



Early Learning Initiative

National College of Ireland

Keeping The Connection

NCI Research Day 2024

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*Supporting parents, communities and schools
in the education of children*



ELI Background



Working in partnership with Government and local communities since 2007 to support educational journeys and achievements in marginalised communities by offering parent and child learning support programs.



About Stretch Graduate

Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Community Action Research during the COVID-19 Pandemic revealed a gap in ELI programmes. Further research confirms the importance of the programme as a lasting connection between ELI and the programme families.
Program Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhance parents' skills and confidence as their child's primary educators.Encourage and support parental involvement in the children's holistic development.Support parents in improving and/or maintaining their own wellbeing.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dublin North-East Inner City
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Vulnerable families with children 4-6 years old
Program Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Weekly/bi-weekly home visits in person to most vulnerable families.Termly calls to families with lower needsEducational family events

Importance of Stretch Graduate to PC+ Families

- Offers a safe place to help families navigate the system
- Vulnerable position, low level of security
- Increase in children's additional needs
- No family support, language barrier
- Racism, discrimination, violence
- Signposting to other services
- Find solutions together
- Trusted relationships
- Ongoing support
- Social isolation



Origins of Stretch Graduate

March
2020

National survey reported challenges faced by families and discrepancies in technology and schools supports (Kelly, Fleming, Demirel and O'Hara 2020)

Mid
2020

Closure of schools and societal lockdown

Late
2020

ELI responds by reaching out to PC+ families in local community to understand what supports were needed

**ELI pre-pilot survey
(April 2020 - Nov
2021)**

revealed that:

Less than half of families (44.29% (n=48) reported to be doing well/very well with their children home from school.

Almost two thirds of parents (64.3% (n=25) stated the quality of their home learning environment was negative.

Methodology

April 2020 - November 2021: initial approach/recruitment

- Standardised questionnaire
- Parents of school going children over 4 years old (N=167)
- Participants were graduates of ELI's ParentChild+ Home Visiting programme.

By December 2021: Need is identified, program is created, and families are categorised according to level of need. Program launches!

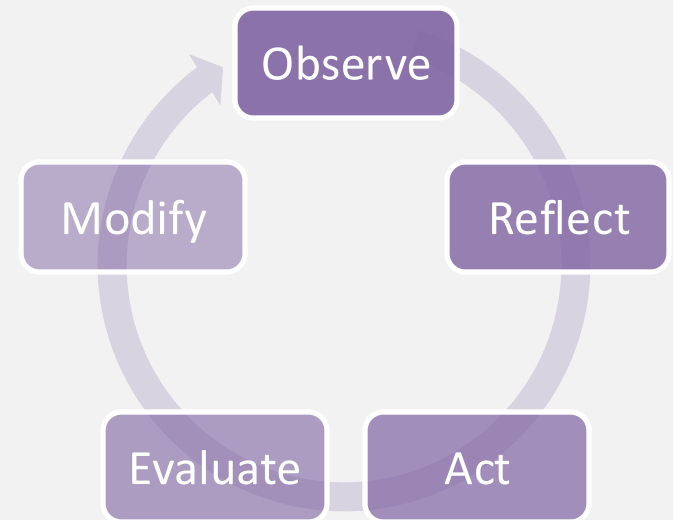
Ongoing data gathering and evaluation activities includes:

- Intake forms
- Home visitor reflections
- Call reflections
- End of year evaluations (calls and visits)
- Transition evaluations (between calls and visits)
- Event parent & child evaluations

Looking Ahead

- Continuous evolution of the program and data gathering methodologies and program refinements using Community Action Research methodology and the data gathering tools above.

Community Action Research



- Enable continuous evolution and improvement (McNiff, 2010)
- Evolve and change according to the educational needs of the community.
- Stakeholder involvement supports successful management of change and creates a learning community (Senge and Scharmer, 2001).

Learnings/Evolution



More calls



More events



Strong Connection



Stretch Graduate Programme Evolution



Impact Since Programme Outset in 2021



98% of parents found the resources brought by the home visitor useful.

100% parents reported that they felt supported by their Home Visitor



100% parents would recommend the programme to a friend.

Home Visitors reflected that on most visits **both parents and children were doing well or very well**



Parents reported Stretch Graduate benefiting their child in areas such as:

speech

language

literacy

social skills

100% parents reported learning new approaches and ideas in which they could improve their interactions with their child.

Impact Continued

- **Year 1 (2021-22)** almost **25% of families** high needs
- **Year 2 (2022-23)** less than **10% of families** high needs
 - Many families transitioned to check-in calls as their circumstances improve.
 - **From 71 Calls 69% parents doing well or very well**
- **Year 3 (2023-24)** ELI observes family circumstances continuing to improve
 - Families continue to transition to check-in calls
 - Majority of families are currently doing well
 - **From 133 calls, 86% of parents doing well or very well**

Note: Number of families with children with additional needs has increased by almost 50% since programme start in 2021.



Stretch Graduate Parent Quotes

“The Home Visitor coming to our home, it was great to talk to another adult person and to get advice and access information I would not have known how to get myself.”

“It's nice that the programme includes the family as a whole.”

“The programme is very helpful. It showed me how to read and play with my son, and how to help him learn through play. I also got a lot of information and tips about my child too.”

Future of Stretch Graduate



Monitor



Observe & Record



Keep the Connection



Longitudinal Action Research

- Identify trends in the communities ELI serves
- Identify family's needs
- Strengthen ties with families, local services and schools
- Identify gaps in programming/guide programme development
- Gather data for grant funding applications, conference presentations, annual reports and other publications
- Demonstrates efficacy of the work of ELI
- Data can also be benchmarked against other research such as the Growing Up Ireland Study and other statistics to offer further insights into programme performance against nationally tracked data and trends.



Keeping the Connection



Home Visits



Check in Calls



Events



Strategic Relevance for NCI



- ❖ 1.1 To deliver a distinctive higher education student experience aligned with mission to change lives through education that is built on access, academic excellence, enterprise focus, community engagement and social justice



- ❖ 3.5 To align teaching, innovation and research with our academic and institutional strategies, our mission to change lives through education, and UN Sustainable Development Goals.



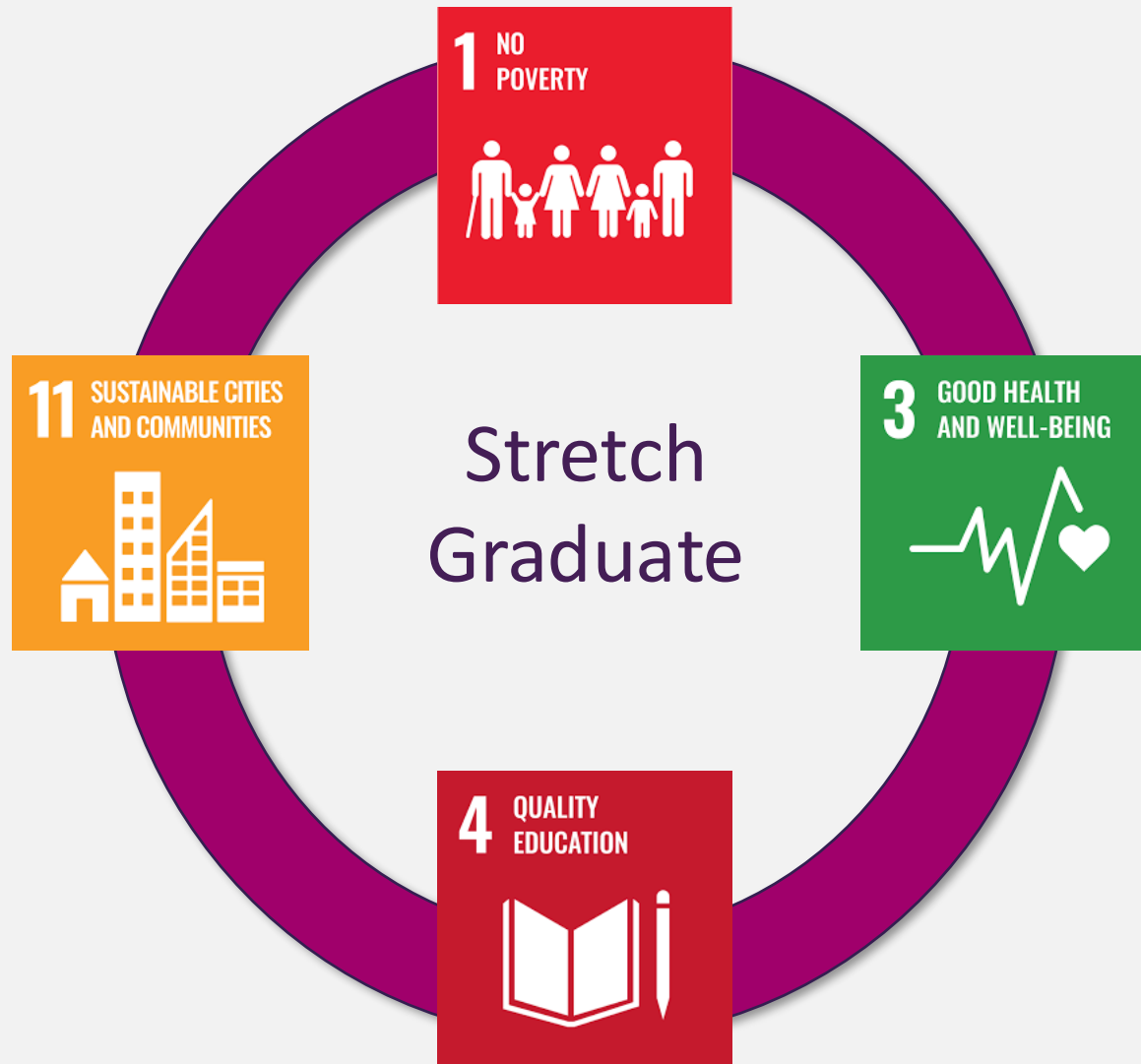
- ❖ 4.3 Research will prioritize the informing of pedagogy and student learning within the classroom, the programmes and impact of the Early Learning Initiative and collaboration with employers and partners



- ❖ 5.5 To continue to provide transformative 'cradle to college' education services through our Early Learning Initiative, both locally to Inner City disadvantaged families and children, and nationally, through our ELI Centre of Excellence



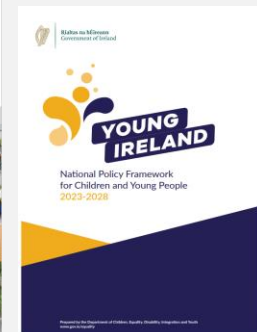
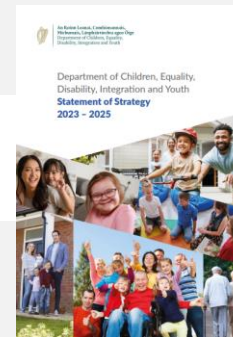
U.N. Sustainable Development Goals



Aligned with National Policies and Initiatives



Sláintecare.



TUSLA PPFS

TUSLA Child Welfare and Safeguarding

HSE National Healthy Childhood Program

HSE Health and Wellbeing Across a Range of Areas inc. Mental Health Promotion

DCEDIY Early Learning and Care. DEIS Early Years

DES School Readiness and Achievement

Working Together for Children and Communities

Address Governments' objectives

- Parent Support, particularly in marginalised communities
- Early identification processes and referral pathways
- Integrated service delivery building on interagency collaboration
- Quality of Early Years Provision
- Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
- Access to third level education
- Employment, training and community education
- National model of home visiting

Improve outcomes for children

- Meeting wellbeing and developmental norms
- Quality interactions and learning environment
- School readiness
- Support through transitions

Empower Communities

- Raise aspirations, hopes and dreams
- Develop the 'educational capital' and skills of communities
- Create high-achieving, supportive and cohesive communities



Sláintecare.



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



Thank You – Any Questions?



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