

National Educational  
Welfare Board

An Bord Náisiúnta  
Leasa Oideachais



# National Educational Welfare Board Strategic Plan **2010 - 2011**

***Every Child  
Counts***



## Contents

	<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Vision, mission and commitment</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1	Vision for children	4
1.2	Mission	4
1.3	Core commitment	4
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Strategic planning process</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	Overview	6
2.2	The Education Welfare Act, (2000)	6
2.3	The nature and scale of school attendance problems	7
2.4	The policy context for the Strategy	8
2.5	The economic context	9
2.6	The challenges for the new Strategy	9
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Strategic Goals 2009 - 2011</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1	Strategic Goal 1	13
3.2	Strategic Goal 2	15
3.3	Strategic Goal 3	17
3.4	Strategic Goal 4	21
3.5	Strategic Goal 5	23
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Ensuring the implementation of the Strategic Plan</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>25</b>
	External consultation process	

## *Every Child Counts*

### *Foreword*

The new strategy of the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) builds on the work of the “every day counts” strategy which outlined the Board’s lead responsibility for implementing the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 which came into effect in 2002.

Since its establishment, the Board has developed clear understandings of the broad and diverse nature of its responsibilities and in particular, its responsibility to ensure that every child either attends school regularly or otherwise receives an education. This responsibility is shared with parents, schools and other services. The Board views education as a key enabler to help children enjoy their childhood, realise their full potential and make a valued contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of their community.

The NEWB’s core commitment to secure every child’s entitlement to an education is a key driver of the “every child counts” strategy. Building on the experience and achievements of the past and drawing from the recent consultations with staff and partners, the Board has identified five strategic goals that will focus the organisation’s work over the next two years. The goals and their associated actions take account of external realities, resource constraints and challenges and are shaped by a desire for efficient and effective public services that meet the needs of stakeholders.

Within the legislative framework, the NEWB will continue to support children, families and schools and advise the Department of Education & Science on the achievement of better educational outcomes. The strategy places an emphasis upon practice development, efficient use of resources, development of partnerships with education services and others to help prevent and tackle school absenteeism. The progression of the achievement of the Board’s mandate depends on organisational capacity and the NEWB’s ability to develop and support staff in the delivery of quality services at every level.

In May last, Mr Sean Haughey, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Education & Science extended the remit of the Board with effect from 1 September 2009 to include responsibility for the Home School Community Liaison Programme, the School Completion Programme, the Visiting Teacher Services for Travellers as well as the National Educational Welfare Service. The extended remit requires the development of a single national approach to attendance, participation and retention. The new remit will facilitate the delivery of a focussed and more cohesive service to children, families and schools. An additional goal providing for the implementation of the Minister’s decision has been incorporated into the Plan.

The Board considers that the goals and the associated actions outlined in “every child counts” are achievable and will advance the educational wellbeing of children and families.

**Eddie Ward**  
**Chief Executive**  
**September 2009**

# **1. Vision, mission and commitment**

## **1.1 Vision for children**

The vision of the National Educational Welfare Board is for a society where every child receives their entitlement to an education, so that they can enjoy their childhood, realise their full potential and make a valued contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of their community.

## **1.2 Mission**

The mission of the NEWB is to maximise the level of educational participation of children and young people by ensuring that each child is attending school or otherwise participating in an appropriate education.

## **1.3 Core commitment**

The NEWB's core commitment is to work to secure every child's entitlement to education. This commitment directs and drives the strategies that will be pursued over the next two years, and is reflected in the actions that will turn those strategies into practical reality. We will ensure that the strategy is strongly focused on achieving better outcomes for children's school attendance and participation.

The NEWB will use the full potential of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 including taking legal action to support children's school attendance; we will make the best possible use of resources, guided by knowledge about the outcomes of the Board's work, and drawing systematically on the insights gathered from working with children and families, education partners and agency colleagues, and from research.

The NEWB will apply the experience and expertise that has been built up within the Board in order to advise the Minister for Education and Science on wider education policy issues with the potential to strengthen and support children's school attendance and participation.

Our services will work with children in a child-centred way to overcome barriers to their school attendance and participation. We will listen to what they have to say and help them to stay connected to their education and learning. We will assist parents and families in a respectful way and in the least intrusive manner so that they can support their children's school attendance.

The NEWB will work closely with schools, educational support services, and agencies whose work contributes to supporting school attendance and resolving attendance problems so that children and families can benefit from that collaboration and coordination.

We will support staff and equip them to develop and strengthen the expertise they bring to their professional task.

We will create the conditions within the organisation to enable the Board to deliver on its responsibilities; the NEWB will ensure compliance with governance requirements; the NEWB will develop and strengthen leadership and management capabilities within the Board; the NEWB will manage and maximise the performance of its mission through high quality planning, strong accountability systems, and by ensuring that structures and systems enable the Board to deliver the best outcomes for children, young people and families.

## **2. The Strategic Planning Process**

### **2.1 Overview**

The development of this Strategy involved background research, extensive consultations, analysis of findings and feedback and preparation of a set of strategic options for consideration by the Board of NEWB. Indecon Consultants were selected by the Board to assist with the development process and consultations took place with the Department of Education and Science, key external stakeholders, with staff and the IMPACT Union. Consultations included invitations to make written submissions, surveys and workshops for staff, and a range of meetings with stakeholders.<sup>1</sup>

### **2.2 The Education Welfare Act, (2000)**

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 created a comprehensive single national framework to support regular school attendance and participation in education.

The National Educational Welfare Board assumed statutory responsibility in March 2002 for implementing this groundbreaking Act.

The Act applies to all children and young people who are enrolled in a State regulated school; children receiving education in other settings, for example in the home; and young people aged 16 and 17 who leave school to take up employment.

The Act addresses the educational welfare needs of children and young people in a number of ways:

- It outlines the entitlement of every child to receive an education.
- It establishes a legal obligation for children to attend school regularly.
- It clarifies the roles and responsibilities of parents and schools in relation to attendance, and sets down the arrangements for monitoring and reporting attendance, sharing of information about children's education and enforcing the law.
- It established the National Educational Welfare Board with powers and functions to put in place the attendance and participation measures envisaged by the Act. These powers include taking legal action against parents or guardians who are failing in their duty to educate their children or to send their children to school.
- It provides the legal basis for collaboration among key statutory agencies whose work can help to ensure that every child receives an education.
- It sets out the rights and obligations on parents who opt to educate their children outside of recognised schools.

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<sup>1</sup> The external stakeholders who contributed to the Strategy are listed in Appendix 1

The National Educational Welfare Board is charged under the Act with a comprehensive set of duties and powers in order to give effect to its provisions.

## **2.3 The nature and scale of school attendance problems**

The NEWB's *Analysis of School Attendance Data in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2003/4 to 2005/06* shows that over 100,000 children miss more than 20 days each year. Non-attendance is greater among older children and children who live in more disadvantaged areas and in urban areas. About 11% of primary-school students (1 in 10) and 17% of post-primary students (1 in 6) are absent for 20 days or more during the school.

Major shifts in this data on a year-to-year basis are not expected. Any shifts will be over a much longer period. However, the data gives a strong indicator of the general level of attendance and absenteeism, and the level of serious absences in various types of schools. These figures are sufficiently robust to warn us that the levels of absences of over 20 days are unacceptably high.

There are continuing indications of the strong links between poor attendance and other indicators of educational disadvantage. The Board's school attendance data highlights again the complexity of poor attendance and educational disadvantage; it is not amenable to any 'quick fix' and needs deep and sustained system interventions. It pinpoints the importance of measuring attendance as one of the ways in which the impact of investment in educational disadvantage can be measured. The broad data points to areas where more detailed research needs to be focused in order to understand more fully the dynamic that is happening in schools and families and the factors that contribute most to poor attendance.

A first step in this detailed analysis is the work undertaken for the NEWB by the ESRI, which looked in depth at all the factors linked to poor attendance.<sup>2</sup> The NEWB research conference 2008, brought together international researchers in the field, school staffs, agencies and EWOs working at local level to examine evidence of good ways of intervening at school level to prevent non-attendance.<sup>3</sup>

This work highlighted the complex influence of family circumstances, school climate, curriculum, teacher expectations, relationships with teachers and peers, students' engagement with school and their sense of wellbeing on a child's school attendance. It is evident that whole school approaches that draw together school policies on areas of school life such as student involvement, curriculum, behaviour and relationships have the potential to make a difference to attendance. The NEWB has already emphasised the importance of this whole school approach in its Guidelines for the development of school codes of behaviour.

Non-attendance at school is a strong indicator of overall child welfare and a determinant of education outcomes. Combating the issues underlying poor attendance

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<sup>2</sup> ESRI, Attendance and Students' School Experiences. NEWB 2008. [www.newb.ie](http://www.newb.ie)

<sup>3</sup> NEWB Conference 2008. School Attendance and Participation: What Works and Why? [www.newb.ie](http://www.newb.ie)

requires concerted action and close collaboration among schools, school support services and other stakeholders involved with children, young people and their families.

## 2.4 The policy context for the Strategy

The investment in school attendance and participation is part of wider educational and social policy aimed at ensuring that every child achieves their full potential. The Department of Education's DEIS programme [*Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*] is a key policy context for the work of the NEWB.

The DEIS initiative is designed to ensure that the most disadvantaged schools benefit from a comprehensive package of supports, while ensuring that others continue to get support in line with the level of disadvantage among their pupils. The DEIS Strategy is an integrated educational response to implementing a whole range of Government measures to address social and educational inclusion:

*'The Lisbon Strategy, the Agreed Programme for Government, the social partnership agreement Sustaining Progress, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) and the National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPs/incl) are all catalysts for driving educational reform in the broader context of tackling poverty and social exclusion. They provide a common language of objectives and priorities, strategies and approaches, targets and timescales, monitoring and evaluation processes which enable all concerned to inform and support each other in working to address educational disadvantage.'*<sup>4</sup>

DEIS is grounded in the belief that every child and young person deserves an equal chance to access, participate in and benefit from education, that each person should have the opportunity to reach her/his full educational potential for personal, social and economic reasons, and that education is a critical factor in promoting social inclusion and economic development.

In line with Department of Education and Science policy, the Educational Welfare Service gives priority to children attending DEIS schools. This approach to priority setting will continue as part of the new Strategy.

Alongside educational and social policy, the NEWB also works within the framework of wider public service policy. Government has accepted the recommendations of the OECD Report *Ireland: Towards an Integrated Public Service*<sup>5</sup> as the basis of a transformation programme for the public sector. The particular transformation challenge for the NEWB is to articulate clearly how the Board's work contributes to the achievement of broad social and economic goals, to have clearly defined targets, outputs and outcomes, and a strong culture of planning and accountability. The NEWB must develop and empower staff and operate good governance throughout the organisation.

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<sup>4</sup><http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?pcategory=17216&ecategory=34267&language=EN>

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.oecd.org/document/31/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_33735\\_40529119\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/31/0,3343,en_2649_33735_40529119_1_1_1_1,00.html)

## **2.5 The economic context**

The environment for this strategic plan involves the most difficult economic prospects for Ireland in decades combined with unprecedented pressure on the public finances. Even as staffing resources are reduced through the various Government measures to contain public expenditure, demand for the NEWB services may grow as families struggle with the fall out from increased unemployment and poverty. This environment creates uncertainty about what the Board's capacity will be to deliver on key responsibilities, making it difficult to plan ahead with certainty or to give guidance to schools and families about the availability of its service. The Strategy must be reviewed regularly in the light of changing circumstances, so that the Board remains in a strong position to plan and manage resources.

## **2.6 The challenges for the new Strategy**

Over the period of the strategic plan *Every Day Counts* 2005-2007, the NEWB has made significant progress in building an integrated organisation dedicated to implementing actions to improve school attendance and participation. The infrastructure for the Educational Welfare Service has been put in place across the country. Staff teams operate in 30 locations and there is at least a basic service in every county, with more significant resources invested in areas of disadvantage where attendance problems are greatest. Each year, the service works with about 8,000 children who have been reported as having attendance difficulties. Actions have been taken to raise public awareness about attendance; national attendance data is being gathered; expertise in addressing school attendance is being steadily built up, and collaborative partnerships are being established.

The challenge for the new Strategy is to consolidate these achievements, respond to the learning from the work done, and address the new challenges and opportunities that now present themselves for improving children's school attendance and participation.

The gap between the resources needed to deliver the Board's statutory remit, and current capacity is a huge challenge, which is likely to become more acute; its management is central to this Strategic Plan. Although research evidence suggests that the scale of attendance problems in Ireland are no greater than elsewhere, the Educational Welfare Service is acutely aware of the numbers of children whose life chances are being affected by high levels of non-attendance and who cannot be reached by the Board's service at present. There is a strong imperative to have clear priorities for the use of resources and these priorities will underpin the new strategy. The NEWB's approach will be two fold: (1) to prioritise intervention with younger children so that their patterns of attendance have a good chance of improvement and (2) to offer an intensive service to those children and young people who have been assessed as being most in need.

Some important provisions of the Educational (Welfare) Act, 2000 have not been addressed on account of resource constraints. One such provision is Section 29 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 which requires the NEWB to register young people who leave school early with inadequate qualifications and plan with them for continuing education and training. In the current economic climate, the need to ensure that young people with minimal skills have access to opportunities for continuing

their learning takes on new and urgent significance. As part of its Strategy, the NEWB must explore possibilities for addressing this requirement in partnership with other state agencies, and against the background of diminishing resources.

The reasons for poor school attendance are complex and challenging. Insights gained from the Board's work with children, families and schools and supported by research underlines the need for active collaboration between the school, the EWO, and other support services and agencies in order to resolve attendance problems; the NEWB will continue to strengthen collaborative working while recognising the challenge posed in doing this well.

The NEWB will continually challenge and question its model of practice and invest in strengthening and improving the way of working, based on updating the Board's knowledge and insight into best current thinking. A key part of the Board's strategy is to continue to scrutinise and strengthen the quality of work, monitor its effectiveness, strengthen the focus on measuring outcomes for children and families and put children at the centre of the work.

### **3.0 Strategic Goals 2009-2011**

In order to progress the achievement of the Board's mandate and address the current challenges, NEWB will ensure that the following strategic goals are achieved:

#### **Strategic Goal 1**

Influence national policy and shape public understanding in relation to school attendance and participation.

#### **Strategic Goal 2**

Provide advice and support to children, parents and schools in order to secure best outcomes for children's school attendance and educational welfare.

#### **Strategic Goal 3**

Make effective use of resources to ensure maximum impact on children's school attendance.

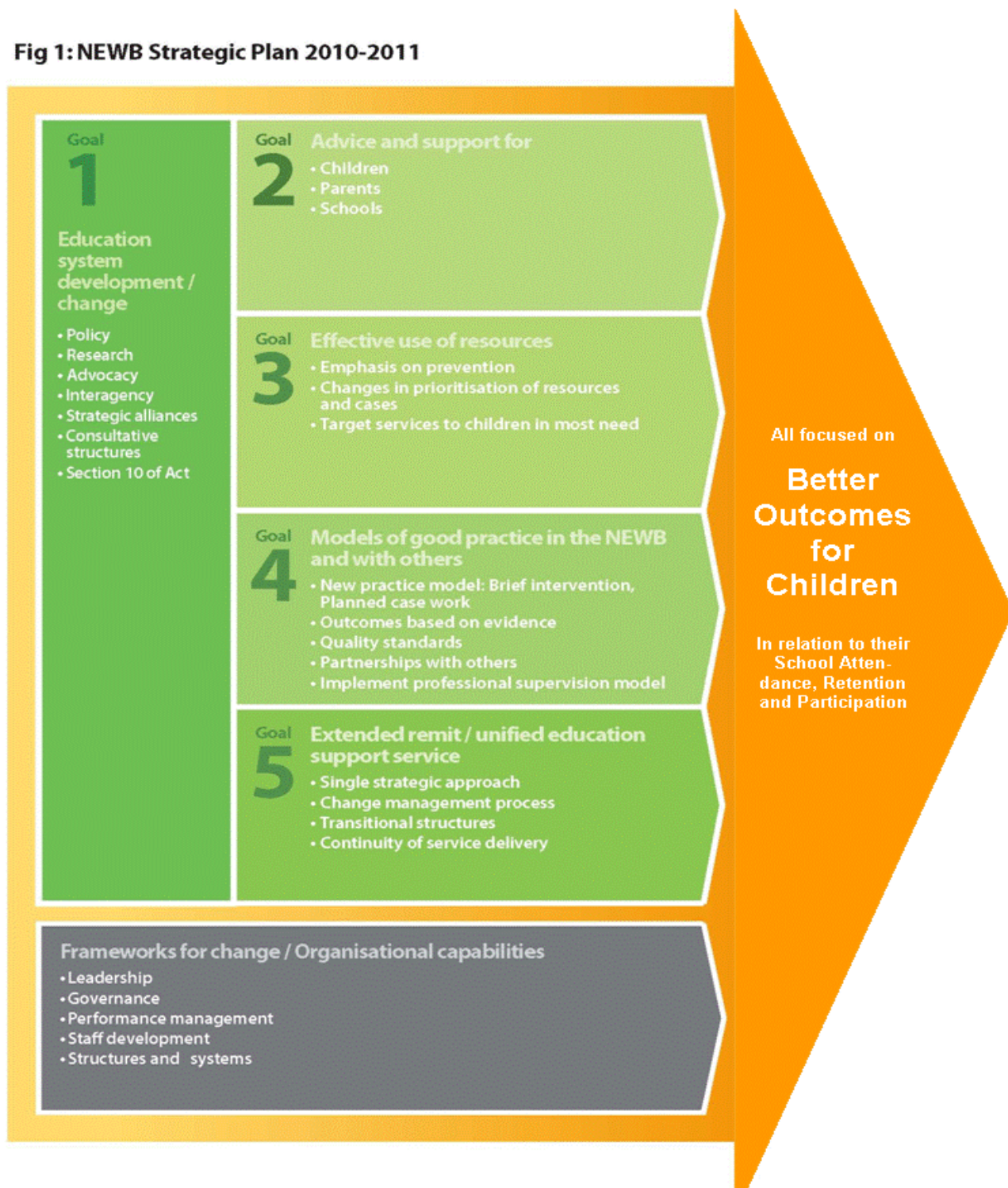
#### **Strategic Goal 4**

Develop models of good practice in the NEWB; the NEWB will build partnerships within the Education system and with other agencies who can impact positively on school attendance.

#### **Strategic Goal 5**

Build a unified education support service in line with Government policy.

**Fig 1: NEWB Strategic Plan 2010-2011**



## **3.1 Strategic Goal 1**

### **Influence national policy and shape public understanding in relation to school attendance and participation.**

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 recognises that school attendance and participation can be influenced at many levels. The Act enables and requires the NEWB to influence public attitudes to education, to create a body of knowledge about the nature of attendance problems and effective means of prevention, and to disseminate that knowledge to schools.

A key duty of the Board is to translate its experience about attendance matters into advice to the Minister about any policy, planning or legislative initiatives that could be taken to improve attendance and participation.

The Act also envisages that the expert knowledge built up by the NEWB about attendance and behaviour will be used in a strategic way to influence those critical parts of the education system that can impact on attendance, such as curriculum and teacher education.

### **The Strategic Objectives**

#### **NEWB will:**

- Use the full potential of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 to bring about long-term change in the systems, policies, practices and attitudes that can benefit school attendance.
- Provide advice to the Minister about any ways in which school attendance and participation can be strengthened through national policy, planning or legislation, drawing on the Board's experience and expertise in relation to school attendance.
- Strengthen strategic alliances with education partners, education agencies and statutory/non statutory organisations so that they can work with the NEWB to promote attendance and reduce the barriers to attendance and participation in education.
- Disseminate research and good practice knowledge about school attendance and the value of education.
- Raise public awareness and understanding about the importance of school attendance, using effective multimedia strategies.

## **Actions**

- Hold regular briefings with the Department of Education and other Government departments and agencies on issues impacting on attendance and participation.
- Participate in Government reviews on relevant educational issues.
- Publish research and data about school attendance.
- Work with parent organisations and other bodies to raise public and parental awareness about the importance of school attendance and participation.
- Review the NEWB's consultative structures with the Education Partners to ensure they are working well.
- Explore with teacher education colleges how the NEWB's knowledge and expertise can be best used to broaden and deepen teacher training programmes in relation to school attendance.
- Work with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on ways of using curriculum to improve attendance levels and participation.
- Work with the judiciary to strengthen awareness about the prosecution provisions in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

## **3.2 Strategic Goal 2**

### **Provide advice and support to children, parents and schools in order to secure best outcomes for children's school attendance and educational welfare.**

Parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their children attend school. In its interventions with children and parents, the NEWB will respect the importance of hearing the child's voice in school attendance matters, and will recognise the primacy of the parental responsibility for their child's education.

Schools have extensive legal duties under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. These include the duty to have a comprehensive strategy to promote school attendance, prevent attendance problems from emerging and encourage regular attendance among students. Schools are also required to notify children's attendance problems and expulsions to the NEWB. The NEWB is committed to supporting schools to deliver on these responsibilities.

### **The Strategic Objectives**

#### **NEWB will:**

- Place children at the centre when finding solutions to their school attendance problems and make decisions based on their best interests.
- Understand, respect and assist parents and involve them in plans to get children back to school.
- Support schools to undertake their responsibilities under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and assist them in their lead role in preventing poor school attendance.

### **Actions**

#### **Children/Young People**

- Develop good practice for involving children and young people in the plans and the solutions to resolving the barriers to their school attendance and participation,
- Provide NEWB staff with the necessary skills and support to enable them to communicate and engage effectively with children and young people.

#### **Parents**

- Continue to offer guidance and information to parents about school attendance issues through the education helpline and through the Education Welfare Officers Build on the strengths in families so that the plans to resolve children's attendance problems are more likely to be successful.

- Provide information and guidance to parents who wish to educate their children outside of recognised schools.
- Provide NEWB staff with the necessary skills and supports to enable them to communicate and engage effectively with parents, to support vulnerable parents and to offer an inclusive approach to the needs of parents from diverse communities and cultures.
- Ensure that NEWB staff understand the importance of engaging with fathers in promoting their child's school attendance.
- Periodically review standard correspondence to parents and consult with parent bodies to ensure that it is as parent friendly and effective as possible.

### **Schools**

- Support schools to devise and implement school attendance strategies and to take up their responsibilities in relation to school attendance.
- Work with schools to enable them to intervene early to address attendance problems with individual children.
- Work with schools to establish good criteria for identifying children who need NEWB intervention.
- Review the reporting requirements/criteria of schools under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and the reporting guidance from the NEWB.
- Disseminate good practice in the implementation of the NEWB Guidelines Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools. Develop strategies to support the implementation of the Code of Behaviour Guidelines.

### **3.3 Strategic Goal 3**

#### **Make effective use of resources to ensure maximum impact on children's school attendance.**

Research indicates that over 100,000 children are absent from school for over 20 days in the school year (Annual Attendance Report, NEWB, 2005-2006). With a staff of less than 100 Educational Welfare Officers, the NEWB can respond individually to about 8,000 of these children with the most serious attendance problems. The gap between the demand for the Educational Welfare Service and available staffing resources presents the NEWB with a significant challenge.

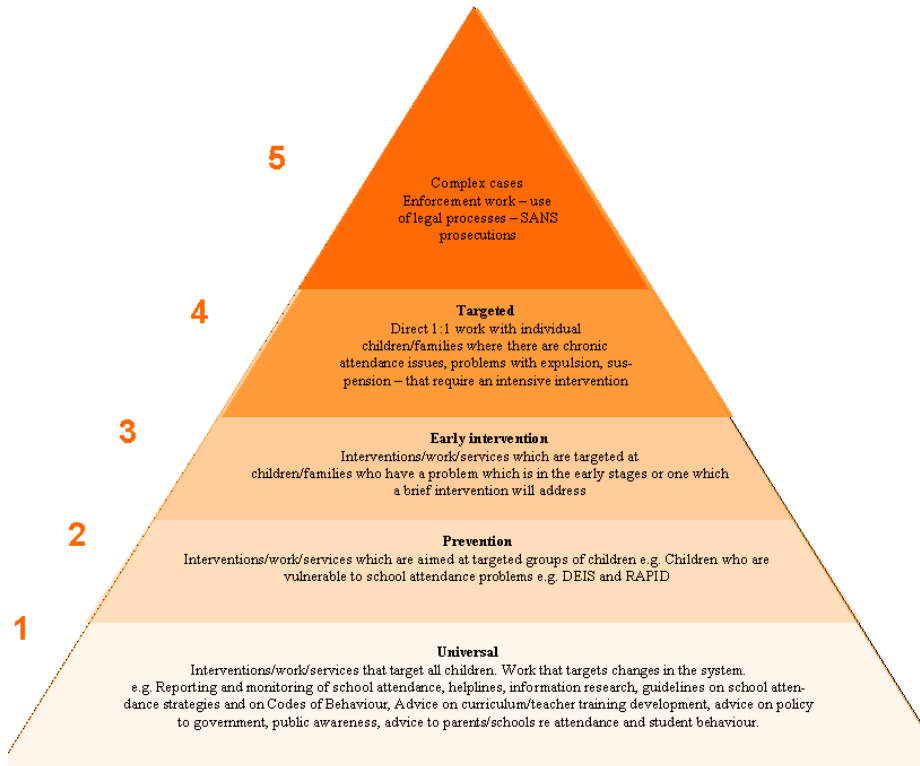
National action to promote school attendance and to remove systemic barriers to attendance (Goal 1), and support for early intervention by parents and schools (Goal 2) are intended to reduce the overall numbers of children referred for individual interventions. The NEWB must also adopt clear priorities for its Educational Welfare staff resource. The Board's approach will be two fold: (1) to prioritise intervention with younger children so that their patterns of attendance have a good chance of improvement and (2) to offer an intensive service to those children and young people who have been assessed as being most in need.

Most children will not require the NEWB intervention during their educational lifetime; for some children, a brief intervention will succeed in resolving their attendance problem. A very small number of children who have complex vulnerabilities will require specialist intensive engagement with the NEWB in partnership with a number of other support agencies. The NEWB is committed to meeting the educational welfare needs of children in the most appropriate way possible while ensuring that the fewest number of children possible end up in need of these supports.

A widely used framework for understanding need (overleaf) illustrates the different levels of need ranging from interventions to address the school attendance of all school age children (level 1), to children at risk of developing school attendance problems (level 2 & 3) to those children and their parents whose attendance and participation in education reflect very complex needs (level 4 & 5).

In addition to its responsibilities for general school attendance, the NEWB has responsibility for the registration of children being educated at home and for ensuring that a child being educated at home is receiving a minimum education. The NEWB is also required to take steps to see that young people under 18 in employment can continue their education and training.

**Framework for understanding Need: adapted from Hardiker (1991)**



## Strategic Objectives

### NEWB will:

- Target services to those children in greatest need.
- Re-direct resources towards early intervention and prevention.
- Lead out on an effective interagency approach to resolving complex attendance issues for children who need an intensive, planned inter-agency approach.
- Make most effective use of prosecution power provided for in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.
- Provide support for parents who are educating their children at home, in line with the requirements of the Educational (Welfare) Act, 2000.
- Explore the scope for enabling 16/17 year olds in employment to benefit from the provisions for their continuing education that are contained in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

## **Actions**

### **Targeting the Educational Welfare Service resources**

- Give priority to EWS interventions with children who are out of school and have no school place; children who have been refused enrolment in a school; children who have failed to transfer from primary to post primary school; children who have been expelled from school; children who are before the courts; children in care who have no school place.
- Give priority to children with serious attendance problems in schools in the DEIS programme.
- Increase the use of brief EWO interventions for specific outcomes with children and families to reduce the need for intensive case work.
- Prioritise interventions with children with poor attendance at primary school and transition to first year post-primary as part of NEWB's preventative strategy.
- Develop effective interagency working to support the most vulnerable children with attendance problems (e.g. children with special educational needs, children in care).

### **Use of prosecution provision in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.**

#### **Actions**

- Explore a model for formal pre-court intervention.
- Make targeted and effective use of School Attendance Notices and prosecutions.
- Evaluate the impact of court experience on school attendance.
- Develop policies and guidance governing the practice of taking prosecutions.

### **Services for children outside recognised schools**

#### **Actions**

- Assist DES to review the Guidelines for the Education of Children outside of Recognised Schools.
- Develop a panel of authorized persons to assess education outside of recognised school.
- Develop Quality Assurance standards for education outside of recognised schools.

- Work with appropriate bodies to increase awareness of the rights and responsibilities of parents who wish to educate their children at home, and in particular, the importance of the assessment and registration processes.

### **Register of young people in employment**

#### **Actions**

- Examine the scope for progressing the establishment of the Register as provided for under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 having regard to resource constraints.
- Prepare a position paper setting out for the DES the costs and benefits associated with the set up of the Register and options to be considered.

## **3.4 Strategic Goal 4**

### **Develop models of good practice in the NEWB; the NEWB will build partnerships within the Education system and with other agencies who can impact positively on school attendance.**

The NEWB is committed to ensuring that the delivery of its services and interventions are in line with best current thinking and good international practice. This is part of its ongoing strategy to ensure quality, effectiveness and value for money. This commitment is advanced by testing new models of service in the field, by strengthening and building staff competencies, by investing in data gathering and analysis in order to build a solid evidence base for its work, and, within the resources available, by undertaking research.

The NEWB affirms the importance of interagency work in ensuring that children with attendance difficulties have the benefit of professional collaboration and co-ordination. The NEWB will work with schools and other agencies who have roles and responsibilities in respect of school attendance and child welfare in order to make most effective use of the combined and different strengths of each party. This interagency collaboration is mandated in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and is a key strand of Government policy for the delivery of quality public services.

### **Strategic Objectives**

#### **NEWB will:**

- Ensure interventions and services reflect best international practice, are evidence based, and continuously monitored, using standards that can be quality assured and outcomes that can be measured.
- Ensure coordinated and effective joint working with the Education partners and integrated with the broader family of children services.

### **Actions**

#### **Quality Practice**

- Further develop EWO guidance and practice, to ensure standardizing of practice.
- Develop, document and standardize the child's journey of contact with the Educational Welfare Service from point of referral to closure of contact.
- Further develop quality assurance standards to support best practice.
- Refine outcome measures to enable the impact of the service to be evaluated.

- Prompt and facilitate schools and other services to engage early and in a structured manner with a child's attendance difficulties.
- Conclude the pilot testing of a new case management framework for planning individual interventions and extend its use across the service once the evaluation can demonstrate better outcomes for children.
- Implement the revised professional supervision model and provide training and development for educational welfare staff to support its effective use.
- Develop a two-way communication with clients and stakeholders including a complaints procedure as part of a quality feedback mechanism.

### **Partnerships with others**

- Review, profile and define the nature of the EWO role and how that role can work in relationship with others.
- Focus EWO intervention as part of a continuum of intervention with the school and other support services.
- Develop an effective model of collaborative attendance planning with other agencies and support services to ensure a tiered, co-ordinated plan for each child with serious attendance and school placement issues.
- Contribute to the development, implementation and review of agreed working arrangements/protocols with key services and agencies in education to ensure most efficient and effective coordinated services for children with attendance difficulties under the leadership of the DES.
- Ensure that leaders and managers in NEWB have experience, skills and vision they need to lead integrated processes with people from different backgrounds.
- Continue and develop engagement and participation on Children Services Committees to ensure joined up planning and delivery of services to children in identified areas.
- Develop protocols with HSE and with the Irish Youth Justice Service to enable engagement about children who are a cause for concern between the NEWB and these agencies.

## **3.5 Strategic Goal 5**

### **Build a unified education support service in line with Government policy.**

A policy decision has been taken to extend the remit of the NEWB to include responsibility for retention of children at school and for developing responses for children at risk of early school leaving.

The Board's new responsibilities include responsibility for the Home School Community Liaison Programme, School Completion Programme and the Visiting Teachers for Travellers. Under this extended remit, the Board is charged with developing a single strategic approach to school attendance, participation and retention, reflecting the strengths of each of these services.

The NEWB is committed to taking up this new remit and in so doing, to offering a cohesive and integrated support service to children, families and schools. The Board will design a strategic approach in partnership with new colleagues, in a manner that will build on combined strengths, experience and expertise.

### **The Strategic Objective**

The NEWB will lead the implementation of the Board's extended remit, and will plan in partnership with colleagues from HSCL, SCP and VTST for the development of a single strategic approach to maximising school attendance, participation and school retention.

### **Strategic actions**

- Design a change management process in line with evidence from research and practice.
- Establish transitional structures and plan to implement the change process.
- Establish baseline information to measure the impact of the change.
- Ensure continuity and continued delivery of existing services.

## **4. Ensuring the implementation of the Strategic Plan**

The NEWB will continue to build organisational capacity, and supporting staff to deliver a quality service, in line with the Strategic Goals and actions in this Strategic Plan.

The NEWB will strengthen its effectiveness through integrated planning at local, regional and national level.

The NEWB will invest in leadership development and strengthening management capacity.

The NEWB will ensure staff are offered appropriate training and continuing professional development.

The NEWB will nurture the innovation, creativity and enthusiasm of individual managers and staff in the organisation and promote a strong culture of individual performance accountability.

The NEWB will define the outcomes it plans to achieve, and gather data to enable it to evaluate performance in respect of those outcomes. The NEWB will report regularly on progress towards achieving these outcomes.

Appropriate governance structures and accountability will be in place at all levels in the organisation.

The NEWB will pursue opportunities for service efficiencies and for shared services where there is a clear benefit to be achieved and better use of resources.

The NEWB will ensure that strategies are put in place for recognising and managing any risk to the organisation in fulfilling its mission and providing a quality service.

The NEWB will evaluate organisational systems and structures to ensure their fitness for purpose.

The NEWB will communicate information about its work, objectives and achievements to partners, stakeholders and service users in an open, effective and timely manner.

## **Appendix 1 - External consultation process**

### **Meetings held**

#### ***Organisation***

Department of Education and Science

NEWB

Office of the Minister for Children (OMC)

HSE

ASTI

Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI)

National Parents Council (Primary)

Barnardos

Irish Traveller Movement (ITM)

IMPACT

INTO

### **Submissions received**

#### ***Organisation***

National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals

National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

Sr. Eileen Randles

Ombudsman for Children

ASTI

JMB AMCSS Secretariat of Secondary Schools

ACCS (Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools)

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Barnardos

Combat Poverty Agency

POBAL

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)

Equality Authority

Children's Rights Alliance

IMPACT

INTO