

**Memorandum of Understanding**  
*between the*  
**Central Statistics Office**  
*and the*  
**Department of Children and Youth Affairs**  
*relating to the*  
**Growing Up in Ireland Survey**

**Background to Growing Up in Ireland (GUI)**

1. The establishment of a National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland (NLSCI) was approved by Government in March 2002 (SI80/20/10/0528). Responsibility for the study was assigned to the Office for the Minister of Children. The study, now known as Growing Up in Ireland (GUI), was commissioned in 2006 as a two-cohort study, tracking the development of two nationally representative samples of children: Cohort '98 (formerly known as the 'Child Cohort', born in 1998) and Cohort '08 (formerly known as the 'Infant Cohort' born in 2008).
2. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2006 set out the arrangements agreed between the CSO and the Department of Health and Children for the study to be conducted within the framework of the Statistics Act (1993). Section 11 (1) of the Act empowers the Central Statistics Office to "*make arrangements with other public authorities and persons for the collection, compilation, extraction or dissemination of information for statistical purposes*".
3. From its establishment, the aim of GUI was to examine the factors which support or undermine the well-being of children in families, in order to inform effective and responsive policy making and service development. It was envisaged that GUI could be extended over time providing invaluable policy relevant data over the lifecycle.
4. Following competitive tendering, GUI has been undertaken by the Economic Social and Research Institute (ESRI) ('the contractor') under contract with the Department. Phase 1 of GUI took place from 2006-14. Phase 2 took place from 2015-19. The contract for Phase 2 included a provision for a three-year extension, from 2020-22.
5. In April 2019, Government endorsed a contract extension for Phase 2 and approved, in principle, the transfer of GUI to the CSO by 2023, subject to the development and agreement of a design brief for the next phase of GUI, agreement of the terms of the transfer, and achievement of the necessary funding approval.

**This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**

6. The 2006 MoU was designed to support the operation of the GUI via a contracted arrangement. Pursuant to the Government decision of April 2019, it is now appropriate to revise and update that document. This MoU replaces the 2006 version, and specifies the following:

- a. The legal framework for Growing Up in Ireland.
- b. The roles of parties to the MoU.
- c. Data governance arrangements relating to data from Phases 1 and 2 of the GUI Study.
- d. Roles and responsibilities of the CSO and DCYA as they relate to the delivery of the remainder of GUI Phase 2 and the GUI Phase 2 Contract Extension.
- e. Funding, governance and operational roles and responsibilities of the Department and the CSO in relation to the preparation and implementation of GUI Phase 3:
  - i. Transition governance structures for GUI to the CSO (2019 to 2022);
  - ii. Planning and preparation for GUI Phase 3 (2020-2022), GUI Phase 3 data collection and fieldwork (2023 onwards);
  - iii. Consultation and stakeholder engagement;
  - iv. Finance and Human Resources.

For the purposes of this MoU the following terminology is employed in relation to GUI Phase 3:

7. The “GUI Survey” refers to the elements of GUI being undertaken by the CSO under the authority of the Statistics Act, 1993. This encompasses all stages of the survey life cycle as defined by the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), namely: Identify Needs, Design, Build, Collect, Process, Analyse and Disseminate. The CSO will ensure that the survey process is informed by the fullest possible engagement with key stakeholders, in particular, the DCYA.
8. The “GUI Study” refers to those elements of GUI being undertaken by the DCYA. These encompass: engaging with policy and scientific stakeholders; consulting with children/young people; identification of research needs, data priorities and policy objectives; consulting on instrumentation development and design; enhancing awareness of GUI; building capacity in GUI data use; promoting the use of GUI data for research and policy development; and generating research analyses of the data in the GUI study. The DCYA will engage with the CSO throughout these processes.
9. The phrase “GUI Phase 3” refers to both survey and study in combination. Appendix 1 illustrates these concepts further.
10. This Memorandum of Understanding is subject to regular review.

## **A. Legal Framework**

11. Section 13 of the Statistics Act stipulates that “the Director General shall have the sole responsibility for and be independent in the exercise of the functions of deciding:
  - a. the statistical methodology and professional statistical standards used by the Office;
  - b. the content of statistical releases and publications issued by the Office; and
  - c. the timing and methods of dissemination of statistics compiled by the Office.”
12. As outlined in paragraph 7, the CSO will be legally responsible for all elements of the Survey life cycle including:

- a. the development of the survey instrument(s) with input from the sponsoring Department drawing on the relevant consultation groups;
  - b. the design of a national survey that can, as far as possible, meet the Sponsoring Department's requirements and national user needs while seeking to provide for inter-wave, intergenerational and international comparability;
  - c. the conduct, including all associated methodological issues, of the survey;
  - d. the preparation, including content and timing, of written text of report(s) and analysis published by the CSO; and
  - e. Preparation of anonymised microdata files to be lodged with ISSDA (or any successor) and of researcher microdata files in line with the CSO's policy on access to data by researchers.
13. As referenced in paragraph 11.d, the CSO will be solely responsible for publishing the survey results in line with section 13(a) to (c) of the Statistics Act (1993). This will take the form of releases and publications that contains appropriate accessible content, primarily descriptive statistics. In designing statistical outputs the CSO will be mindful of all inputs on stakeholder needs elicited during consultations.
  14. Separate mechanisms as appropriate to meet the need for additional research will be facilitated subject to the provisions of the Statistics Act, 1993. Access to anonymised data, micro data research files and protocols for release of data will be administered under the provisions of the Statistics Act (1993) and will conform to the highest statistical standards as well as being consistent with the Data Protection Act (2018) and/or General Data Protection Regulation (2018).
  15. Consistent with General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection requirements, the CSO will act as sole controller of Survey data associated with Phase 3.
  16. The Director General, as the Accounting Officer of the CSO and based on his statutory independence on statistical matters as set out under section 13 Statistics Act 1993, is solely responsible for the allocation of resources in the CSO. The CSO will create appropriate internal project governance.

## **B. The Parties to the MoU**

17. The parties to this MoU are the Department of Children and Youth Affairs ('the Department') and the Central Statistics Office (CSO). From 2023 the Department will act as the sponsoring department for Growing Up in Ireland. As the Sponsor, DCYA will be responsible for the overall development of the GUI Study and will: identify the views of children and young people, and scientific and policy user needs in order to inform the development of the Survey; engage with the CSO during the Survey development process; and work to ensure that GUI data is used for research and policy development subject to the provisions of the Statistics Act, 1993. The CSO will be responsible for all elements of the Survey life cycle<sup>1</sup>, and will engage with DCYA during the development of the Study. The Department will work with the CSO throughout all periods (contract extension, transition and post transfer) in securing necessary funding to support the continued operation of GUI in line with requirements as agreed from time to time.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/gsbpm/>

**C. Data governance arrangements relating to Phases 1 and 2 of the GUI Study.**

18. The provisions of the 2006 MoU continue to apply in relation to the treatment of data collected and processed in Phase 1 and Phase 2. Specifically, the CSO and the Department will ensure that all individual level data obtained in any way during the course of the Study shall be used solely for statistical purposes in strict conformity with Part V of the Statistics Act – in cases of doubt the CSO shall be consulted and the judgement of the Director General shall be final.
19. The Department and the CSO shall ensure the transfer of GUI legacy data to CSO (period 2019 to 2022).

**D. Roles and responsibilities as they relate to the delivery of the remainder of GUI Phase 2 and the GUI Phase 2 Contract Extension**

20. As per the 2006 MoU (attached), the CSO will continue to be directly and publicly associated with the Study throughout GUI Phase 2 and GUI Phase 2 Contract Extension. A representative of the CSO shall be a member of the Governance group(s) which have operational and strategic oversight of the Study.
21. The Department, who engage the Contractor to undertake these Phases of the Study, remains bound by the same requirements as pertained under the 2006 MoU regarding systems and processes to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the data (micro data, aggregate data, metadata etc.), in compliance with the Statistics Act (1993).
22. The Department, who engage the Contractor as Processor of GUI data, shall ensure that the Contractor is bound by all relevant provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (2018), in particular the provisions of Article 28.
23. Prior to obtaining access to individual level data collected for the purposes of GUI Phase 2, all persons engaged in activities associated with GUI Phase 2, shall be appointed Officers of Statistics in accordance with Sections 20 and 21 of the Statistics Act (1993) subject to the agreement of the Director General of the CSO.
24. Under the provisions of Section 30 of the Statistics Act, the Director General of the CSO may, as necessary and appropriate, facilitate access to records available to public authorities that are required for the conduct of GUI Phase 2.
25. Access to individual data for the purposes of conducting “Nested Studies” may be proposed by the Phase 2 GUI Steering Group, subject to the agreement of the Director General of the CSO.

## **E. Funding, governance and operational roles and responsibilities of the Department and the CSO in relation to the preparation and implementation of GUI Phase 3.**

### **E(i) Transition governance structures for GUI to the CSO (2019 to 2022)**

26. A tripartite CSO, Department and Contractor GUI Transfer Project Lead Team has been established to agree proposals in relation to the transfer of the GUI survey from the Contractor to the CSO.
27. Both parties to this MOU shall work to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to support efficient transition planning and execution. If funding is unavailable the study and/or survey will be suspended.
28. A tripartite Design Brief Sub-Group made proposals to the GUI Transfer Project Lead Team on the design of GUI from 2023, including new waves of the existing cohorts along with a commitment to explore the feasibility of establishing a new birth cohort as proposed in *First 5, A Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families*. These proposals were accepted by the GUI Transfer Project Lead Team subject to detailed transition planning, co-ordination on costs estimates and funding approval.
29. A tripartite Human Resources Sub-Group has been established to propose arrangements to facilitate the transfer of GUI knowledge and expertise from the current GUI team as appropriate.
30. A tripartite Survey Operations and IT Sub-Group has been established to make proposals for the transfer of survey operations from the contractor to the CSO to ensure business continuity and that all survey operational requirements are addressed in tandem with the transition of the Survey. This sub-group is responsible for reviewing the current process of the GUI Survey end to end, i.e., from questionnaire design to the dissemination of the Anonymised Microdata File and Research Microdata Files as well as the final dataset which comprises the data from which all outputs are generated.
31. It is at the discretion of the GUI Transfer Project Lead Team to request additional sub-groups, when necessary and appropriate, to facilitate the transition of the GUI Survey.

### **E(ii) Planning and preparation for GUI Phase 3 data collection and fieldwork (2023 onwards)**

32. Subject to detailed transition planning, co-ordination on costs estimates, and the provision of necessary funding, and compliance with all relevant legislation, the Department and the CSO will implement the Design Brief roadmap agreed in principle by the Transfer Project Lead Team in March 2020. The CSO would then undertake a schedule of GUI Surveys from 2023 as outlined in Appendix 2.

### **E(iii) Consultation and stakeholder engagement for GUI Phase 3**

33. Input by a range of public interests is essential to the future of GUI especially those of young people. The voice of the child needs to be central to the process, in line with government commitments in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, and its constituent strategies. Inclusion of policy and service delivery perspectives is also essential to ensure that GUI continues to provide relevant information that meets the objective of

providing evidence for the creation of effective and responsive policies and services for children and families.

34. The Department shall be responsible for establishing and chairing a Scientific and Research Committee. This committee shall be comprised of relevant experts who can inform a continued focus on research topics relevant to all aspects of children's lives in the Study. This group will contribute to ensuring that Study developments are informed by national and international research literature and expertise and remain firmly based on a sound conceptual framework. Coherence with other research initiatives especially longitudinal cohort studies will also be a key focus for this group, facilitating linkage possibilities over time. It is essential that the voice of the child remains central to the study and the Department will ensure that consultations with a broad spectrum of children and young people should be undertaken. The Department should also be responsible for the establishment of a Research Ethics Committee.
35. A Policy Liaison Group will be established as an information sharing and advisory mechanism and will provide input into the research objectives of the Study and content of the Survey. The Liaison Group will consist of representatives from the CSO, the Department, other Departments and agencies as appropriate as well as specific non-governmental organisations and other relevant experts, national and international. The Group will be chaired by the Department. It will act as a forum for sharing information and providing advice to ensure the continuing policy relevance of the Study.
36. A CSO-DCYA Steering Group will be established to advise on the strategic direction of the Survey, the development of the survey instruments and to review progress of the Survey against agreed milestones. It will meet on a regular basis, at least four times per annum, and will also consider funding related issues as the project evolves.
37. Nothing in the foregoing shall be construed as superseding the independence of the Director General of the CSO in respect of statistical matters. The terms of reference of all groups established will reflect the statutory basis of the survey.

#### **E(iv) Finance and Human Resources**

38. For each year of the Transition project, the Department will work to ensure that adequate project funding, reflecting the agreed financing requirements compiled by the CSO, is made available as part of the annual Estimates process. For 2023 and onwards, each party to this MOU will engage with the Department of Public Expenditure directly to negotiate respective vote allocations covering both Study and Survey needs, commensurate with meeting agreed user requirements. The parties will cooperate in this exercise, having regard to the close intersection between their roles in the overall GUI process. In the event that funding ceases to be made available the project will be suspended.

**Signed, on behalf of the Central Statistics Office:**

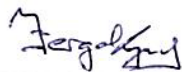


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Pádraig Dalton, Director General

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020

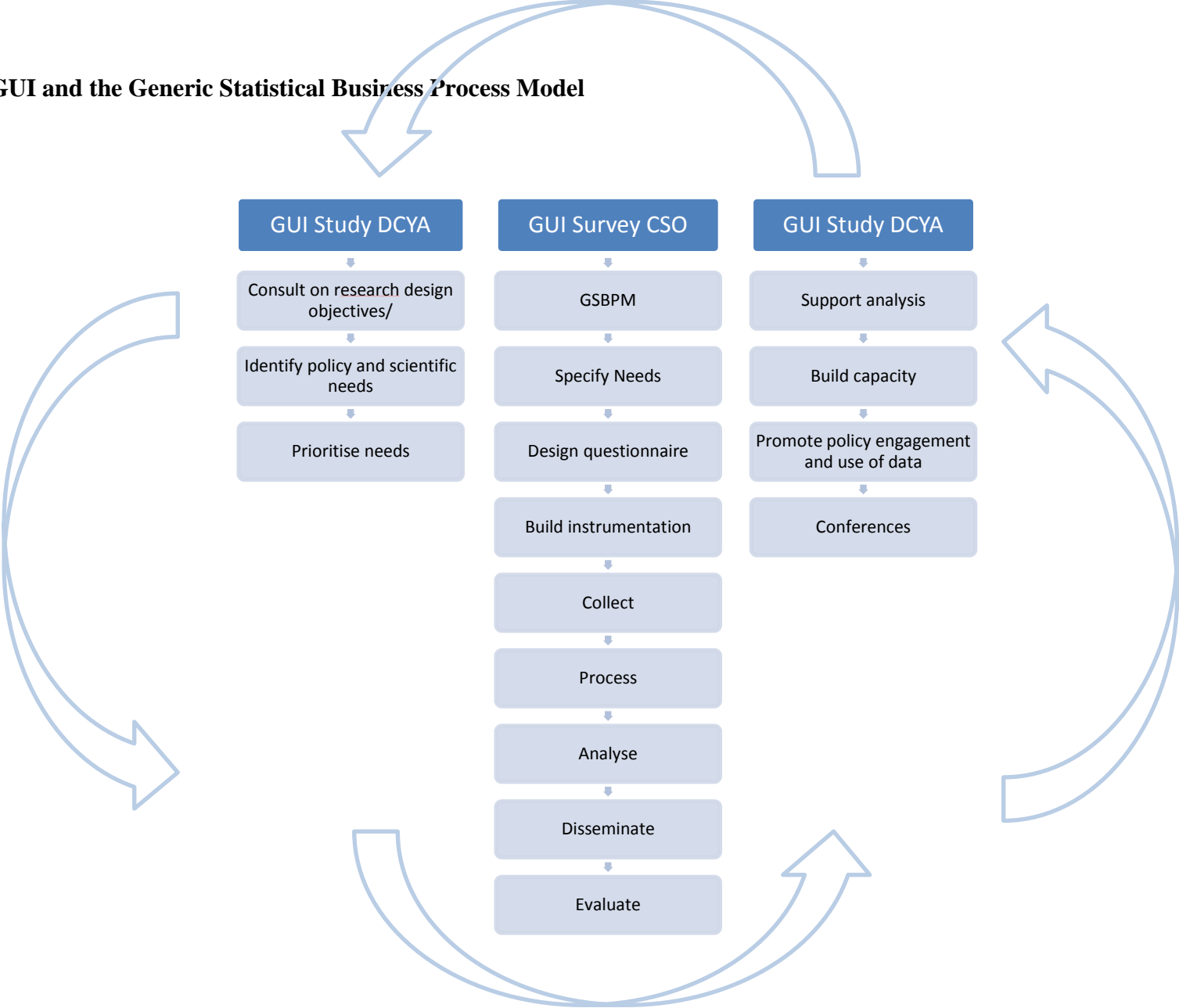
**Signed, on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs:**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Fergal Lynch', is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Fergal Lynch, Secretary General

Date: 11 August 2020

Appendix 1 GUI and the Generic Statistical Business Process Model



Appendix 2: GUI Survey Schedule by cohort and age at data collection

Year	1998 Cohort	2008 Cohort	2024 Cohort
2023	25 years		
2024			1 year
2025		17/18 years	
2026			3 years
2027	29 years		
2028		20 years	5 years
2029			
2030			7 years