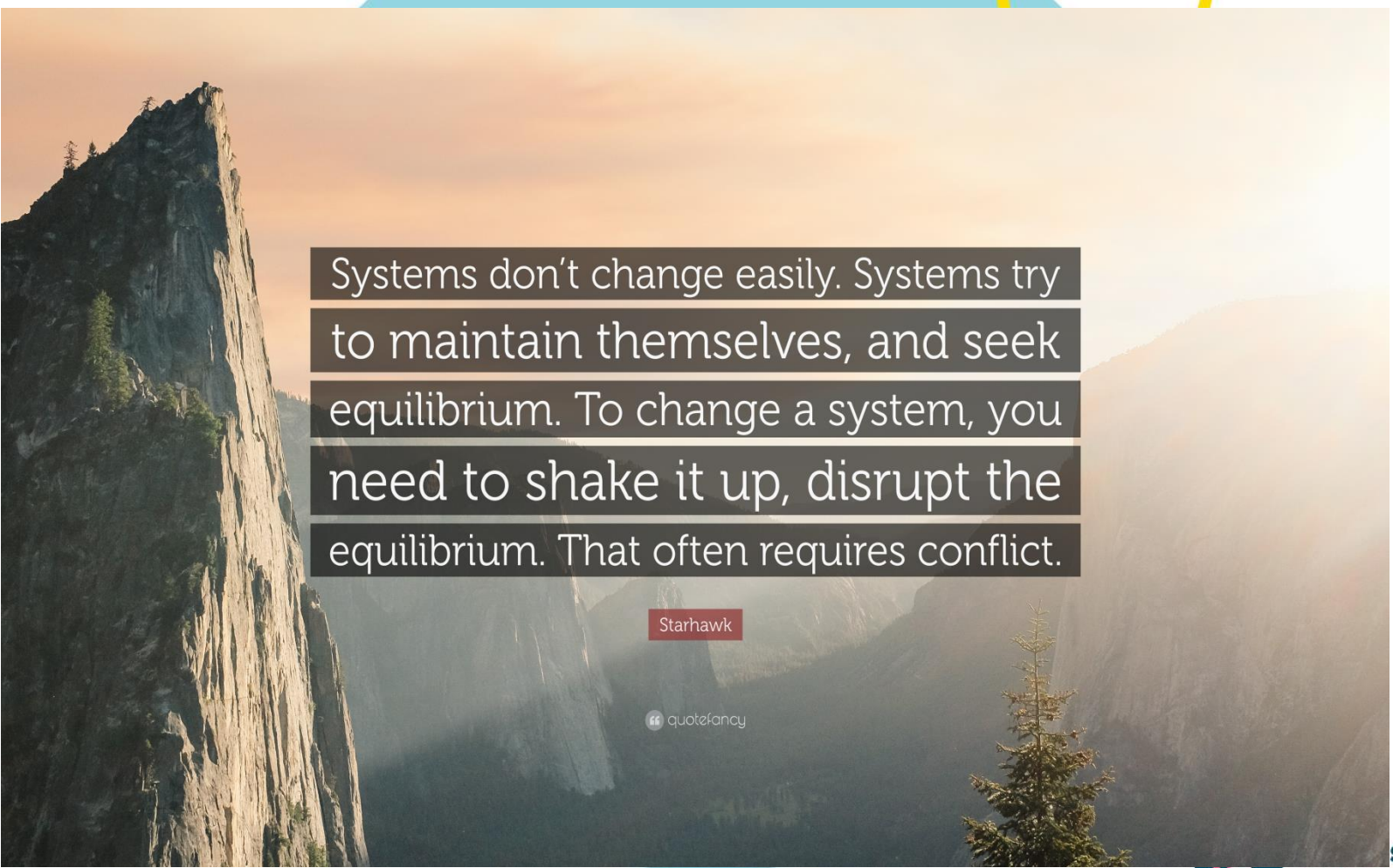




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**WHY IS CHILD
CENTRED PRACTICE &
INTERAGENCY
CO-OPERATION
IMPORTANT?**

**NATIONALLY, WHAT SUPPORT
IS THERE FOR CHILD-
CENTRED PRACTICE AND
COLLABORATIVE WORKING?**



Systems don't change easily. Systems try to maintain themselves, and seek equilibrium. To change a system, you need to shake it up, disrupt the equilibrium. That often requires conflict.

Starhawk

quotezancy



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Molly's Case Shows System fails children with disabilities

(18/1/18 - IT OpEd - Claire Edwards – Lecturer in Social Studies in UCC)

“The State seems to have built a system which prides itself on impenetrability and inaccessibility”

There still remains a perception that disability is a specialism owned by particular professions in the health and social care arena, that “do” disability.

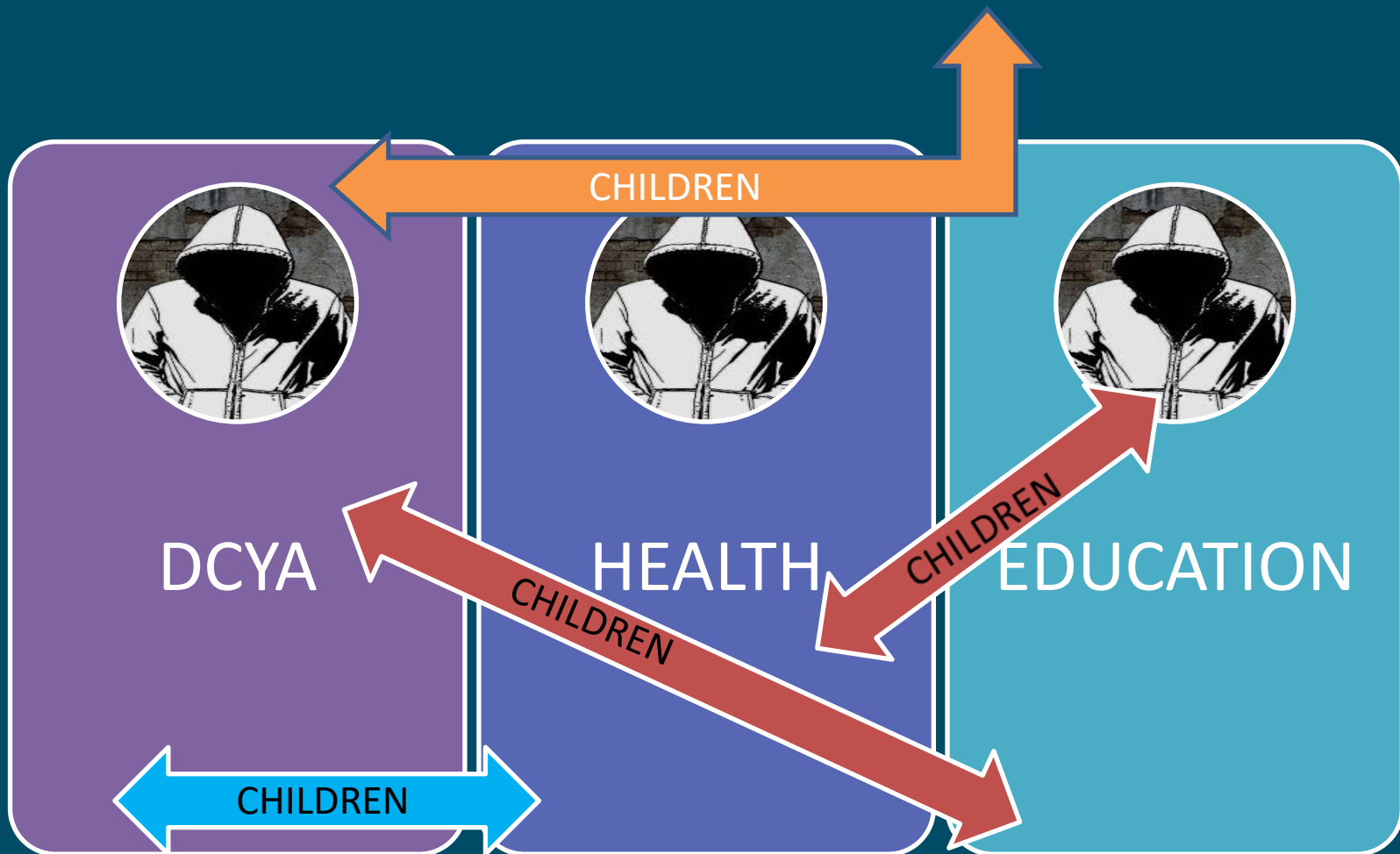
That is a perception that owes much to Ireland's residual welfare state, and the historical development of charitable organisations which took on responsibility for providing services to children and adults with disabilities.

St. John of Gods!!!

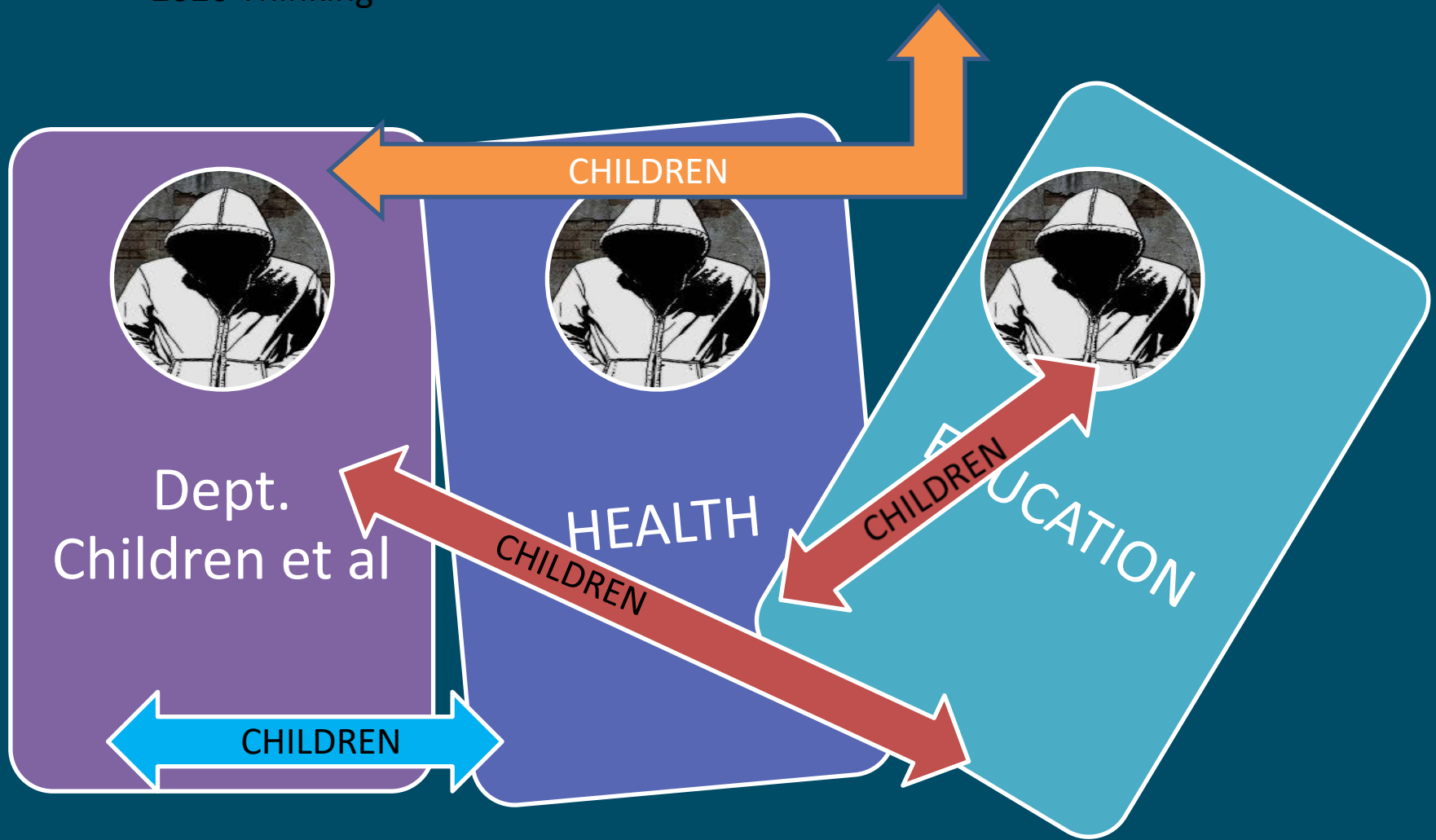


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2019 Thinking



2020 Thinking





Child Centred System



DEPT.
CHILDREN ET
AL



HEALTH

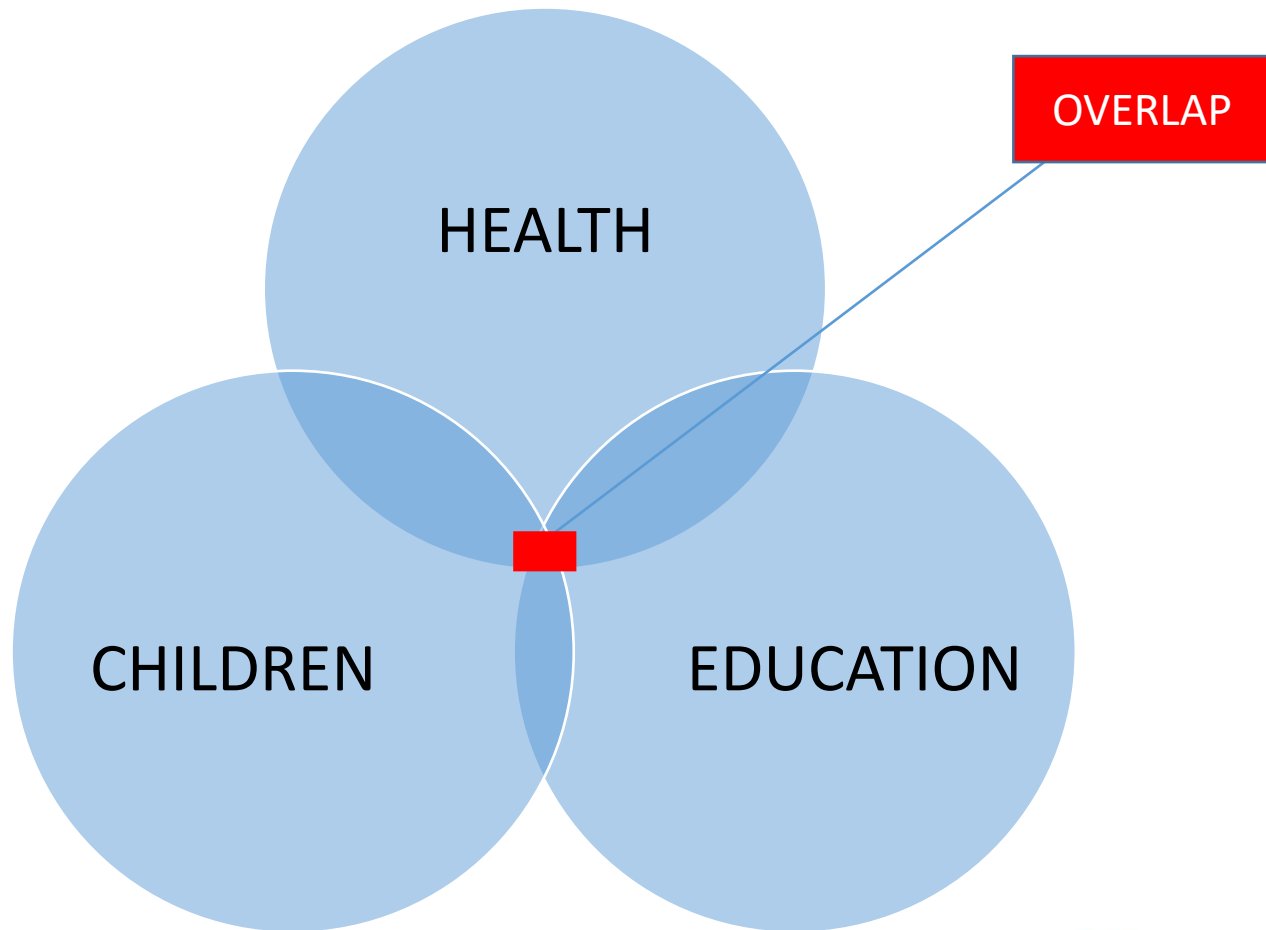


EDUCATION

BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD

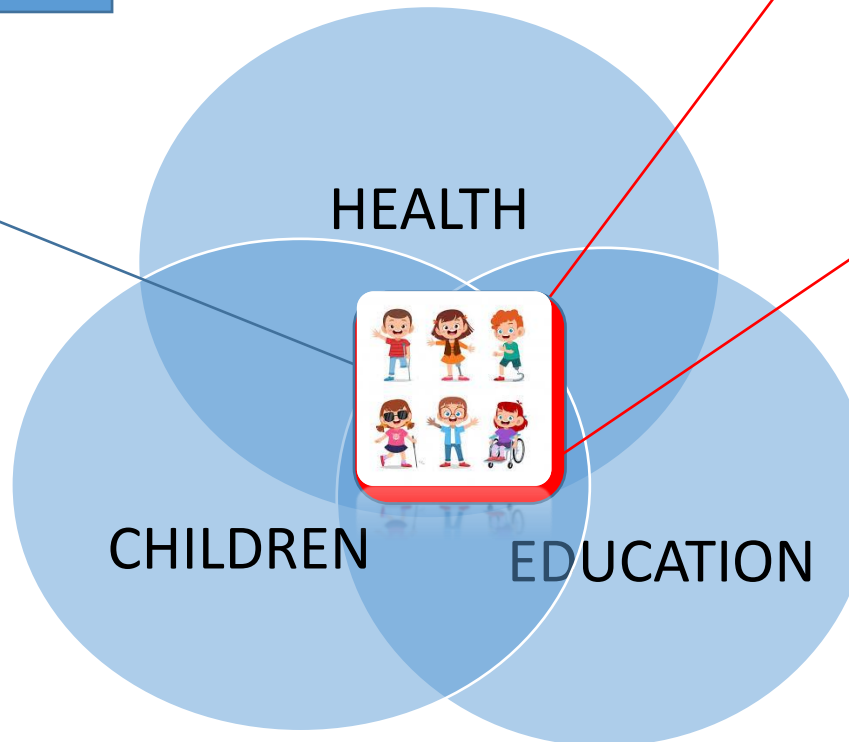
DEPT OF JUSTICE - GARDAI

CURRENT THINKING



HOW WE CAN IMPROVE?

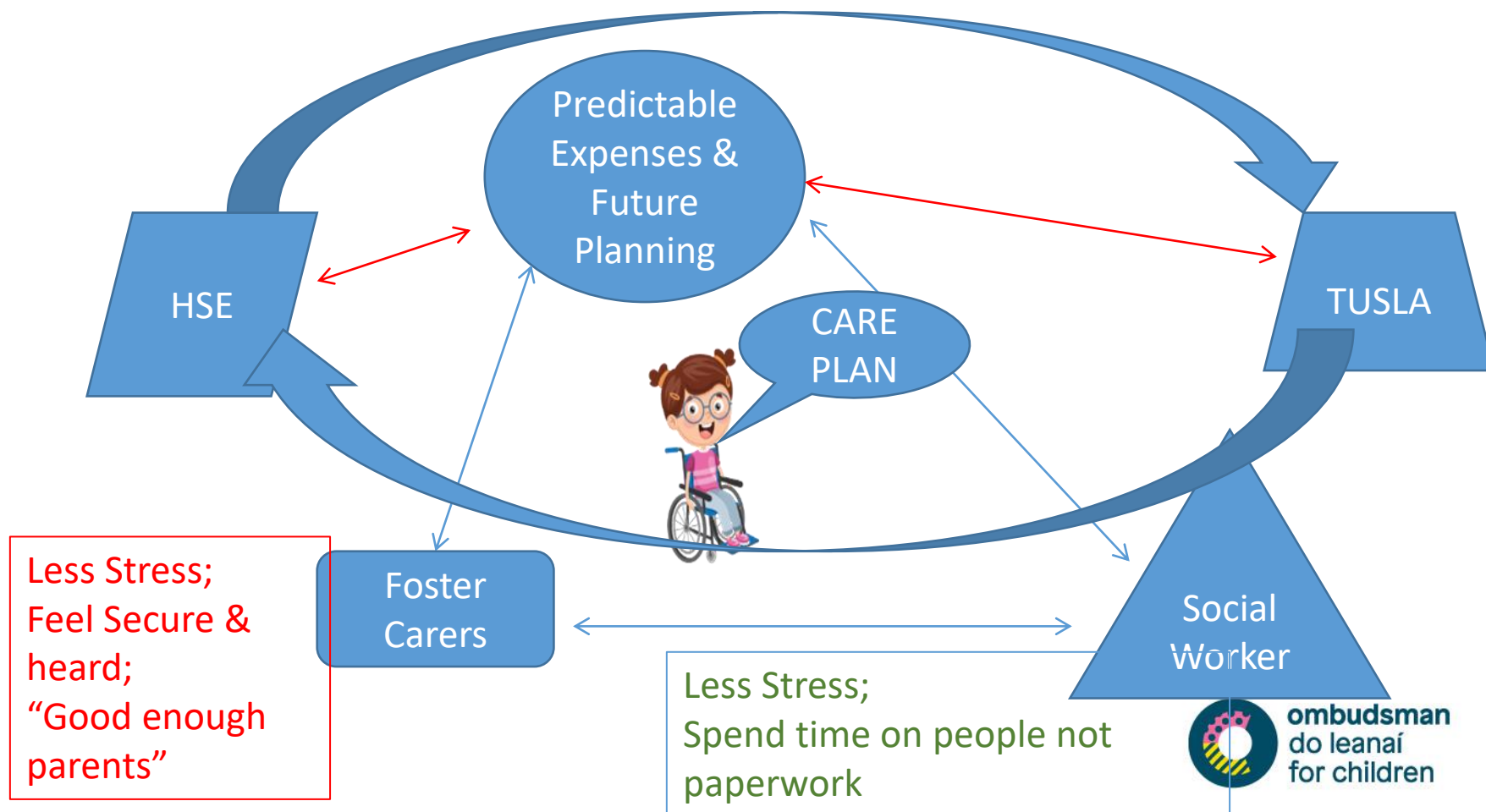
CAMHS
HOMELESS
ABUSE



Best Interest of Child
Voice of Child
UNCRC
UNCRPD

DCYA & Disability;
Inter-Agency Joint
Protocol;
Leadership;
Shared Budget;
Predict Cost of Disability;
“Best Interest of Child”
Clause;

MOLLY – IN A “BETTER SYSTEM”



Final thought...



Strive for progress,
not perfection.

Anonymous

 quote fancy



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