**Title of Paper:** Building Evidence for Practice on How to Support Adolescents through a Comparative Tracking of their Perceived Social Support Outcomes.

**Author**: Dr. Cormac Forkan

**Organisation:** Child and Family Research Centre, School of Political Science and Sociology, National University of Ireland, Galway.

**Abstract**

Considerable public expenditure is invested in a plethora of community based youth and family interventions in Ireland, on an annual basis. One of the primary arguments underpinning this endeavour is that early intervention with young people and families is a successful way of enabling the positive development of participants in these projects. However, little evidence exists to-date surrounding outcomes for adolescents attending differing community based youth and family projects in Ireland. However, from a policy perspective the publication of the *Agenda for Children’s Services* in 2007 by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, began the process, albeit more organic than structured, of encouraging community based youth and family projects to develop systems to track outcomes data.

Considering this gap in knowledge the author engaged in a study with two practice sites to build evidence on how to support adolescents experiencing adversity. This involved a comparative tracking study of the adolescents’ perceived social support outcomes while attending either a community-based youth project (direct work with young people) or a family support project (direct work with parents and young people). By developing a conceptual model using literature on adolescent development, social support theory, parenting and evidence-based practice and outcomes in youth and family interventions, the author was able to introduce a *tentative practice design framework.* This framework addresses how future family support service design and provision can utilise perceived social support measurement and enlistment, as a tool in an evidence-based approach.