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Name- Rachel Mescall-Fitzpatrick

Company- Carambola

Unit B5, Annacotty Business Park, Dublin Road, Limerick

Submission for National Planning Framework

Health and wellbeing

What would Health and Wellbeing look like for the children in disadvantaged school in 2040?

The children would be afforded the same access to and have the same knowledge as their peers in non-disadvantaged area.

They would feel connected to the world outside their area as health services would be made readily available to them and if they couldn't get to health services, the health services would come to them.

School lunches in Irish primary schools

- In 2040 school lunches would be made available to all children in Irish Primary schools not just those in disadvantaged areas.
- Whilst those in disadvantaged areas need lunches because many are below the poverty line so are some people struggling in 'advantaged areas', their struggle is hidden.
- Many parents are time poor so struggle to get ready in the morning
- Many children come to school with no breakfast eaten for a variety of reasons.
- Solution = take some of the children's allowance and put into school food, breakfast clubs, lunches and after school clubs using only healthy food.
- Ensure all suppliers are vetted as no facilities exist at present in Irish primary schools to cook or prepare food, either we build the facilities or ensure only the best suppliers are used.
- Only healthy food allowed, no fizzy drinks, sugary treats or fatty foods with high salt contents.
- Fresh food, fruit, vegetables, dairy etc
- Treats only on Fridays and celebration days
- Cooking classes need to feature in Irish society, primary and secondary schools. By 2040 everyone could be micro waving only and the art of cooking will then be lost. There are many children, teenagers who cannot cook, bake or boil. People who can't cook will go to places to eat so as not to have to cook at home.
- Canteens in Irish primary schools as they have in Belgium, Finland and other European countries where only healthy food is served in the middle of the day as a hot meal. In secondary schools, the children should be allowed cook for their fellow students as a lesson and as life skill.
- Whilst at present no canteens exist then healthy bagged lunches delivered by reputable lunch companies that have children's best interest at heart is an excellent alternative.
- Schools can ensure a healthy eating policy by using lunch companies.

Restaurants, shops, cafes

- With regards to disadvantaged areas most if not all of the cafes, shops and restaurants sell high fat, high sugar, high salt foods.
- We need no fry zones around schools to protect children.
- There needs to be access to some form of healthy food that doesn't cause health problems.
- Solutions would be no special offers i.e. bottle of coke with pringles, curried wedges and free drink etc allowed over certain amount of calories or grams of sugar, salt or fat.
- Each person working in a café, restaurant or shop must be trained in Health in subjects such as calories, salt and sugar levels and what's ok and what's not.
- They are being trained in Health and safety anyway why not broadened the training around health, not just food temp, storage and pathogens.
- Every supermarket should have a dietician / nutritionist available to their customers so customers can ask questions as they buy products. Let's take the dieticians and nutritionists out of offices and made available to the people.
- We also need to cap the numbers of cafes, shops and restaurants opening in Ireland. If we really are serious about obesity and chronic health problems and look to the mistakes made in other countries how many cafes and restaurants does one small area need?
- Every petrol station is now a restaurant, with not just one food outlet in them but many food outlets, you just need to visit a plaza on a motorway to see just how like America we have become. The human body cannot discern how many calories it has eaten. It doesn't know when it has eaten over 2000 calories. Overloading with food is easy to do when faced with food outlets everywhere if these food outlets sell calorie rich, energy dense food.

DEIS rural

- Can be isolating to live in rural Ireland particularly if you are ill, old or below the poverty line. Putting in areas and venues for people to connect and feel part of their community is very important. Using existing buildings such as the school hall if infrastructure planning is a problem. Health classes, physical activities, social gatherings.
- Scouts, brownies, sports clubs opening their doors and arms to the older person so connections are made.
- Gardening classes where fruits and vegetables are grown, communal farms for people to meet. Existing farms and farmers opening up part of their farms to local communities as areas to meet, do some farming, help out, and connect.
- Mobile shops so rural people can have access to fresh produce even once a week. Tesco saw a niche and created a delivery service that goes out to rural areas.

Urban areas

- We are not going to have more 'green areas' in certain urban areas but we can create 'safe spaces', make cul de sacs of some streets. A cul de sac would mean children could play more safely and the older people could leave their houses and walk around safer. There are few safe spaces for kids to play. Now the older people that live in towns miss not seeing or talking and interacting with kids and neighbours as people move out to suburbia. Let's not make the car king of every situation. Let's make people more important.
- There is an estate in Limerick called Garryowen, the largest estate in Limerick and it has no community centre. This should be a priority in any estate especially one as large as this.

Physical Activity

- In Galway's Westside there is an excellent communal area with a running track, walking track, green space, and playground. Great thinking and planning here and there needs to be at least one in all larger urban areas to start and then made available in all areas.
- When the Markets field was re-opened in Limerick and what an excellent venue, why not put a running track in there. How many of this amazing venues lie idle for weeks and open once every 2 weeks for a few hours for 1 match to take place? A playground in there and seating area for the older person would have made it a great space. Let's use what we have better. A missed opportunity.

Department of Health

A disconnect can sometimes exist between Government departments and what's happening on the ground. That's why surveys like this can be good source of information, but is there people going into communities and doing this survey. A lot of people may not have access to computers, be illiterate etc and voices are not being heard.

A disconnect at this level makes putting the correct framework together for all peoples in Ireland very difficult. There may be language barriers as our country is a changing one.

- In 2040 the DOH is focusing on Health prevention and health promotion.
- We have 700 dieticians in Ireland today some full time, some part time, how are such a low number of people expected to deal with all the diets around chronic illness in Ireland with an aging population, cancer going to 1 in 2, obesity and diabetes on the rise?.
- A children currently in a disadvantaged area identified by the Public Health nurse as obese will be lucky if they get 1 to one and half visits with a dietician. Why is the situation in Ireland that in order to cure obesity you must first become obese? As Einstein says you can't solve the problem from the level of the problem. In 2040 as we increase the number of available health professionals or health leaders, let's not tie up members of the HSE always a child would be seen when overweight not obese.
- As Dr. Joao Breda, Programme Manager, WHO said on his last visit to Ireland when asked what Ireland's downfall was when it came to tackling obesity, he said lack of trained professionals.
- We need more trained professional so upskilling existing professionals is a must.

Studying Health in Ireland

- You can only study Dietetics in Dublin or Belfast, only full time. There is no access to Dietetics courses part-time, on line or for anyone interested but working full time. There are very few health promotion courses currently in Ireland. The Masters in Health Promotion course in UL didn't run last year due to a lack of uptake and numbers. We could be filling these courses. Imagine in 2040 all health care professionals, teachers, community leaders upskilled in tackling obesity and chronic illness.
- Health Promotion and Health prevention as a way forward. We spent around €78m on Diabetic amputation operations. What if we took a few of that million and put it into Diabetes prevention through education and better screening.
- For all doctors and nurses longer nutrition training not just a few weeks at college.
- Let's go online with the CPD training so no need to spend more on sending out trainers and allow health care professionals to do the training at work or at their desk.

- Let's use our National broadcaster RTE as a knowledge network. Put on programmes for young and old alike. Like the PBS channel in America or BBC2 in Britain. Bring back Popeye! We can all start eating spinach!

Broadband

- To help those ill, older, living in rural areas, and areas where members of their families have emigrated feel connected better broadband is needed for Skype, facebook etc.
- Not having good connection on your phone or computer can lead to feel isolated and doesn't help with mental health as they can feel so alone.
- Not being able to leave your home or have places to go to can lead to isolation. Lack of transport, no visitors, no connections. We know how important feeling connected is to good health.

Mental health

- Currently we have a mental health crisis in this country, suicide rates high, high numbers of mental illness, Alzheimer's, dementia etc and like a lot of areas we are under resourced and doing our best with what we have but we need better facilities. In 2040 more mental health awareness, less stigma attached, more education around the subject.
- Teaching in secondary schools around self-harm and suicide prevention particularly most at risk groups, men, travellers etc.
- Emotional Intelligence classes in primary schools with mindfulness. Studies show that it is EQ not IQ that makes us successful. Getting children through school with their self-esteem intact is what will set them up for the rest of their lives. We have an emphasis on A's and Bs and this will not secure them good mental and emotional well-being. Harvard study shows having good IQ only gives a 6% chance of job success.
- Emotional intelligence is the ability **to understand one's emotional make-up** and **the emotional make-up of others** and to **use insight from this knowledge to effectively manage and regulate one's own emotions** to **make good decisions and to act effectively**
- Having good emotional health allows for
 - ❖ Better mental health
 - ❖ Better relationships
 - ❖ Better communication with self
 - ❖ Better communication with others
 - ❖ Better general health as a result of improved coping mechanisms around stress and conflict

Thank you for taking the time to read this.