



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO
Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement
Ireland
CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre

The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC) is part of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS) at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Founded in 2007, through support from The Atlantic Philanthropies, Ireland and the Health Services Executive, with a base in the School of Political Science and Sociology, the mission of the Centre is to help create the conditions for excellent policies, services and practices that improve the lives of children, youth and families through research, education and service development. The UCFRC has an extensive network of relationships and research collaborations internationally and is widely recognised for its core expertise in the areas of Family Support and Youth Development. The UNESCO Chair awarded to Professor Pat Dolan in 2008, provides a platform for the UCFRC to influence and inform global policy for families and youth. The formation in 2015 of a Global Network of UNESCO Chairs in Children, Youth and Communities brings together universities, centres of excellence and agencies that foster the development of young people in communities and civic society.

Research undertaken at the UCFRC is strongly connected to applied work for children and families and relevant to a diverse range of stakeholders including service users, policymakers, politicians, service managers and front-line staff. Activities are focused on knowledge creation around 'what works' in the real world of practice and on utilising community-based approaches to working with and for children and their families. Through its partnership with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, the UCFRC is at the heart of policy, research and evaluation activities

that inform the delivery system for child welfare. The Centre engages in large-scale, commissioned research and evaluation projects adopting a variety of methodological approaches, ranging from experimental studies of innovative programmes to exploratory qualitative studies in key policy areas. These include a range of assessments of new and internationally tested interventions and initiatives aimed at targeting social and economic disadvantage among children and families.

Alongside policy and practice research, the UCFRC is committed to generating academic publications, contributing to the development of theory and to providing education and training. Additionally, the Centre undertakes a programme of related activities including conferences, symposia, visiting faculty exchanges and supporting practitioner networks.

Major Research Initiatives Include:

- Evaluation of Tusla's Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support;
- Empathy, Caring and Connection among Early Adolescents: An Empirical Analysis;
- A research partnership with the Lumos Foundation founded by the author J.K. Rowling.

Across the thematic areas of family support and youth development the UCFRC engages in research, education and policy and practice activities:

Family Support

The Centre is widely recognised as being at the forefront of research, education and training in the area of Family Support. As a broad-based paradigm, Family Support policies and services:

- Strengthen family, friends and community support networks;
- Emphasise children's and families' strengths;
- Are attentive to the wider environment in which the child and family live;
- Demand intervention that is needs-led, flexible, accessible, delivered in partnership and promotes social inclusion.

The Centre's Family Support orientation reflects a commitment to generating knowledge on prevention and early intervention approaches for children and young people experiencing adversity.

Youth Agency, Inclusion and Development

Enabling young people to raise their voices and influence issues that affect their lives is part of the youth participation agenda of organisations working with and for young people. The UCFRC works with services on interventions that enable young people to thrive and engage fully with their own development as well as that of their communities. A number of activities aimed at promoting youth leadership and youth participation are undertaken in both formal and non-formal settings. The Youth Researchers strand works with young people to engage in research on community and global issues.

Supporting Innovation in Policy, Services & Practice

The changing nature of the lives of children and families demands policies, services and practices that are dynamic and flexible. The UCFRC has established strong credibility in supporting policy makers, service managers and practitioners to develop and implement new ideas in their work. Central to this objective is the application of research to inform practice and policy and the translation of knowledge into an evidence-informed approach to children's services. Alongside this, an ethos of reflective practice underpins a culture of stakeholder engagement in using and learning from evidence.

EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The UNESCO CFRC has an evolving programme for education and training:

The PgDip/MA in Family Support Studies offers vocational postgraduate qualification for professionals working in state and voluntary services on behalf of children, young people, families, people with a disability and older people.

The PhD in Child and Youth Research is a four year full-time or six year part-time structured PhD programme delivered as part of a collaboration between the School of Psychology and the UCFRC at the School of Political Science and Sociology. This interdisciplinary programme responds to an identified need for researchers with the requisite, high level and wide-ranging experience and skills to undertake the kind of work that is needed in an evidence-informed policy environment.

The BA in Child, Youth and Family: Policy and Practice is a four year full-time programme with a strong emphasis on child and family policy and research. The programme offers foundational preparation for work with children and young people, across a range of settings. The core strengths of the programme include small group teaching, a full year of placement experience in year three and teaching that is research-led and supported by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre.

A Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action is run in association with youth work partner organisation Foróige and the Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development at NUI Galway. Delivered off campus by youth workers in Foróige clubs, projects and schools, the course is designed to equip youth with the required skills and confidence to take on positive leadership roles today and in the future.

+353 (0)91 495 398

ucfrc.nuig

@UNESCO_CFRC

cfrc@nuigalway.ie

UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre,

School of Political Science and Sociology,

Institute for Lifecourse and Society, Upper Newcastle Road,

National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland

www.nuigalway.ie/childandfamilyresearch

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