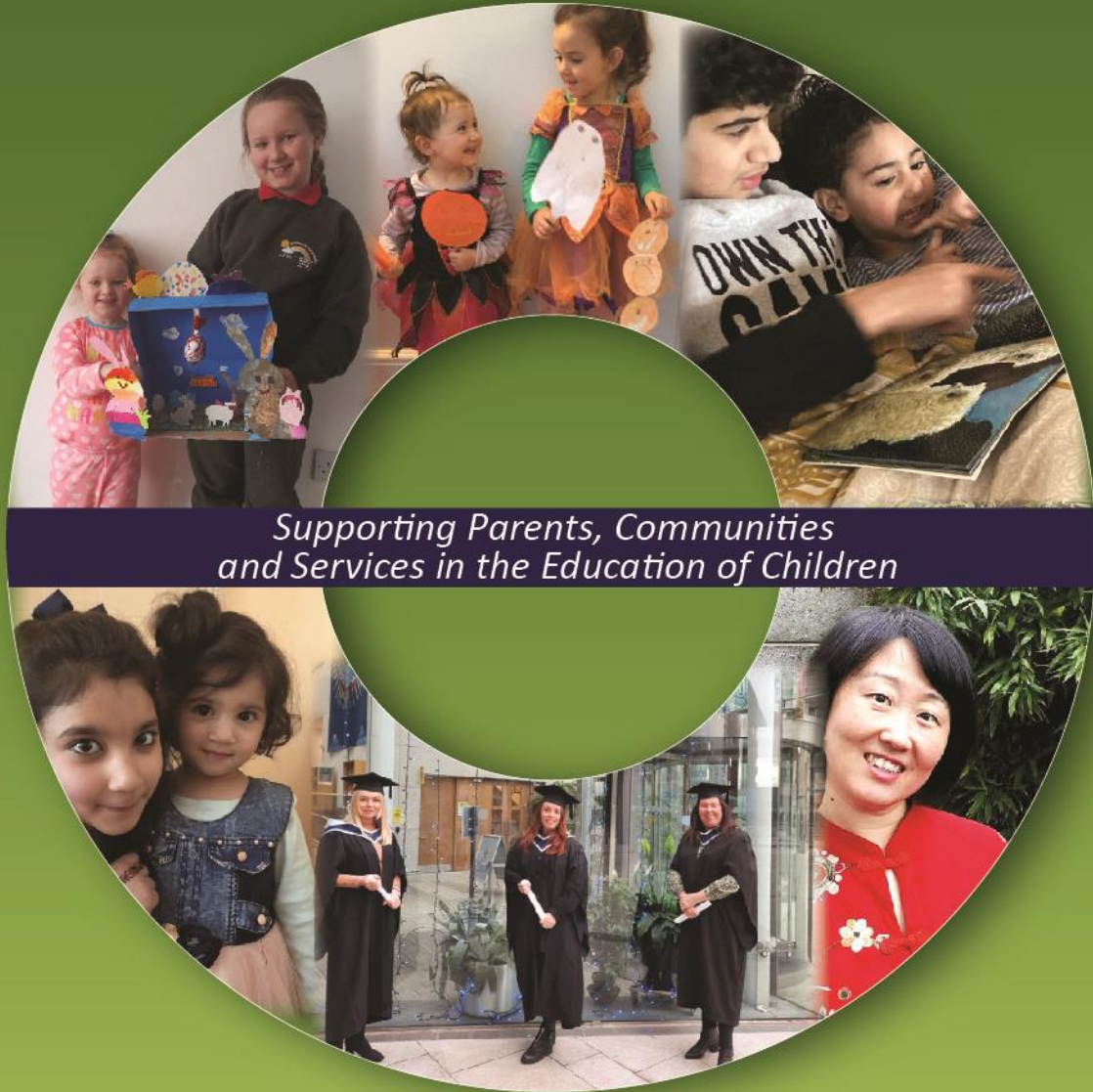




Early Learning Initiative

National College of Ireland



*Supporting Parents, Communities
and Services in the Education of Children*

End-of-Year REPORT 2020-21

CHY 9928

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VISION

Our long-term vision is that ELI will lead the way in providing first class educational support programmes within local communities, thereby enabling children, young people and their families to develop the dispositions, skills and knowledge needed to achieve their educational, career and life goals.

MISSION

Working in partnership with Government and local communities to support educational journeys and achievements



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1. INTRODUCTORY LETTER

2020-21 was the year of innovation for the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), National College of Ireland (NCI), when we built on pivoting in March 2020 to developing our high-quality responsive hybrid home learning model that supports children and parents in an ever-changing Covid-impacted world. Our commitment to vulnerable children and families continues with 14,234 people engaged in ELI's programmes. Satisfaction rates (96%) and learning indicators (93%) have risen with children's language, literacies and cognitive skills continuing to improve. This End-of-Year Report summarises our achievements over the past year with more information available on our website: www.ncirl.ie/eli and from our ELI team. While things have been tough for families recently, it is very encouraging to have so many fantastic partners working with us to ensure that children and young people thrive despite the pandemic. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in ELI and to note our key highlights and learnings this year.

Home Visiting remained an essential lifeline for children and families.

ELI's home visiting programmes continued to provide a critical lifeline in 2020-21. Virtual 'home visits' via video/phone calls as well as socially distanced outdoor visits ensured family well-being, addressed the educational/digital divide and prevented developmental delays. Our former ParentChild+ families are doing well, still using the educational resources provided by ELI and very eager to engage in our new Stretch Graduate Programme.

Stretch Graduate Programme – new frontier of home visiting

COVID-19 lockdowns highlighted the need for more direct parental engagement and home-based programmes to support children's learning. Over the past year, we have trialled differentiated hybrid home-based learning activities, which aim to ensure that the parents whose children we have supported through their early years education will have the confidence, understanding, skills and knowledge to continue to support their children's education in this new everchanging situation in which home learning is more critical than ever.

Centre of Expertise, Research and Innovation (CERI) thrives.

CERI is little over a year old and has become the home of ELI's strategic planning and creative thinking. Managing ELI's expansion to other communities across Ireland and the development of a national home visiting training, support and research centre, it ensures that ELI remains a national leader in promoting social responsibility, parent support and positive educational pathways for our most vulnerable children.

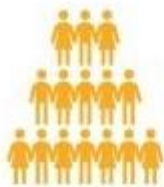
Thank You

Once again, thank you to our many partners, who mitigate the educational and digital divides for 5,914 children. Short-term, you provided critical supports during a historical and life-changing pandemic. Long-term you help thousands of at-risk children overcome adversity and achieve their educational, career and life dreams. If you want to know more about our pioneering, ambitious and innovative programmes, we are very happy to talk to you. Together we are changing children's and young people's lives through education.



Dr Josephine Bleach,
Director, Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland

1.1. 2020-21 Key Indicators



14,234 participants engaged

Indicators of satisfaction
(96%, n=1,096)



Indicators of learning
(93%, n=1,047)

6,683 parents engaged



167 volunteers engaged

35 corporate partners
supporting ELI



19,394 visits completed
in home and virtually

380 activity packs and
780 play mats delivered



1.2. Thank You



We would like to pay tribute to the generosity of all our donors, who range from Government to businesses to Trusts/Foundations to individuals. Your investment in children's futures is greatly valued and is making a huge difference to their lives. We would also like to acknowledge the support of all those who gave their time and expertise on a pro bono basis.

We are continually seeking additional partners and would welcome the opportunity to talk to interested companies and individuals. Please contact Mary Anne Stokes (by phone: 086 4666438 or by e-mail: maryanne.stokes@ncirl.ie) for more information.

1.3. 2020-21 Overview

National College of Ireland (NCI) is an independent third level institution providing programmes in business and IT to a diverse group of students from non-traditional backgrounds. In 2006, NCI established the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), as part of its mission to address educational underachievement in marginalised communities. Working in partnership with Government and local communities, ELI has developed a range of innovative programmes, including our flagship ParentChild+, to improve the educational aspirations and outcomes of children and young people. It has grown from 400 participants (children, parents and professionals) to 14,000+ and moved beyond its initial Dublin Docklands catchment area to supporting other communities across the country.

As part of ELI's 2020-25 Strategic Plan, a Centre of Expertise, Research and Innovation (CERI) ([Chapter 3](#)) was established to capture and build on its achievements to date and its strategic ambition of scaling up sustainable models of Home Visiting programmes across Ireland.

Centre for Expertise, Research and Innovation	Families	Professionals	Budget
ParentChild+ (18-36 months)	383	59	18%
Slaintecare Community Mothers Project	1,415	54	6%
My Place to Play	780	253	
Home Visiting Alliance Webinar	0	90	8%
Rethink Ireland From Couch to Screen Project	0	45	
Total	2,578	501	32%

ELI's commitment to Dublin's Inner City ([Chapter 4](#)) remains strong. The Docklands has evolved into a demonstration site for CERI ([Chapter 3](#)), where best practice can be observed, and real-life examples and evidence of impact is available. An integrated programme of educational support from antenatal/birth up to third level is delivered annually. While priority is given to developing children's social, language, numeracy and thinking skills from an early age, on-going support as children progress through the education system is provided through our educational guidance and literacies programmes.

Dublin's Inner City	Families	Professionals	% Expenditure
Educational Guidance	305	481	7%
Literacies & STEM	2,369	340	18%
Parent Support Groups	306	21	9%
Home Visiting*	320	48	34%
Total	3,801	906	68%

*300 of this figure also included in CERI table above.

ELI is a partnership ([Chapter 3.3](#)) between families and professionals from statutory, corporate, voluntary and community organisations. Fifteen years of sustained cross sectoral collaboration has paid dividends due to the goodwill, enthusiasm and determination of our wonderful partners. In 2020-21, ELI teamed with

- ✓ 1,376 professionals from community, statutory and voluntary organisations
- ✓ 45 Corporate organisations and Foundations along with 153 volunteers

Irish Government through the Docklands and East Inner City Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme, Tusla, Children and Young People's Services Committees, Slaintecare, Rethink Ireland, Science Foundation of Ireland and the North East Inner City (NEIC) Initiative.

2. FINANCE, GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Early Learning Initiative (ELI), National College of Ireland (NCI), is committed to good governance and put in place systems and processes to ensure we achieve our objectives with integrity by managing ELI in an effective, efficient, accountable and transparent manner. This section accounts for ELI’s 2020-21 income and expenditure along with its governance structures and 2020-25 Strategy.

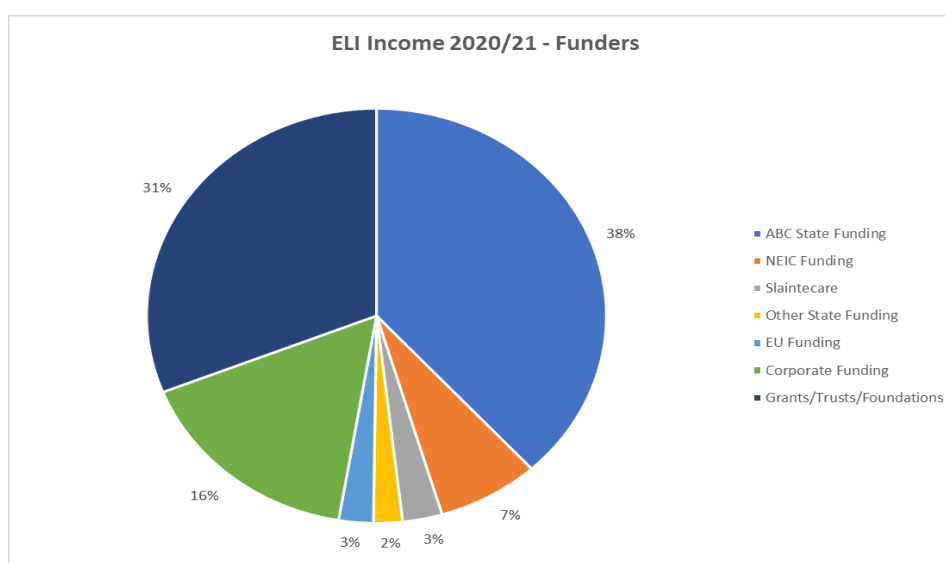
2.1. Finance

ELI has tightly managed income and expenditure to ensure that programme and partner outcomes and commitments have been fully achieved. It is financed by a mix of statutory and voluntary funding. This section details the income, expenditure and budgets for Centre for Expertise Research & Innovation (CERI), Dublin’s Inner City and Docklands & East Inner City Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programmes.

	Income 2020/21	Expenditure 2020/21	Variance in Income and Expenditure	Estimated Expenditure 2021/22
	€	€	€	€
Docklands & East Inner City Area Based Childhood (ABC)	796,100	797,917	(1,817)	796,100
Dublin's Inner City	691,291	511,319	179,972	550,000
Centre for Expertise Research & Innovation (CERI)	618,103	627,610	(9,507)	650,000
Total	2,105,494	1,936,846	168,648	1,996,100

2.1.1. Income 2020-21

ELI raised a total income of €2.1m in 2020-21, of which €1.1m (53%, up from 52% in 2019-20 but down from 61% in 2018-19) came from statutory funding (Tusla, NEIC and HSE) with the remaining €1m (47% down from 48% in 2019-20 but up from 39% in 2018-19) coming from our Corporate partners, Trusts, Foundations and Individuals.



There was an increase in grants (31% compared with 27% in 2019-20 and 12% in 2018-19), while funding from our corporate and individual partners decreased slightly (16% compared with 17% in 2019-20 and 27% in 2018-19).

We would like to pay tribute to the generosity of all our donors, many of whom are long-term visionary partners in improving outcomes for children, families and communities. A special thank you to Dan O'Connor (Director, CRH), Joe O'Reilly (Managing Director, Castlethorn), Declan Quilligan (Managing Director, Citco Fund Services), Sean Reilly (Executive Chairman, McGarrell Reilly Group), Michael Hartwell (Partner, Deloitte), Gina Quin (President of NCI) and Sandra Foley (Managing Director, State Street) for their generous invaluable input as part of our ELI Development Committee.

If you are interested in partnering with ELI, please contact Mary Anne Stokes, Development and Volunteering Officer (by phone: 086 466 6438 or email: maryanne.stokes@ncirl.ie)

2.1.2. Expenditure 2020-21

Department	Programmes	Projected Expenditure Year ending 30th June 2021 €	Actual Expenditure Year ending 30th June 2021 €	Variance in Expenditure Year End 30th June 2021 €	Projected Expenditure Year ending 30th June 2022 €
CERI	National	353,000	627,610	(197,078)	650,000
Docklands	Dublin's Inner City	550,900	531,119	178,676	550,000
ABC	Dublin's Inner City	796,100	797,919	(51,096)	796,100
Total		1,700,000	1,956,648	(256,648)	1,996,100
CERI	Home Visiting National	-	41,481	(41,481)	50,000
CERI	ParentChild+ National - Support	80,000	123,370	(43,370)	125,000
CERI	ParentChild+ National - Direct Delivery	186,000	226,141	(40,141)	230,000
ABC	ParentChild+	300,000	288,536	11,464	300,000
Docklands	ParentChild+ -	172,000	159,530	12,470	160,000
CERI	Sláintecare Community Mothers	87,000	108,564	(21,564)	87,000
ABC	ABC 0-2 Home Visiting	180,000	194,739	(14,739)	200,000
CERI	My Place to Play	-	36,016	(36,016)	20,000
CERI	Rethink Ireland Innovate HV QQI Training	-	92,038	(92,038)	82,962
Docklands	Home Visiting COVID-19 Support	50,000	21,910	28,090	50,000
Total	Home Visiting	1,055,000	1,292,325	(237,325)	1,304,962
ABC	ABC 0-3 Parent Support Groups	70,000	76,061	(6,061)	70,000
Docklands	Parent Support Groups	30,000	34,225	(4,225)	30,000
ABC	ABC Restorative Parenting	50,000	67,682	(17,682)	50,000
Total	Parent Support Groups	190,000	177,968	(27,968)	150,000
ABC	ABC Early Numeracy	60,000	72,859	(12,859)	60,000
ABC	ABC Zoom Ahead with Books	36,100	30,936	5,164	36,100
ABC	ABC Doodle Den Programme	100,000	67,106	32,894	100,000
Docklands	NEIC Doodle Den Programme	50,000	36,004	13,996	50,000
Docklands	Literacies	20,900	28,777	(7,877)	30,000
Docklands	COVID-19 Stretch Family Learning	40,000	69,919	(29,919)	80,000
Docklands	Robotic Coding Clubs	70,000	52,229	17,771	60,000
Total	Literacy & STEM	337,000	357,830	19,170	416,100
Docklands	Educational Guidance	75,000	60,000	15,000	75,000
Docklands	NEIC Brighter Futures	43,000	68,525	(25,525)	43,000
Total	Educational and Career Guidance	118,000	128,525	(10,525)	118,000

Notes:

- The costs included above represent the direct costs incurred of providing the Programmes. They do not include any charges for services provided by NCI such as accounting, payroll, HR, marketing, which is estimated at 20% of the above costs (€399,220).
- The higher spend was due to more intensive COVID-19 supports for vulnerable children and families; additional restricted funding e.g., Tusla My Place to Play Project and Sláintecare along with successful grant proposals e.g., Rethink Innovate Fund, ESB Energy for Generation.
- ABC Funding from January to June 2022 is subject to its inclusion in the Government's 2022 Budget and the projected expenditure will be amended in January to reflect the 2022 ABC budget agreed with Tusla.
- The CERI and ELI Docklands Projected Expenditure 2021-22 is based on ELI's 2020-25 Strategic Plan, costs in previous years, pledged funding, outstanding grant applications as well as proposed programme expansion for 2021-22. It will be amended in December 2021 to reflect funding received and additional pledges/grants.

2.2. Governance

NCI takes full responsibility for the financial, management, contractual, reporting and governance requirements of ELI. It has proactively embraced the highest standards of corporate governance including the Statement for Guiding Principles for Fundraising, Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015, Child Safeguarding Statement, GDPR and The Governance Code. NCI does not charge any central overheads to ELI and has absorbed historical deficits between funding available and the cost of delivering ELI programmes and services. The generous commitment of Fr. Leonard Moloney S.J., Chairperson of NCI's Governing Body; Gina Quin, President of NCI; and other members of NCI's Governing Body and Executive Board has been critical to the success of ELI in improving outcomes for children and young people in the area. Membership of NCI's Governing Body is listed below.

NCI Governing Body as of June 2021 *Members of Governing Body who sit on the ELI Advisory Committee, which in turn reports to Governing Body.	
Chairman - Fr. Leonard Moloney S.J.	Ms. Sheila Nunan*
Mr. Michael Brady	Fr. Kevin O'Higgins S.J.*
Ms. Barbara Cotter	Ms. Kathleen Frith
Mr. Brendan McGinty	Mr. Conor O'Reilly - NCISU President
Ms. Brigid McManus	Mr. Dave Cormack
Mr. Patrick Clancy	Mr. Kevin Callinan
Ms. Maureen Brogan	Mr. John McGarrigle - Secretary and Registered Officer
Mr. Tony O'Malley	
Ms. Gina Quin – College President	

ELI is a discreet centre within NCI with its own dedicated staff and Advisory Committees. The leadership and expertise shown by Frank Ryan, Chairperson of the ELI Advisory Committee and ABC Steering Group; Dan O'Connor, Chairperson of the ELI Development Committee; Alan Barrett, Chairperson of ELI Research Committee and the other members of the ELI Advisory Committee, ABC Steering Group, Research and Development Committees has been invaluable in the development of ELI. We thank them for their advice, guidance and support over the past year and look forward to working with them in 2021-22. Membership of ELI Committees are listed below with more information on ELI Governance available on our website: www.ncirl.ie/eli.

ELI Advisory Committee as of June 2021 is set out below:	
<p>Chairperson – Frank Ryan Gina Quin, President NCI Fr. Kevin O’Higgins S.J., NCI Governing Body Sheila Nunan, NCI Governing Body Joe O’Reilly Sean Reilly,</p>	<p>Dan O’Connor, Chair of ELI’s Development Committee Jenny Barnard, Professor Alan Barrett, Chair of ELI’s Research Committee (Resigned April 2021) Mary Doyle</p>
ABC Steering Group as of June 2021 is set out below:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson – Frank Ryan, Chairperson ELI Advisory Committee • Donnchadh Ó Madagáin, NCI Finance Director • Dan O’Connor, Chair of ELI’s Development Committee • Mark Shinnick, Principal • Niall Heneghan, Principal • John Peelo, Tusla Northside Representative • Denise Hevey, Early Years Representative • Dr Josephine Bleach, ELI Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lorraine Doherty, Tusla Southside Representative • Angela Nolan, Assistant Director of Public Health Nursing. PHN Representative. • Alison McCormack, Community Representative • Dara Terry, Voluntary Sector Representative • Lana Cummins, ELI Assistant Director until March 2021 • Catriona Flood, ELI Assistant Director from March 2021
ELI Development Group as of June 2021 is set out below:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson – Mr Dan O’Connor, Non-Executive Director Glanbia • Mr Sean Reilly, Executive Chairman Alcove Properties • Ms Sandra Foley, Managing Director, State Street International (Ireland) Ltd. • Mr Joe O’Reilly, Managing Director of Castlethorn Construction • Mr Declan Quilligan, Managing Director Citco Fund Services (Ireland) Ltd. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Michael Hartwell, Partner, Deloitte • Gina Quin, President NCI • Dr Josephine Bleach, Director Early Learning Initiative • Mary Anne Stokes - ELI Development and Volunteering Officer
ELI Research Committee as of June 2021 is set out below:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson: Professor Alan Barrett (Resigned April 2021) • Dan O’Connor, Chair of ELI Development Committee • Mary Doyle, ELI Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Grainne Kent, ELI Researcher until April 2021 • Kate Darmody, ELI Researcher from April 2021 • Dr Josephine Bleach, Director of ELI

2.3. Strategic Planning

ELI is a complex initiative in an increasingly complex world with strategic planning a key element of its strength, durability and success over the years. Since 2007, ELI has focused on the delivery and sustainability of its programmes within the Dublin Docklands. Our 2015-20 Strategy defined a new phase in ELI's history with its aims to establish ELI as a national initiative with national impact. Our 2020-25 Strategy builds on this work and aims to develop incrementally the following:

1. Sustaining and developing the portfolio of Dublin's Inner-City Programmes
2. Scaling up sustainable models of Home Visiting programmes across Ireland
3. Research and Innovation in response to quality assurance and everchanging contexts
4. Building partnerships to increase influence and impact

Two separate but interlocking departments within ELI have been established as the first steps in implementing the 2020-25 Strategy:

- Dublin's Inner City ([Chapter 4](#)) is responsible for sustaining and developing ELI's suite of Programmes. A demonstration site, where best practice, real-life examples and evidence of impact can be observed, and innovative ideas trialed and tested before being scaled up for mainstreaming and/or adaption in other communities.
- Centre of Expertise, Research and Innovation ([Chapter 3](#)) is a focal point for knowledge management, capacity-building, communication and influencing in relation to educational disadvantage, access and ELI's growing expertise in supporting other communities to deliver high quality Home Visiting Programmes, in line with the Irish Government's First 5 A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028.

As part of the strategic implementation process, the following plans have been developed:

ELI's Fundraising Priorities 2020-2025 ([Chapter 2](#))

1. Maintain ELI's existing programmes, including ParentChild+, and commitments in Dublin's inner city by targeting €1.2m a year (€600k for ParentChild+ and €600k for Parent Support, Literacies, Educational Guidance and Capacity Building).
2. Continue ParentChild+ in existing 9 areas, including Docklands, and extend it to another 4+ areas by targeting €1.2m a year (€600k for Docklands and €600k for other areas).

ELI Research and Evaluation Priorities 2020-25 ([Section 3.2](#))

1. Strengthen research capacities, processes and structures.
2. Improve research communications and partnerships.
3. Expand research in the following thematic areas.
 - a. Tracking ELI children from when they first engage with ELI and throughout their education.
 - b. ParentChild+ Graduate follow-up engagement and research.
 - c. Cross-programme emergent responses to and learning from COVID-19, including virtual delivery and the impact of the pandemic and government restrictions on children and families.

National Home Visiting Training, Research and Support Centre ([Section 3.1](#))

1. Grow the number of vulnerable children and families in Ireland benefitting from evidenced-based home visiting programmes, in particular ParentChild+.
2. Build our capacity to support other communities to deliver home visiting programmes.
3. Develop a comprehensive training, mentoring and evaluation system to support Managers, Coordinators and Home Visitors around the country.
4. Ensure that children and families are receiving a high-quality service no matter where they live.

2021-25 NEIC Restorative Practice Strategy Development ([Section 4.3.3.](#) and [Section 4.4.2.](#)).

For the last 7 years, ELI has been supporting the roll out of restorative practice (RP) across Dublin's North East Inner City (NEIC). Our aim is to support the community to develop positive interpersonal relationships and have the skills to resolve conflict restoratively. A restorative practice strategy is being developed with the strategic review ongoing. A webinar, *Restoring Communities*, was held on 10th June, with a focus on what a Restorative Community looks like; what have we achieved in the NEIC so far and what is needed to ensure long-term sustainability and embeddedness.

For more information about ELI's 2020-25 Strategic Plan, please contact Dr Josephine Bleach (By phone 086 81536000 or email josephine.bleach@ncirl.ie)

3. CENTRE FOR EXPERTISE, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

From the beginning, NCI envisaged ELI acting as a Centre of Excellence from which other communities and governments, nationally and internationally, could learn how to improve the educational and life chances of children and their families across Ireland and further afield. As ELI's activities grew exponentially, balancing local programme delivery with national advocacy and mainstreaming activities was challenging. As part of NCI's Strategic Plan, a Centre of Expertise, Research and Innovation (CERI) was established to capture and build on its achievements to date and its strategic ambitions.

NCI's Academic Strategy 2019-24 details NCI strategic ambitions of being a national leader in accessibility, widening participation and educational pathways through a life cycle approach. At present, an institution wide strategy for NCI is being developed. It will incorporate our academic strategy, our physical campus requirements, the significant digitisation of delivery over the past 18 months, our ambition around institutional positioning, and our commitment to mission, access, student supports and services and community engagement.

Through ELI, NCI's access programmes start at birth and support children to start school with the language, literacy and numeracy skills needed for success in education, career and life.

ELI's 2020-25 Strategic Objectives are

- National leader and centre of expertise in accessibility, widening participation and educational pathways with a particular focus on early childhood and family learning.
- National centre for the development of sustainable models of Home Visiting across Ireland and innovative emerging future orientated family home-based learning.
- Innovation centre for adapting and transforming our existing activities, pedagogies, and processes to remain responsive to everchanging needs and policy contexts.
- Pioneering research to capture new knowledge and practices and disseminate them locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Develop our expertise in capacity-building for long-term sustainability planning, particularly in relation to programmes and services for children and young people in statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

CERI is a focal point for knowledge management, capacity-building, communication and influencing in relation to educational disadvantage, access and ELI's growing expertise in supporting other communities to deliver high quality Home Visiting programmes, in line with the Irish Government's First 5 A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028. The overall goal is to capture new knowledge and practices in these areas and disseminate them locally, nationally and internationally. It supports and learns from ELI's work in Dublin's Inner City and uses it as an example of best practice from which other communities can learn.

At present, CERI supports a combination of the following activities:

1. Scaling up sustainable models of Home Visiting programmes across Ireland.
2. Research and innovation in response to quality assurance and everchanging contexts.
3. Building partnerships to increase influence and impact.
4. Sustaining and developing the portfolio of Dublin's Inner-City Programmes.

This section summarises the activities of CERI this year, including National Home Visiting Support, research, innovation, communication and partnership activities.

3.1. National Home Visiting Support

Developing and scaling up sustainable models of Home Visiting programmes across Ireland so that the 12,400 children born into poverty each year in Ireland get the support they need to thrive in education, career and life is a key priority for ELI. To achieve this, we have been developing a National Home Visiting Support Centre, which has the capacity to support the delivery of high quality evidenced-based sustainable models of Home Visiting and innovative emerging future orientated family home-based learning across Ireland. While a lot of progress has been made, it is a complex task in an everchanging policy and societal context to ensure that the structures, processes and training to enable high quality governance, accountability and implementation of home visiting programmes in different organisations across Ireland are in place and are working. This section details this work

- **ParentChild+ National Home Visiting Training, Research and Support Centre**, which supports the scaling up of ParentChild+ to other communities in a sustainable way and provides ongoing comprehensive support to ParentChild+ Managers, Coordinators and Home Visitors around the country.
- **Home from Home Programme**, a specially adapted home visiting programme for families living in homeless/emergency accommodation, which is ready for scaling up around the country in 2021-22
- **Sláintecare Integration Fund: Prevention is Better than Cure: A Community Mothers Programme Development Project** in collaboration with the HSE, Tusla, Katharine Howard Foundation and 10 Community Mothers sites across Ireland. Our goal is that every first-time parent in Ireland will be offered the updated home visiting programme.
- **My Place to Play Project** in collaboration with Tusla and CYPSC. It aims to enhance parent-baby interactions and children’s physical (tummy time), emotional (sense of safety, wellbeing and belonging), cognitive and language development for infants living in homeless/emergency/overcrowded accommodation.
- **Rethink Ireland Innovate Fund for the ‘From Couch to Screen’ project**, provides professional qualifications in Home Visiting through
 - QQI Accredited Level 6 Microcredential in Core Pedagogy and Curriculum in Home Visiting
 - QQI Accredited Level 7 Microcredential in Leadership and Change Management for Home Visiting Coordinators
 - Non-accredited programme specific training and eLearning resources
- **Home Visiting Alliance**, a collaboration of 5 Irish evidence-based early childhood home visiting programmes (Community Mothers, Infant Mental Health, Lifestart, ParentChild+ Preparing for Life) represents the collective national voice of early childhood home visiting.

3.1.1. ParentChild+ National

Originally from the US, the ParentChild+ Programme is an innovative, home based literacy and parenting programme that strengthens families and prepares children to succeed academically. For over 14 years, ELI has delivered ParentChild+ to vulnerable families with children aged 18 months to 3 years in Dublin, expanding to Galway, Limerick and more recently Louth. Beginning with 15 families in 2007, numbers have grown to 383 in 2021. Unfortunately, this is only 3% of the 12,400 babies born into poverty in Ireland each year and 8% of 4,800 babies born to first time parents living in poverty (CSO 2019). We would like to do more.

Extending ParentChild+ to other disadvantaged communities across Ireland is central to ELI’s 2020-25 Strategic Plan as we want to ensure that all children get the support needed to start school with the language, literacy and numeracy skills needed for success in education, no matter what their background is or where they live. The ParentChild+ National Home Visiting Training, Research and Support Centre is committed to scaling up ParentChild+ in a sustainable way with two new sites in Waterford and Wexford coming on board in 2021. It also ensures fidelity to the programme and high-

quality service delivery through its ongoing comprehensive support to ParentChild+ Managers, Coordinators and Home Visitors around the country.

Programme Delivery

- 383 families in Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Louth received:
 - 12,647 home visits from September 2020 – June 2021.
 - 423 indoor visits, 2,213 outdoor visits, 9,822 video call visits and 189 phone call visits.

ParentChild+ Area	Started	No. of families	No. of Home Visitors
Docklands and East Inner City (NCI)	2007	168	28
Dublin South City Partnership	2009	10	2
ABC Grangegorman/DoCCS	2014	28	5
Garryowen, Limerick	2015	72	6
Ballinasloe, Galway	2015	37	4
Ballyfermot Partnership (ABC)	2017	29	4
St Ultan's, Cherry Orchard	2017	14	3
Clondalkin – Blue Skies (ABC)	2019	8	3
Louth Genesis (ABC)	2019	17	4
Youth New Ross, Wexford	2021	0	0
Brill FRC, Waterford	2021	0	0
Total		383	59



Child Leading the Play in Outdoor ParentChild+ Visit

ParentChild+ Programme Assessment- Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)

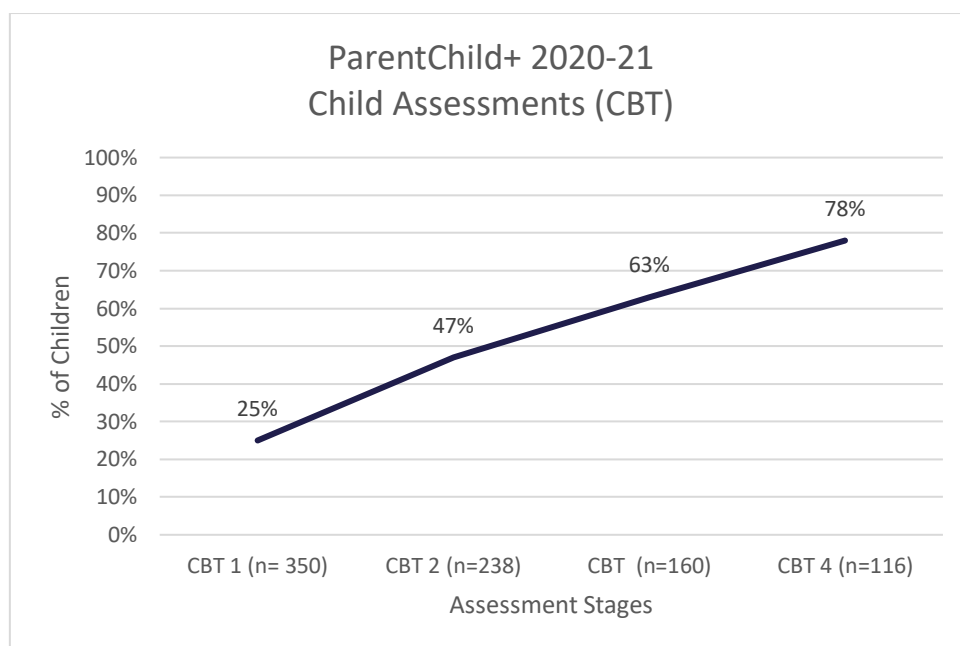
To monitor the developmental trajectory of the children and highlight the parent-child relationship, highlighting areas of learning and interaction that need to be addressed, Home Visitors complete two

observational assessments (Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)) at the following points throughout the programme:

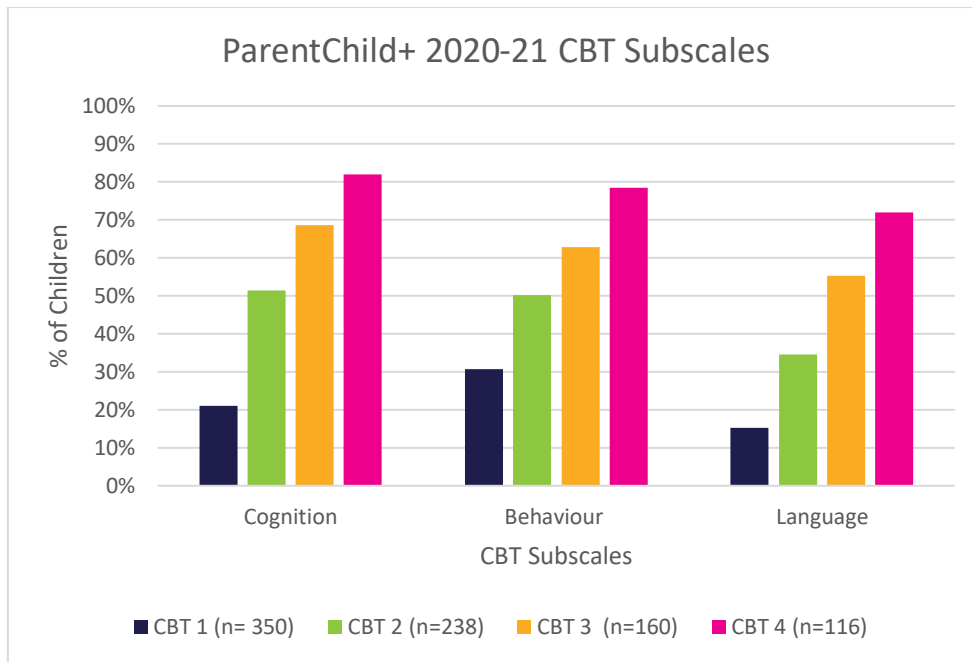
- CBT & PACT 1 after the 6th visit
- CBT & PACT 2 after the 44th visit
- CBT & PACT 3 after the 68th visit
- CBT & PACT 4 after the 92nd visit

In the following graphs, the percentages displayed are calculated based in the proportion of Home Visitors answering 'often' or 'always' in the CBT and PACT assessments. According to the coding scheme, children scoring 'often' (3) or 'always' (4) tend to meet their developmental milestones, and parents scoring at this level indicate positive parent-child relationships. Data from all nine national sites were collated and are reported in the graphs below.

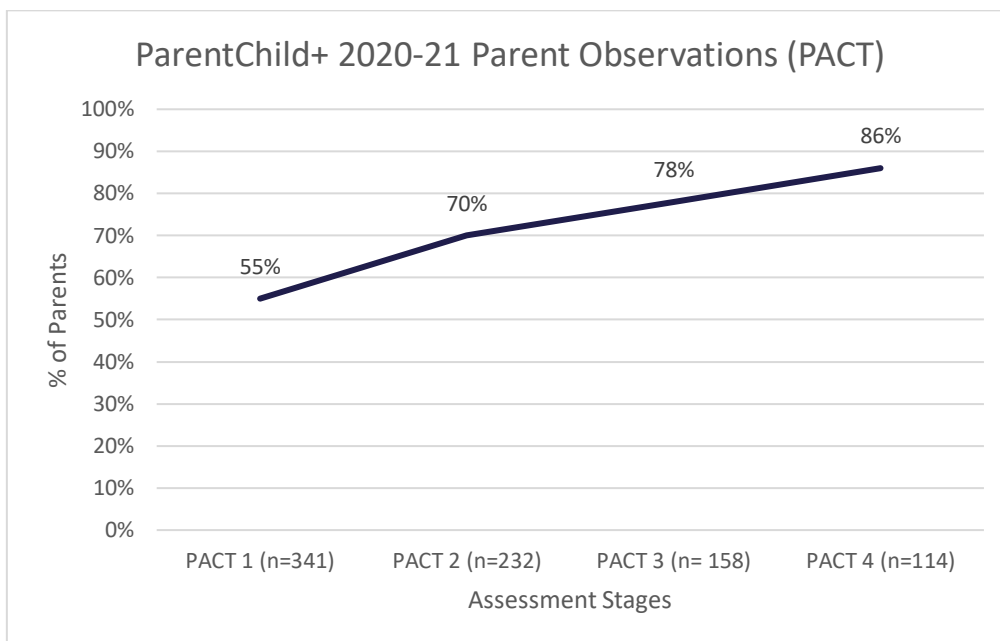
The percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones across the nine ParentChild+ sites gradually increased throughout the programme, from 25% at the beginning of the programme to 47%, 63% and, finally, 78% on completion of the programme. The percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones after completing the full programme has decreased slightly from 2019-20 (82%). Looking to the individual sites for 2020-21, three are scoring on average below 80% at CBT 4 due to 25%-40% of the children assessed presenting with severe levels of additional needs. Although improvements have been seen in these children throughout the programme their overall ability is less than typically developing children.



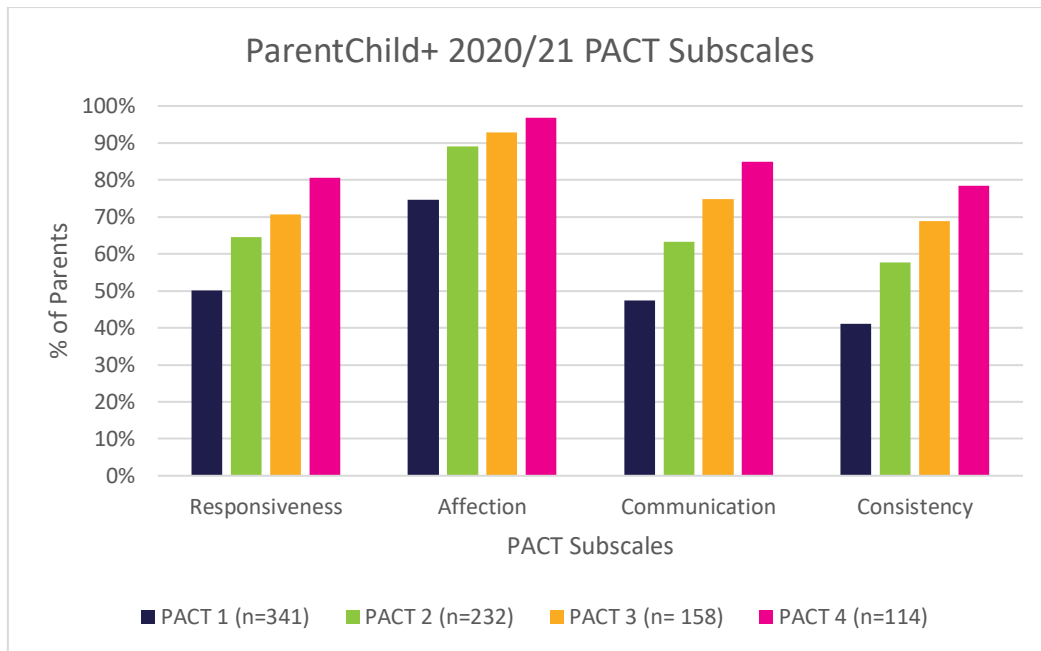
Children engaging in the programme demonstrated developmental increases across the three CBT subscales (cognition, behaviour and language) at each stage of the programme. As can be seen below the greatest overall increase was found in the percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones in the area of cognition (61%), followed by increases in language (57%) and behaviour (48%), following the same pattern as the assessment scores in 2019-20.



There was also a significant increase in the percentage of parents across all ParentChild+ sites having high-quality interactions with their children from 55% at PACT 1 to 86% at PACT 4, remaining similar to the 87% of parents at PACT 4 in 2019-20.



The percentage of parents having interactions of good quality with their children showed improvement in all four areas of assessment (parents' responsiveness to their child, parent's affection toward their child, parent's communication with their child and parent's consistency with their child) at each stage of assessment. This was particularly evident in parents' consistency and positive communication with their children, which both increased by 37% overall. This was followed by increases in responsiveness (30%) and affection (22%).



Comments from participants included:

“I have thoroughly enjoyed co-ordinating the ParentChild+ Programme since October 2020. Right from the beginning the support received from the Senior Specialist and other Co-ordinators has been amazing. We work together for the good of all our families looking after each other. The monthly meetings and WhatsApp group are so valuable and supportive. Great for getting ideas and advice.” [Site Coordinator]

“I was worried about my son. He wasn’t talking and I had concerns around autism. Since joining the programme he is coming on so well. He is talking and counting. His social skills have really improved. We are currently working on getting him to wait and take turns. He loves his Home Visitor and runs to greet her every time. He goes straight for her bag to see what gift she has for him. I can’t thank the programme enough. I’m less worried about his future because I have seen the changes in him in this short time. The changes the programme has made in my son are priceless.” [Parent]

“The ParentChild+ Programme to me is making little changes in children that will in turn be big differences in the parent and child’s life, long term benefits. Seeing the reaction from the child when the parent is playing with them is so rewarding.” [Home Visitor]

Training and Professional Development

Home Visiting and Parent Support Programmes are local peer-led community lifelines for most at-risk children (0-4 years) and their families. Continuous professional development is critical to ensuring that Coordinators and Home Visitors have the dispositions, skills and knowledge to effectively engage our most vulnerable children and families, particularly those experiencing intergenerational poverty, unemployment, violence/abuse, social isolation, trauma, mental health issues, educational disadvantage, homelessness/emergency accommodation.

Due to the ongoing restrictions, training and professional development was primarily conducted online this year, including:

- Mandatory training each year for all Home Visitors with weekly supervision supplemented by additional training in self-care and restorative practice.
- All Home Visitors have been supported to engage in eLearning with 1,645 hours of CPD completed nationally from a range of courses offered both internally and externally.
- Upskilling of the Dublin Docklands team in Presentation and Interview Skills:
 - 11 Home Visitors presented at the ELI online Community Action Research Day in June 2021.
 - 7 Home Visitors participated in a CV development and interview techniques session.
- Ongoing upskilling of the team in IT Skills, Apps and Systems:
 - One-to-one peer support and Coordinator to Home Visitor support where needed.
- 8 Coordinators and Home Visitors are pursuing academic/professional qualifications:
 - 2 members of the Home Visiting programme are engaging in the BA in Early Childhood Education
 - 1 Home Visitor is undertaking their level 5 and 2 their level 6 in FETAC Early Childhood Care and Education with FETAC level 5 the minimum qualification and standard practice.
 - 1 Home Visitor completed Birthlight training in Baby and Toddler Yoga
 - 1 Home Visitor completed FETAC level 6 in Counselling and Psychotherapy
 - 1 Home Visitor is undertaking their level 5 in FETAC Business and Administration
- Communities of Practice
 - 12 Coordinators attended three Community of Practice Day sessions online and received up to date training in quality assurance, fidelity to the programme, leadership practices, General Data Protection Regulations, and self-care.
- Mentoring and Support
 - 12 Coordinators attended monthly online support sessions relating to managing and supporting staff.

3.1.2. Home from Home Programme

The Home from Home Transition Programme is an intensive weekly home visiting programme developed by our Home Visiting Team in Dublin's Inner City for families living in emergency/ homeless accommodation, which provides an integrated plan of intervention and support for families with children aged 16 months onwards. An adaptation of the ParentChild+ programme, its overall aim is to meet the needs of families living under the duress of homelessness, who would not be able to commit to a two-year programme and twice weekly visits. To date, it has only been delivered in the Docklands (see [Section 4.1.4.](#)). In 2021-22, it is hoped to extend it to 4 other areas around the country.

3.1.3. Sláintecare Community Mothers Programme Development Project

The Community Mothers Programme (CMP) is an Irish-developed home visiting programme which supports parents in caring for their babies and young children while also encouraging them to look after their own health and wellbeing. Working closely with the HSE Public Health Nursing Service, it is

an effective mechanism for the delivery of key child health and wellbeing messages and supports, particularly in relation to

- Maternal and child diet, sleep and overall health
- Childhood vaccination uptake
- Infant stimulation and development

Funded through the Sláintecare Integration Fund and a philanthropic donor, this project is a collaboration between 10 local CMP sites, the Katharine Howard Foundation, the HSE, Tusla and ELI, with ELI the lead partner.

Programme Delivery

- 10 local organizations in Dublin (ELI), Limerick, Roscommon, Meath, Kerry, Westmeath, Tipperary, Laois, Offaly and Longford participated in the project
- 1,415 families received the Community Mothers Programmes across the 10 sites
- 36 Home Visitors upskilled and improved the quality of their service to families
- Virtual Consultation sessions between the Project Consultant and representatives from the Community Mothers sites around the county took place twice monthly throughout the year
- Parent Consultations took place in April and May 2021
- Project review took place in April 2021 with plans for Phase 2 developed
- The Project Management group and Oversight Group met monthly
- All of the above consultation processes resulted in the development of a
 - Standardized Model for the new Community Parents Programme,
 - Common dataset to monitor and evaluate the impact of the programme across the country
 - Site specific action plans to implement the new model and dataset in their area.
- Phase 2 of the Sláintecare Community Mothers Programme Development Project commences in July 2021. The second phase of the Project, with leveraged ELI funding, is intended to conclude in December 2021.

Comments from participants included:

"...without this service, I would not be here today." [Parent]

"The key element of our practice is taking the time to develop a warm, trusted and non-judgmental relationship with the parents. It is this relationship which allows us to share the vital health promotion information and advice that we deliver." [Home Visitor]

"..... work together to share information, share experiences, listen to and learn from one another and keep the family at the centre of what we do and what we do well." [Director of Public Health Nursing]

3.1.4. My Place to Play Programme

My Place to Play, which aims to enhance parent-baby interactions and children's physical (tummy time), emotional (sense of safety, wellbeing and belonging), cognitive and language development for infants living in homeless/emergency/overcrowded accommodation was developed in 2018-19 in partnership with the Dublin City North Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC), Healthy Ireland Funds, ABC Programme (Dublin Docklands and East Inner City, Preparing for Life in Darndale, Better Finglas and Young Ballymun), Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) and Focus Ireland.

Since then, ELI has been part of a multi-agency Implementation Working Group comprising Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) National and local areas, Tusla Partnership, Prevention and Family Support (PPFS) National, Tusla Homeless Liaison, the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) to develop it further. The project is a leading example of the upscaling of a multi-agency, collaborative and responsive project from local to regional to national level.



A baby plays on their My Place to Play mat

Programme Delivery

- 5 national organisations collaborate on the My Place to Play project (CYPSC, PPFS, IPAS, ABC and Tusla) and have
 - Secured funding to extend it across the country
 - Published [*A Report on the Review of "My Place to Play for families living in International Protection Accommodation"*](#) ;
 - Written a sustainability paper advocating the continued implementation of My Place to Play with under-resourced families who are raising very young children in cramped and confined living spaces such as temporary homeless accommodation, international protection accommodation (IPAS) and domestic violence refuges.
 - Developed in collaboration with Speech and Language Therapists an extension of the programme for toddlers, which will be piloted in 2021-22

- 780 My Place to Play Packs, containing a portable play mat, a ball, mini maraca and wrist rattles were delivered to families nationally this year:
 - July 2020- 266 packs delivered Nationally to international Protection Accommodation Centre and Homeless accommodation.
 - November 2020: 50 packs through Community Mothers services Nenagh and Clonmel Tipperary.
 - December 2020- 60 packs through CYPSC (Children and Young Peoples Services Committees) Louth and Meath.
 - Spring 2021- 390 packs delivered Nationally to international Protection Accommodation Centre, Homeless accommodation, and families in need.
 - During the year 14 packs delivered through ELI team to local families in need.
- 253 professionals attended 11 online briefing sessions.
- 2 services trialled My Place to Play packs for toddlers in June 2021 to support physical and language development of children living in confined space.

Participant Feedback

Nearly half of the parents (48%, n=16) reported to use their My Place to Play mat every day, with 85% (n=28) of parents reporting that having it makes it easier to play with their baby as the mat is convenient and provides a safe and comfortable place for their baby to play. Eighty-eight percent (n=29) received information on tummy time and the importance of play for their baby. Practitioners agreed with these sentiments, with 89% (n=33) reporting that the mat and resources provided valuable learning opportunities, which enabled parents to interact and play with their babies. All parents (n=33) and 95% of practitioners (n=35) would recommend the mat to other parents.

Comments from participants included:

"She was safe on the floor and I could keep it clean. I liked playing with the toys and watching her following the noise." [Parent]

"It introduces the parent to the concept of play & interaction with their baby from birth. It introduces the parent & baby to 'Tummy Time' which gives a baby an immediate head start in so many areas of development." [Practitioner]

"Didn't have play mat for other kids and can really see the importance of having one. Baby loves seeing herself in the mirror and cooing to herself, it's lovely to see." [Parent]

"Previously played in the travel cot which was difficult as baby too young to use but now using the mat several times a day and have a natural routine to play together. Each toy we play with is developing her skills – baby grasp and reaching for the toys. Tummy time is really improving." [Parent]

3.1.5. Rethink Ireland Innovate Fund Project: From Couch to Screen

Home Visiting Programmes provide a critical lifeline to children and families at-risk of educational inequality and social exclusion. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Home Visitors have been making virtual 'home visits' via video/phone calls as well as socially distanced outdoor visits to ensure family well-being, address the educational divide and prevent developmental delays. The need for a high-quality responsive hybrid home visiting delivery model that supports children and parents in an ever-changing Covid-impacted world was identified.

A key goal of the Rethink Ireland Innovate Fund Project: From Couch to Screen - Engaging Children and Supporting Families Through High-quality Responsive Hybrid Home Visiting was to align standards in terms of professional qualifications across the country and build the skills and capacity to deliver high quality Home Visiting Programmes that would have a significant positive impact on children and families.

The Rethink Ireland Project enabled us to redesign the existing home visiting curriculum and pedagogy to incorporate blended delivery methods e.g., indoors, outdoors and online as well as develop e-learning modules for leadership/change management for the Coordinators and curriculum/pedagogy for the home visitors. The first QQI Accredited professional qualifications in home visiting were developed. Non-accredited programme specific training and eLearning resources designed and delivered by the coordinators as part of their Level 7 course will be developed over the summer to provide ongoing training and capacity building for home visitors.

- Consultation process to redesign the existing home visiting curriculum/pedagogy involving
 - 16 partner organizations in Dublin, Limerick, Galway, Roscommon, Meath, Kerry, Westmeath, Tipperary, Laois, Offaly, Longford and Louth
 - 9 NCI colleagues from Centre for Teaching and Learning, Quality Assurance, Finance, Exams, School's & Registrar's Offices who guided us through the QQI and programme development process.
 - 45 coordinators and Home Visitors around the country along with the ParentChild+ Senior Specialist and the Consultant on the Sláintecare Community Mothers project
- 2 QQI accredited modules developed collaboratively
 - Level 6 Microcredential in Core Pedagogy and Curriculum in Home Visiting
 - Level 7 Microcredential in Leadership and Change Management for Home Visiting Coordinators.
- 12 participation MOUs signed committing attendance at and implementation of training
- 35 Home Visitors recruited for QQI Accredited Level 6 Microcredential in Core Pedagogy and Curriculum in Home Visiting
- 15 Home Visiting Coordinators recruited for QQI Accredited Level 7 Microcredential in Leadership and Change Management for Home Visiting Coordinators
- Non-accredited programme specific training and eLearning resources are being designed for delivery in September

Securing QQI accreditation for the Curriculum and Leadership modules, particularly in such a short time frame, is a real achievement and the result of many people working together. It would not have been possible without the support of our colleagues in NCI, in particular Quality Assurance and the Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning. It is the base on which we can develop further the professionalism of Home Visitors and encourage them to progress to degree level. It is another step in the realisation of the Government's First 5 goal of developing a standardised model of home visiting across Ireland.

3.1.6. Home Visiting Alliance

Antenatal to five is the most critical period in a child's life and vital for development over the life course. Increasingly research indicates that chronic stress and trauma have a significant negative impact on the developing brain. It reduces parents' capacity to support child development.

Established in November 2020, the Home Visiting Alliance is a collaboration of five Irish evidence-based early childhood home visiting programmes: Community Mothers, Infant Mental Health, Lifestart, ParentChild+ and Preparing for Life, which represents the collective national voice of early childhood home visiting from pre-birth or during pregnancy. While recognising that each programme has its own mechanisms and structures, the Alliance's focus is on promoting common messages about home visiting and addressing cross-programme issues in a systematic coherent and collaborative way.

The purpose of the Home Visiting Alliance is to:

- Promote home visiting from pre-birth or during pregnancy as an essential prevention and early intervention service for children, parents and families.
- Support member organisations, collectively and individually, to strengthen and broaden the impact of home visiting in Ireland.
- Contribute to policy development and implementation in relation to early childhood home visiting from pre-birth or during pregnancy and parenting support locally, nationally and internationally.
- Share our common learning at programme, approach, implementation and policy levels.

Delivery:

- Held monthly executive group meetings chaired by the Director of ELI with the ELI Administrator providing administrative assistance
- Developed terms of reference, overview of home visiting in Ireland along with key commonalities
- Agreed a governance structure as part of the Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN)
- 90 home visiting staff from around the country attended an inaugural webinar in June 2021
- Contributed to the Department of Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) consultation on a national model of parenting support.
- Awarded funding by the Department of Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) under the What Works Learning Together Fund to hold 2 webinars and develop a website in 2021-22

3.2. Research and Innovation

Research and evaluation are central components of ELI's commitment to evidence-based practice. Considered essential to understand the needs of the community, they ensure that the programmes being delivered are meeting these identified needs. They also provide evidence of impact for our funders in addition to making important contributions to growing the knowledge base of early intervention and prevention in Ireland.

As a result of the restrictions implemented at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic ELI pivoted our programmes to continue to support children, parents, and professionals in our community. Throughout 2020-21 ELI continued to build on this work developing a high-quality response hybrid home learning model that supports children and parents in an ever-changing Covid-impacted world.

This section outlines the key research conducted by ELI in 2020-21 in addition to the innovative projects addressing the ever-changing needs of our community during the pandemic.

3.2.1. Community Action Research

The Early Learning Initiative continued to develop in line with their Community Action Research approach in collecting the voices of participants across all programmes through a variety of methods such as evaluation forms (paper based and online), focus groups etc. This includes capturing the voices of children, young people, parents, other family members, staff and corporate volunteers. This year all evaluations were reviewed, and common indicators being measured across ELI's range of programme identified. These include indicators of participation, indicators of programme satisfaction, indicators of participant learning and parental involvement.

In addition, children's learning continued to be measured for specific programmes through a range of child and parent focused measures including the 0-2 Child and Parent Well-being Measure and the 0-2 Parent and Child Observation tool (0-2 Home Visiting Programme), the Parent Child+ Measures (CBT and PACT), Assessing Children's Phonics, Writing, Sight Vocab and Social Skills (Doodle Den Programme), and Assessing Children's Understanding, Knowledge and Skills in Coding (Coding Programme).

To support the development of the ELI's team as Community Action Researchers, two research days were held - at the end of both term 1 (December 2020) and term 2 (June 2021). Both encouraged the team to reflect on their practice, the learnings emerging from the programme data collected and the changes being made in response to this feedback. In June 2021 ELI Home Visitors and Facilitators were also invited to participate with 11 presenting. Of the staff involved across both events, 100% (n=33) reported that they learnt something new about ELI at the event. Due to COVID-19, the event in term 2 took place online with 94% (n=31) of participants at the term 2 event reporting that the virtual format of the event worked well.

3.2.2. Virtual Engagement

As the virtual format of revised delivery of our programmes across Zoom and Microsoft teams was the primary method of delivery in 2020-21, it was encouraging to see it working well with 75% (n=174) of programme respondents (students, parents and professionals) reporting that children/young people achieved the same learning through virtual delivery. This is an increase on the 63% in 2019-20.

To continue to support our community in an ever-changing COVID impacted world ELI will deliver a high-quality response hybrid home learning model in 2021-22. A blended delivery of Home Visiting will continue and the STEM Family Learning Programme, a variety of home-based learning modules for children and their parents piloted in 2020-21 will continue 2021-22.

3.2.3. Parenting365 Project

ELI are monitoring the increase of participants in our Home Visiting programmes presenting with intellectual and or physical disabilities. Nationally, more than one third of programme children have a medical diagnosis, are on waiting lists for assessments or are the subject of concern for not reaching developmental milestones. A pilot programme, funded by the Community Foundation Toy Show Fund, Parenting365 will provide a supplementary support programme to families in our Home Visiting programmes whose children are experiencing significant developmental delays. An accompanying research project will use standardised measures to complete a baseline exploration, identifying developmental, social and emotional challenges affecting this group, and follow-up sessions will measure impact 6 and 9 months on from the programme. The first iteration of this programme is due to commence in Autumn 2021.

3.2.4. Quality Implementation Training and Champions

In April 2021 four nominees from the Dublin Docklands and East Inner City ABC Site (three ELI staff members and one consortium member) participated in ABC Quality Implementation Training which offers common language, consistent approaches and evidence-informed practice in relation to identifying need, planning services, delivering and quality assuring interventions, and the collection and analysis of data to all ABC sites. Two of these staff members elected to become Quality Implementation Champions, continuing their training in 2021 and will work with their ABC colleagues and local stakeholders to integrate the processes considered in the training.

3.2.5. Early Developmental Outcomes of Infants from an Area of Socio-economic Disadvantage: a comparison with National Norms

The study exploring whether infants from an area of socio-economic disadvantage differ in variables related to Child and Parent Well-being, as compared to national norms continued across 2019-20. To date the study has 87 baseline surveys and 40 post programme surveys. A preliminary report on the findings of this research study is available on request from the research team.

3.2.6. ParentChild+ Follow-Up Study

In 2019-20 the ELI Advisory Board approved the recruitment of a researcher to complete a follow-up study on ParentChild+ graduates. In January 2020 a researcher was recruited and began designing the study. Following ethical approval in March 2020, the study began with initial contact being made by Home Visitors explaining the study and inviting parents to take part. Two different cohorts were involved, a cohort of 8/9/10 year olds and a cohort of 13/15 year olds with 97 families identified as being a potential sample. Of these, 53 were successfully contacted by phone with the remainder being uncontactable due to obsolete phone numbers. Five families did not want to take part while 47 were interested in taking part in ELI's research. However only 17 families from the 8/9/10 year old cohort and six from the 13/15 year old cohort met the eligibility (have completed their standardised tests). The study is currently on hold due to the challenges of COVID-19 and the design of a ParentChild+ Graduate Programme. It is expected to resume in 2021-22.

3.2.7. Learnings from a Move Towards Virtual Engagement in Supporting a Community of Socio-Economic Disadvantage During COVID-19.

ELI have collected data to share our learning of our continued work supporting children and families across our community during COVID-19. Our programmes have adapted to virtual delivery and we began checking in with previous programme participants to offer additional supports to families. Over 5000 reflections completed by Home Visitors have been collected which will be explored in 2021-22 to identify the factors that predict positive engagement with virtual delivery of visits.

3.3. Partnerships

ELI enables children, their families and the community, to acquire the skills and self-confidence needed to benefit fully from the educational system. All of our partners understand the challenges faced by the local community and are genuinely committed to making a real, measurable and positive difference to the lives and learning successes of children and young people. This section outlines how, in 2020-21, our partners supported us in improving outcomes for children and young people through sharing their expertise, resources and learning. Thank you to everyone who partnered with ELI last year. We really appreciate your friendship, generosity and commitment to helping us ensure that children and young people in the area achieve their educational, career and life ambitions. We look forward to working with you again in 2021-22 and building on past successes.

3.3.1. Government Partnerships

The Government, through its sustained support and interest in ELI, is directly ensuring a more cohesive, equal and successful society. Implementing Government policy, in particular *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-15* (DCYA 2014) and *First 5, A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families* (DCYA 2018).

The **Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme** enables us in collaboration with our colleagues in the **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Tusla** and local partners address key educational and social issues for children and families in the Dublin Docklands and East Inner City.

The **Department of Justice and Equality through the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014 - 2020 (AMIF)** helped us ensure that migrant children start school on a par with their peers and their parents are enabled access other services, make friends and integrate into the local community

Sláintecare, Prevention is better than cure: The development of a standardised national model and dataset for the Community Mothers Programme is an exciting collaboration with the **HSE, Tusla, Katharine Howard Foundation** and 10 Community Mothers sites across Ireland.

My Place to Play is being mainstreamed across Ireland through a multi-agency Implementation Working Group comprising **Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) National and local areas, Tusla Partnership, Prevention and Family Support (PPFS) National, Tusla Homeless Liaison, the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS)**, thereby ensuring that babies living in homeless/emergency/overcrowded accommodation develop normally and learn how to crawl.

3.3.2. North East Inner City (NEIC) Programme Implementation Board

The NEIC Programme Implementation Board led by an independent chair, Michael Stone, has been very supportive of ELI since its inception. NCI President and ELI Director sit on Subgroup 2: Education and Training and Subgroup 3: Improving Family Wellbeing respectively. ELI was delighted that NEIC funding was continued in 2020-21 for Restorative Practice and Educational Guidance at second level.

3.3.3. Corporate Partners

Without the substantial, long-term financial and voluntary support of our corporate partners, much of the ELI's work would not be possible. We applaud their visionary insights and genuine commitment to making a real, measurable and positive difference to the lives and learning successes of children and young people across Ireland. We are continually seeking additional corporate partners and would welcome the opportunity to talk to interested companies. Please contact Mary Anne Stokes (by phone: 086 4666438 or e-mail: maryanne.stokes@ncirl.ie) for more information on how your organisation could get involved with ELI.

3.3.4. Other Communities across Ireland, EU and globally

ELI, through CERi, is a centre of excellence, from which communities can learn how to improve the educational and life chances of vulnerable children and their families. Over the past year, a range of diverse national and international organisations expressed an interest in learning more about ELI and we are delighted to share our learning with them. We are also involved in the ABC learning communities and are members of the Prevention & Early Intervention Network (PEIN), which are networks of evidence-based practice, advocacy and research organisations that share a commitment to improving outcomes for children, young people, and their communities. This year we were honoured to be one of the founding members of the Home Visiting Alliance, which represents the collective national voice of early childhood home visiting.

3.3.5. Local Docklands and Inner City Dublin Communities

One of the great strengths of ELI has been our local cross sectoral network of public health nurses, early years, after school and youth services, schools, TDs, community, statutory and corporate organisations. As well as directly supporting implementation, their involvement in the ABC Steering Group, Consortium and various Working Groups actively informs the development of all our programmes. Together we are changing children's lives.

3.3.6. Colleagues in the National College of Ireland

NCI staff, from various Departments, work very closely with us to ensure that ELI delivers our programmes to a high standard and best practice is adhered to. Through their interactions with ELI's partners at national and local level, they demonstrate NCI's long-standing commitment to widening participation in higher education and ensuring that children in the area will progress successfully to third level. NCI's Vision 2025 and Academic Strategy recognises ELI as an integral part of the NCI landscape with ELI's Five-Year Strategy 2020-25 aiming to embed ELI further within NCI. Together, we are achieving NCI's strategic goal to be recognised worldwide for excellence in access, education and research in social justice, educational disadvantage and how to lead and support social responsibility and cultural change at an individual, family, organisational and community level.

3.3.7. NCI Governing Body and ELI Advisory Committees

NCI takes full responsibility for the financial, management, contractual, reporting and governance requirements of ELI. The generous commitment of Fr. Leonard Moloney S.J., Chairperson of NCI's Governing Body; Gina Quin, President of NCI; and other members of NCI's Governing Body and Executive Board has been critical to the development and success of ELI.

ELI is a discreet centre within NCI with its own dedicated staff and Advisory Committees. The leadership and expertise shown by Frank Ryan, Chairperson of the ELI Advisory Committee and ABC Steering Group; Dan O'Connor, Chairperson of the ELI Development Committee; Alan Barrett, Chairperson of ELI Research Committee and the other members of the ELI Advisory Committee, ABC Steering Group, Research and Development Committees has been invaluable in ensuring that ELI operates effectively in the best interests of children and families

3.4. Communication

Communication is key to ELI's engagement with all its partners and its ability to influence practice, policy and theory. During 2020-21, we communicated our work to multiple audiences through a mix of social media, conferences/webinars and papers along with traditional print and media coverage. Networking enabled us to expand our learning support networks and develop relationships with other similar organisations, who are committed to improving outcomes for children. It also enhanced our ability to reach new and potential Corporate partners who expressed interest in our work during the year.

3.4.1. Social Media

ELI's social media presence aims to build connections, sustain relationships with stakeholders and share information, achievements and learning. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, our social media platforms perform an essential role to provide updates on how ELI is responding and adapting to the situation and promote access to our full range of activities and programmes for children, young people, parents and families across the community.

Over the year and during school closures in early 2021, ELI continued to reinforce our message around family well-being and self-care for parents and signposted to our extensive suite of online parent and child groups, online parenting courses, and new and innovative online Stretch Graduate Home Learning Challenges, STEM Family Learning and Coding projects, and Zoom Ahead with Books Virtual Book Club.

Other content included suggested activities, news and updates from all programme areas including 0-2 Home Visiting, ParentChild+, Doodle Den, Zoom Ahead with Books, Early Numeracy, Robotic Coding, Restorative Practices and Discover University.

Programme Figures

There was substantial growth across all four of our social media platforms, particularly in Instagram and LinkedIn.

Social Media Platform	Total followers end June 2020	Total followers end June 2021	Increase in 2020/21	% Increase in 2020/21
Facebook	2,373	2,687	314	13%
Instagram	357	663	306	86%
Twitter	1,027	1,148	121	12%
LinkedIn	196	331	135	69%
Totals	3,953	4,829	876	22%

Highlights of Content Posted:

- 13,565 reach and 732 engagements for **Education Guidance 'A Day in the Life'** post with Dublin Fire Brigade on Twitter in February 2021.
- 9,066 reach and 55 engagements for post announcing **RTE Toy Show Appeal Fund** success on Twitter in June 2021.
- 7,812 reach and 64 engagements for post opening **Restorative Communities Webinar with Minister Paschal Donohoe** on Twitter in June 2021.
- 3,499 reach with 330 engagements for **ParentChild+** family Sign-up post on Facebook in July 2020.

- 1,932 reach and 480 engagements for **ESB Group Energy for Generation Fund** video post on Facebook in July 2020.

Themed Content:

- 2,043 average reach and 204 average engagement per post for our **International Women’s Day ‘Women of ELI’** series (6 posts).
- 1,770 average reach and 58 average engagement per post for **Discover University** (10 posts).
- 1,008 average reach and 99 average engagement per post for **Zoom Ahead with Books Virtual Book Club** series (24 posts).
- 935 average reach and 99 average engagement per post for **Parent Child+** updates and celebrations (14 posts).
- 927 average reach and 56 average engagement per post for **International Children’s Day Storytime** video series (7 posts).
- 785 average reach and 60 average engagement per post for **Weaning Your Baby with 0-2 Home Visiting** series (4 posts).
- 509 average reach and 17 average engagement per post for **Screen Time Tips Series from ParentChild+ National** (4 posts).
- 480 average reach and 32 average engagement per post for **ELI Research Insights** (10 posts).
- 333 average reach and 94 average engagement per post for **Multilingual May Song and Rhyme** video series (7 posts).

3.4.2. Conference Presentations

Byrne, M. (2020). My Place to Play Programme: Creating a Dedicated Place to Play for Infants and Their Families Living in Emergency Accommodation. Presented at the Early Childhood Ireland Research Symposium, 19th October.

Kavanagh, A. (2020) Conversation-Based Research with Young People: Discover University Focus Groups. Presented at CARN Conference 2020, 25th October.

Bleach, J. & Shinnick M. (2021). ELI’s Partnership Approach. Presented at TU Dublin Community – Higher Education Partnership Seminar, 24th June.

Darmody, K. & Kent, G. (2021) Capturing the voices of school aged children the COVID-19 pandemic. Presented at the Early Childhood Ireland Online Research Symposium, 24th April.

McGrath, L., Grennan, G., Power, L., & Harris, A. (2021). Ireland’s Call: Responding and Adapting to Family’s Needs During a Pandemic. Presented at the ParentChild+ Annual Conference, 18th May.

Wheatley, E., Goulding, S., Flood, C., & Darmody, K. (2021). Creating Restorative Communities. Presented at the ELI Restorative Practices Webinar, 10th June.

Wheatley, E. & Darmody, K. (2021). Creating Restorative Communities. Presented at the National College of Ireland Research Day, 25th June.

3.4.3. Networking

Learning networks are a significant element of our ethos and our community action research approach. In 2020/21, members of the ELI team attended 193 interagency networking events. Of these, 88 were related to the ABC Programme, 52 were Dublin’s Inner City related, while the remainder (n=53) involved CERl and national initiatives. Key criteria for networking are the individual’s and organisation’s commitment to improving outcomes for children along with their ability to work in partnership with others. Priority is given to networks that are focused on early childhood development, educational disadvantage and supports for parents. Learning more about or

having an input into Irish and European policy, especially when it concerns children's learning and development, is highly valued.

Key networks in 2020-21 included

- Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) and PPFS Child and Family Networks at local and national level
- Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN), ABC Managers Forum and Home Visiting Alliance.
- Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) consultation on developing a national model for Parent Support
- Member of TCD's Grand Canal Innovation District Enterprise Working Group
- Collaborating with TCD's AMBER Centre on STEM outreach events; DCU's Community Outreach Group on Voices for Vaccines project and UCD's Lego Project
- Early Years Groups: Dublin City Childcare Committee; Better Start and Síolta Mentors; National Síolta Aistear Initiative (NSAI) Awareness Training Initiative
- YPAR Meitheal, 0-5; 5-12; Homeless; Meitheal; Foreign National and Steering Groups
- North Inner-City Community Coalition and its subgroups
- Homeless organisations: CDYEB; Foundations Projects; Focus Ireland, Cross Care
- Restorative Practice Ireland; Restorative Coordinators Group (CDI Tallaght, South City Partnership, Ballyfermot and Limerick; Dublin Restorative Community Development; European Forum for Restorative Justice group
- Charities Institute Ireland; The Wheel; Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) and NEARI

3.4.4. Academic Publications

Bleach (2020). Real-World Ethical Experiential Practice Based Action Learning for the 'New Normal', In Dunning, Bottom, Diamond and Elliott eds, Handbook of Teaching and Learning in Public Administration and Management. *Handbook of Teaching and Learning in Public Administration and Management*, London: Edward Elgar Publishing (forthcoming)

4. DUBLIN'S INNER CITY

Since 2006, ELI has partnered with our local Docklands community to develop a range of pioneering programmes aimed to improve the educational aspirations and outcomes of children and young people. ELI's commitment to Dublin's Inner City remain strong. While it has grown into a demonstration site for CERI ([Chapter 3](#)), where best practice can be observed, and real-life examples and evidence of impact is available, it remains focused on delivering high quality Home Visiting, Parent Support, Literacies and Educational Guidance Programmes, that meet the needs of children and families in the area.

ELI's pioneering portfolio of programmes in Dublin's Inner City include:

- [Home Visiting and Parent Support](#) (N=748 families) - positive home environment through playful learning interactions.
- [Literacies](#) (N=2,369 children) – improving social, language, coding and thinking skills.
- [Educational Guidance](#) (N=305 young people) - accessing education and career opportunities.
- [Capacity Building, Training and Mentoring](#) (N=372 professionals) – building professionals' skills to collectively improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

At three years of age, there are already big differences in language and mathematical development between children depending on their family circumstances. This gap continues to widen if it is not addressed before children start pre-school. Dublin's Inner City Home Visiting and Parent Support Programmes help parents to develop their children's social, language and thinking skills from an early age and thereby ensuring that their children enter school ready to learn.

While support in the Early Years is undoubtedly essential, continued input throughout a child's life is needed to sustain the gains made through prevention and early intervention. ELI's wrap-around approach builds an excitement about education through multiple progressive sustained interventions in the same family, street and community with learning seen as enjoyable and something to be shared between families, schools, services and our corporate partners. These practices sustain high levels of parental involvement and increases the likelihood of children, with continued enthusiastic committed support from their parents, progressing through the education system to third level, and developing the skills, knowledge and dispositions required to achieve their educational, career and life goals.

Objectives:

- Enable children and young people to develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions they will need to achieve their educational, career and life goals
- Increase parental involvement and skills in supporting their children's development and education
- Ensure smooth transitions, continuity and progression in learning for children moving from home to early years' settings to local schools, afterschool services and on to higher education
- Promote a safe, secure, caring, holistic, restorative learning environment at home, in school, after-schools and youth organisations in Dublin's Inner City community
- Support family needs through interagency collaboration in Dublin's Inner City
- Sustain a world class research and development site for CERI, where innovative ideas can be trialled and tested before being scaled up for mainstreaming and/or adaption in other communities.

This section gives a brief summary of all ELI's Dublin Docklands and East Inner City programmes in 2020-21. More details on each programme are available on the website: www.ncirl.ie/eli. If you would like more information on a particular programme, please contact Catriona Flood by e-mail catriona.flood@ncirl.ie or phone: 086 0296894

4.1. Home Visiting and Parent Support

This section examines Dublin’s Inner City Home Visiting and Parent Support Programmes, which aim to improve children's overall development and school readiness by supporting parents/guardians to provide a positive home environment through playful learning interactions. These programmes developed in collaboration with local parents and services are the ABC 0-2 Home Visiting Programme; ABC 0-3 Community Parent Support Groups; ParentChild+ (formerly Parent Child Home Programme); Home from Home Transition Programme and Restorative Parenting. Since March 2020, we have been reaching out to our ParentChild+ graduates to see how they are getting on and what, if any, support they require with COVID-19. Details of these calls are available at the end of this section.

Objectives:

- To increase parental skills, knowledge and engagement in all areas of their children’s development and learning
- To develop oral language, social, emotional, literacy, and numeracy skills of children so that they enter school with the skills needed for success in education and life
- To provide resources and materials to create a stimulating home learning environment
- To provide the information parents need to successfully navigate the Irish systems (healthcare, housing, education) for themselves and their children
- To ensure effective transitions for children at key developmental stages and between home, hospital, early years’ service, school, statutory & community services
- To enhance and develop the existing interagency collaboration within the area and co-facilitating community support groups with other agencies to support specific family’s needs
- To enable children and their families to experience a safe, secure, stable, caring, holistic, learning and restorative environment in their home, in services (statutory and community) and throughout the community

Home Visiting and Parent Support Programmes	Children	Parents	Total
	575	800	1,375
Home Visiting Programmes	Children	Parents	Total
ABC 0-2 Home Visiting Programme (0-2 years)	134	177	311
ABC ParentChild+ (18-36 months)	170	174	344
Home from Home	23	21	44
Total - Home Visiting	327	372	699
ABC Parent Support Programmes	Children	Parents	Total
ABC Parenting Group Support Sessions (0-3 years)	213	213	426*
ABC 0-3 Summer Programme (0-3 years)	35	35	70
Restorative Parenting (0-11 years)	0	77	77
ParentChild+ Graduates Calls	0	103	103
Total - Parent Support	248	428	676

*This figure is slightly overrepresented due to an initial stage (Sept-Oct) of counting logins for virtual sessions

4.1.1. ABC 0-2 Home Visiting

The ABC 0-2 Years Home Visiting Programme, which is an adaptation of the Community Mothers Programme, is now in its seventh year of programme delivery as part of the ABC Programme. A universal, prevention-focused home visiting programme, it supports families to improve children's (from pre-birth to two years of age) wellbeing, developmental and learning outcomes while increasing parental skills, knowledge and engagement.



A 0-2 Programme Virtual Visit

Programme Delivery

- 132 families took part over the year
- 1,801 programme visits in 2020-21 supported parents' wellbeing and children's development
 - 1,079 video calls
 - 408 socially distanced, face-to-face outdoor visits
 - 314 phone calls when video calls and outdoor visits weren't possible
- 89 socially distanced visits to deliver learning materials to families and face-to-face check-ins
- 164 referrals were received. The team continued to work in partnership with the families' PHNs, and Family Support Practitioners to provide continuity of care and share the one key message of integrated support.

The ABC 0-2 Home Visiting team are involved in the Sláintecare Community Mothers project, an Irish-developed home visiting programme which supports parents in caring for their babies and young children while also encouraging them to look after their own health and well-being. Further information on this project can be found in [Section 3.1.3](#).

Child and Parent Observation Tool

The Child and Parent Observation Tool was developed in 2018-19 to track the wellbeing and development of the participating children and their parents as they progress through the programme. The 1st Observation is completed after the 4th visit, the 2nd Observation is completed after the 12th visit and the remaining stages of observations are completed every 12 visits thereafter.

The below table presents the observations of the parents and children engaging in 2020-21 and the percentage of those scoring often or always at each of the observation stages. These illustrate promising developments in parents' knowledge and confidence as they progressed through the programme, increasing by 51% and 15% respectively. The data also highlights, however, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the noted increase in parents experiencing isolation. It also must be noted,

however, that due to the universal nature of the programme, whereby all new parents in the catchment area are eligible participants, those that remain on the programme for longer periods tend to be those most in need. Thus, this may also influence the average scores as families progress throughout the observation stages.

	Obs 1 (n=99)	Obs 2 (n=80)	Obs 3 (n=45)	Obs 4 (n=21)
Parent Observations by Home Visitor				
Social Support	40%	41%	40%	33%
Isolated	29%	29%	33%	57%
Health	62%	61%	51%	67%
Warmth	93%	97%	98%	95%
Responsiveness	82%	91%	89%	95%
Knowledge	39%	46%	69%	90%
Confidence	56%	69%	64%	71%
Child Observations by Home Visitor				
Responds to parent appropriately	77%	80%	83%	90%
Developing as expected	85%	90%	91%	81%
Healthy	89%	94%	89%	86%
Appropriate diet	84%	91%	87%	90%

Participant Feedback

Ninety-six percent (n=52) of participants reported finding the programme useful/ beneficial, 94% (n=51) that they learnt new approaches/ideas and 100% (n=54) would recommend the programme to a friend. In commenting specifically on what they learnt from engaging in the programme parents mentioned practical tips around caring for their baby such as information on sleep, nutrition, toilet training and safety; tips for playing and interacting with baby including tummy time, sensory play, singing, nursery rhymes, arts and crafts and reading to baby; information on child development and skills in baby massage. Over a third of parents (35%, n=12) were finishing the programme as their baby had turned two, 26% (n=9) as they were returning to work, 21% (n=7) to move over to ParentChild+, with 18% (n=6) moving out of the area.

Comments from parents/guardians included:

“I am incredibly thankful for all your help and support all over these months. It's been an exciting but extremely difficult for me and you have helped me at lot.” [Parent]

“New Mummies and babies are very lucky to have you All the Best” [Parent]

“ELI program was our source of trust besides our PHN for setting us as new parents who respect, care and develop her child’s physical and cognitive development. We had the chance to work with our home visitor, she is a great listener, an engaging trainer, a curious mind who always guides, encourages, champions and motivates us.” [Parent]

4.1.2. 0-3 Community Parent Support Programme

The ABC 0-3 Parent Support Programme, now in its seventh year, was developed and piloted in collaboration with local parents and professionals. It has a dual purpose of supporting positive parent-child learning interactions as well as linking parents to the other parents and local supports. All the sessions are based on best practice: Aistear, The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA 2000), Síolta the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (CECDE 2006), Aistear Síolta Practice Guide (2015), Parents Together Community Course (Parents Plus & NCI 2008) and ParentChild+ Programme.



Child taking part in Online Storytelling Group (with a few of his friends!)

Programme Delivery

- Approximately 164 families engaged in groups in 2020/21.
 - 15 online groups were held across the year (Storytelling, Song-time, Fitness for Mams, Read, Rattle and Roll, Baby Yoga, Weaning workshop, Baby Massage courses)
- 49 families engaged in the Baby massage courses
 - 25 mothers participated in Baby Massage with Mams
 - 13 fathers participated in Baby Massage with Dads
 - 11 parents participated in Baby Massage in Mandarin
- 15 families engaged in a new workshop series 'Let's Talk Weaning' delivered across 3 sessions by the coordinator and a Public Health Nurse for parents with 4-12 month old infants their weaning journey.
- 7 one-off themed storytelling sessions were introduced with an average of 21 attendees per session marking different celebratory dates throughout the year such as Halloween and International Children's Day (1 primary school Junior Infant class from City Quay National School joined our St. Patrick's Day Zoom session and a local librarian co-facilitated one session as a collaborative piece).
- 8 summer programme events with 35 families (numbers reduced to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions) were delivered over a blended approach (4 online creative 'Make & Do' sessions and 4 'Out & About' park sessions).
- 23 books and 20 activity arts & crafts packs were gifted to families.
- 52 social media posts related to Groups to communicate with families and professionals including projects like 'Multilingual May' which included songs & rhymes sang or recited by group facilitators in their native language including Mandarin, Croatian, Latvian, Russian and Irish. The reach of these posts was 6,828 with a total engagement of 1,101.

Facilitator Observations

At the end of each session, group facilitators complete an observational tool to document the learning occurring across the various group sessions being delivered by ELI group facilitators. The more commonly supported area of development across the groups are children's speech and language skills (81%), followed by social and communication skills (77%), concentration skills (74%) and fine motor skills and gross and fine motor skills (68%).

Participant Feedback

Evaluation feedback indicated a high level of satisfaction across all groups, as all participants (N=62) reported feeling glad that they attended, and majority of the participants reported feeling supported by the facilitator (98%, n=59). Participants also reported very positive benefits to their own well-being (87%, n=53) and to their child's development and well-being (81%, n=46). There was evidence of learning across the groups with majority of participants (98% n=61) reporting that they learned new approaches/ideas through participating in the group.

Comments from parents/guardians included:

"I think the class is really good and there is great balance between the facilitators and good interaction with the group." [Father attending Infant Massage]

"Coming to group has given me the confidence and reassurance as a first time Mam." [Mother attending Read, Rattle and Roll Baby Group]

"We really enjoyed it, connecting with everyone and having that dedicated time with baby. Something to look forward to every week." [Mother attending Infant Massage]

"My oldest daughter was only 4 months old when she started going to the Marks Lane group and the Pearse Library group and now she is 4 years old! I would also like to say that taking into account that it is not easy to make a children's playgroup online, the people who lead both groups make it enjoyable and fun it is such a beautiful and useful resource for these difficult times where socialization is difficult." [Mother attending Storytelling and Songtime]

4.1.3. ABC ParentChild+ Programme

Originally from the US, the ParentChild+ programme is an innovative, home-based literacy and parenting programme that strengthens families and prepares children to succeed academically. For over 14 years, we have been delivering ParentChild+ to vulnerable families with children aged 18 months - 3 years in Dublin's Inner City. Beginning with 15 families in 2007, the numbers have grown to 168 in 2021. The National ParentChild+ Training, Research and Support Centre, established in January 2020, supports implementation. More details on ParentChild+ National can be found in [Section 3.1.1.](#) of this report.

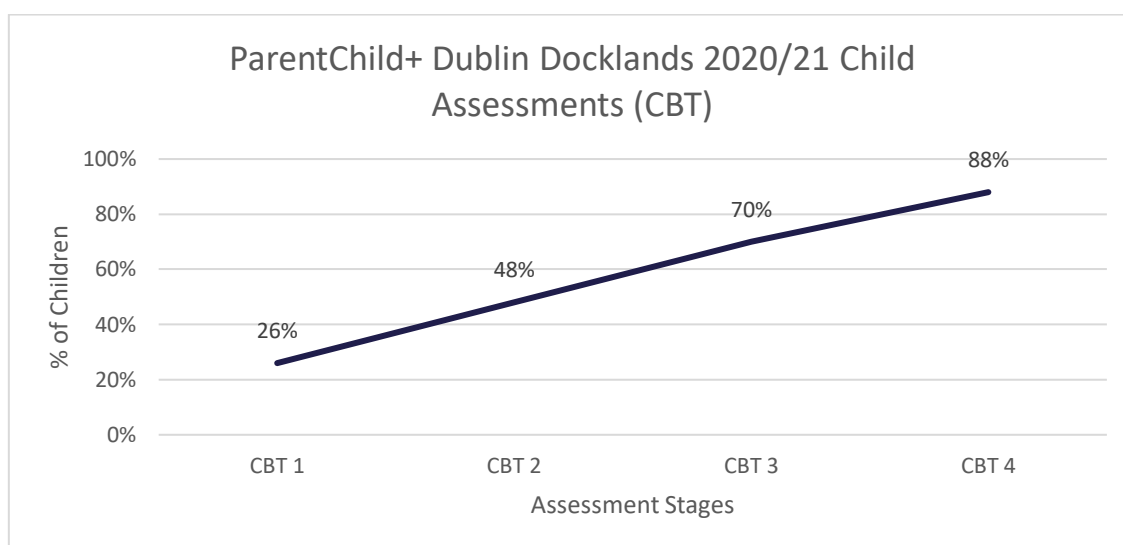
Programme Delivery

- 168 Families participated in ParentChild+ Dublin Docklands and Dublin 8 this year, engaging in 4,396 video call visits, 104 phone call visits and 190 socially distanced outdoor visits.
- 38 children graduated.

- 36 families left the programme before completion.
- 79% retention rate which is 7% lower than 2019/20 (86%) but the same as 2018/19 (79%).
- 78 female and 86 male children with the gender of 5 children not specified by the parents.
- 162 female adults and six males participated in the programme. Gender of one adult is unknown.
- 56% Irish, 14% Chinese, 5% Eastern European, 6.5% African, 7% Asian, 5% Western European, and 5% South American.
- 28 ParentChild+ home visitors delivered the programme to families in 2020/21.
- 135 referrals received from the ELI 0-2 Home Visiting Programme, Family Support Workers, Public Health Nurses, Local schools, Social Workers and other Non-profit organisations and charities.
- 23 ParentChild+ themed social media posts were posted on the ELI social media channels.

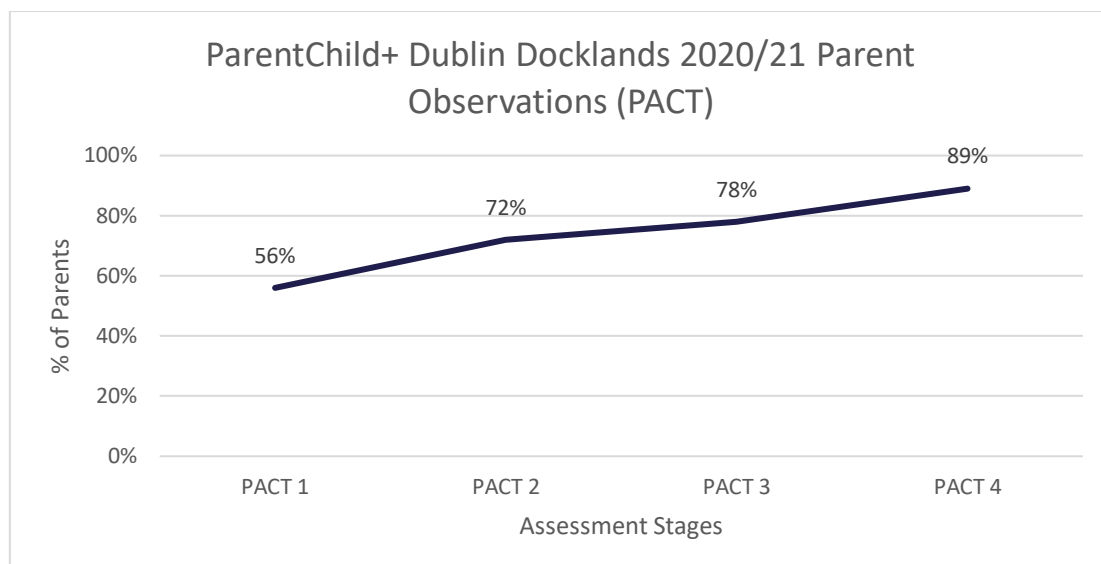
Programme Assessment- Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)

Throughout the programme Home Visitors complete two observational assessments (CBT and PACT). For more information on the assessments please see [Section 3.1.1.](#) As can be seen in the figure below, the percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones in Dublin’s Inner City has gradually increased throughout the programme, from 26% at the beginning of the programme to 48%, 70% and, finally, 88% on completion of the programme. This 62% increase overall is an improvement on that of the 2019-20 cohort (54%) and, also, the 2020-21 increase across all ParentChild+ sites nationally (53%, see [Section 3.1.1.](#)).



The average CBT score of children who completed the programme in 2020-21 increased from 65 at CBT 1 to 107 at CBT 4, with 100% of children demonstrating an increase in positive verbal interaction and behaviour. This percentage of increase is 2% greater than that of 2019-20 and 2018-19. Children also demonstrated developmental increases across the three CBT subscales (cognition, behaviour and language) at each stage of the programme.

Overall, there was a significant increase in the percentage of parents having high-quality interactions with their children from 56% at PACT 1 to 89% at PACT 4. This is the same progression as was from the 2019-20. The percentage of increase from PACT 1 to PACT 4 (33%) is also the similar as that of the overall ParentChild+ 2020/21 cohort (31%, see [Section 3.1.1.](#)).



The average PACT score of children and parents who completed the programme in 2020-21 increased from 69 at the early stages of the programme to 90 at PACT 4, with 96% of parents demonstrating an increase in positive verbal interaction and behaviour. A slight decrease from 2019-20 in which 100% of parent demonstrated an increase. The percentages of parents having good quality interactions with their children show improvement in all four areas of assessment (parent’s responsiveness to their child, parent’s affection toward their child, parent’s communication with their child and parent’s consistency with their child) at each stage of assessment.

Parent and Child Engagement

The percentage of parents Home Visitors reported as fully engaged for their visits increased from 84% of parents in 2019-20 to 88% in 2020-21. Eight percent of parents in 2020-21 were reported as somewhat engaged with the visits. Sixty-five percent of the children were reported as fully engaged in their visits in 2020-21, in comparison to 69% in 2019-20. The slight decrease in full engagement can be due to conducting all visits virtually. Twenty-eight percent of children were somewhat engaged while 5% were not engaged with the visits.

Participant Feedback

Satisfaction rates remained high with all parents (N=47) reporting they would recommend the programme to a friend. The majority of parents reported learning new approaches and ideas from participating in the programme (93%, n=43). Parents reported their children are benefitting most in the areas of social skills (96%, n=44), language and numeracy skills (94%, n=44), and literacy skills (91%, n=43). Many families (78%, n=35) finished the programme as they had completed their visits. Other reasons for leaving early included the child starting pre-school (18%, n=8) moving from the area (2%, n=1), and parent returning to work (2%, n=1).

Comments from parents/ guardians included:

"I'm delighted she is engaging so well and thanks, I just do my best to give her a life I never had." [Parent]

"The programme showed me how to become a parent." [Parent]

"I can see my child coming on, my Home Visitor told me I'm a good Mammy, which really means a lot to me." [Parent]

"We count ourselves lucky to have our Home Visitor, and for providing such great support to us." [Parent]



ParentChild+ Child Playing with the Easter Activity

4.1.4. Home from Home Transition Programme

The Home from Home Transition Programme is an intensive weekly home visiting programme developed by our Home Visiting Team for families living in emergency/ homeless accommodation, which provides an integrated plan of intervention and support for families with children aged 16 months onwards.

Programme Delivery

- 20 families participated in the Home from Home Programme this year
- 11 emergency accommodation services referred families this year including B&Bs, Homeless Family Hubs, Sonas Women's and Children's Refuge.
- 256 visits took place, including video call visits (218), phone calls (8) and outdoor visits (30)
- 8 interagency meetings took place this year
- ELI represented on the YPAR Children in Homelessness working Group & Summer Activities for Children in Homelessness Subgroup

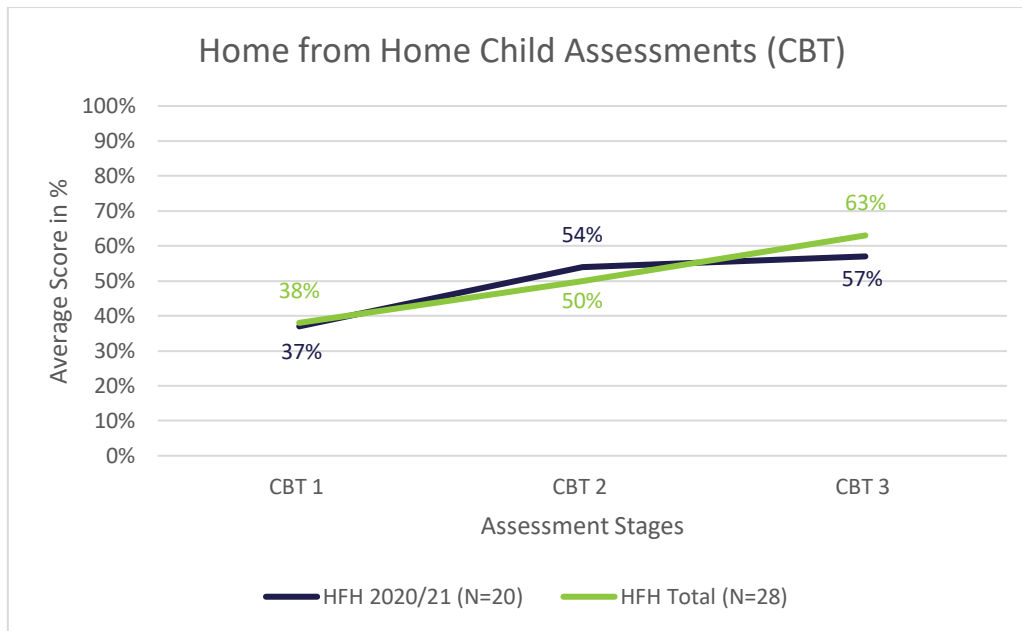


Proud Moment – Graduating from Home from Home

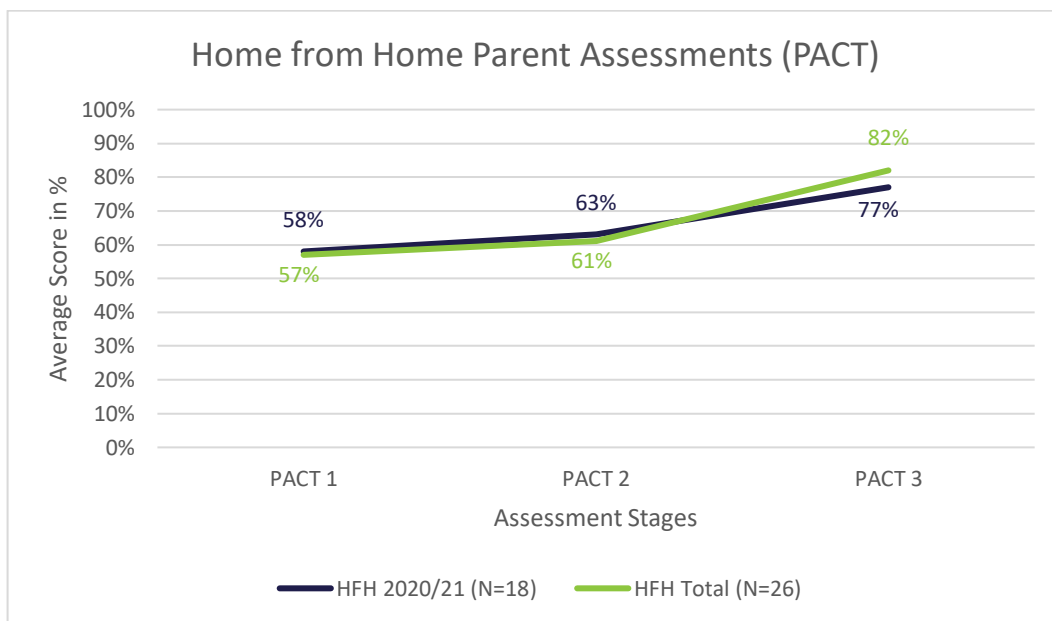
Programme Assessment- Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)

For the Home from Home programme Home Visitors complete a baseline CBT and PACT after the 2nd visit and a second CBT and PACT after the 12th visit. Due to the nature of the programme many families may be relocated to other accommodation and finish the programme at this stage. For any family that continues with the programme after the 12th visit, a final CBT and PACT assessment are completed after their final visit. (Please see [Section 3.1.1.](#) for further details on these assessments). Despite adopting the same observation measure as is used in ParentChild+, comparisons cannot be drawn between the two programmes' assessments due to the assessments being completed at different time periods. Comparisons have been drawn between the 2020-21 Home from Home cohort and the Total Home from Home cohort of families that have engaged since its inception in 2019.

As can be seen in the graph below 37% of the children in the 2020/21 Home from Home cohort were reaching their developmental milestones on entering the programme, similar to the 38% of the total Home from Home cohort. The average percentage score of children reaching their developmental milestones in the 2020/21 cohort increased by 17% at CBT 2 and by a further 3% at CBT 3. The cohorts remained comparable at CBT 1 and 2, and although the 2020/21 cohort's average score at CBT 3 is lower than the total cohort, due to the small sample sizes these results must be interpreted with caution as there is greater chance of individuals affecting the average.



With respect to parent-child interactions, the average percentage score of the 2020/21 Home from Home cohort remained just below the total cohort for assessment stages 1 and 2. Again the gap increased slightly by PACT 3. Despite this, the 2020/21 cohort experienced a 20% increase overall.



Parent and Child Engagement

Parents were fully engaged for 63% of the visits, and children were fully engaged for 52% of the visits. Both levels of engagement were less than that of the ParentChild+ cohort (86% and 63% respectively). It must be noted, however, the considerable challenges the Home from Home families face, particularly space restrictions, which may affect the children throughout the visits.

Participant Feedback

Eight of the parents provided feedback through exit evaluations and end of year evaluations. All of the parents (100%, n=8) reported finding both the programme and the books and toys provided useful and would recommend the programme to a friend. All also indicated that they learned new

approaches and ideas and were confident in implementing the strategies they learnt while participating. All the parents reported that their child has improved in the areas of speech and language skills, numeracy skills, and literacy skills through participating in the programme. Seventy-five percent (n=6) also saw improvements in social skills and 63% (n=5) that their child's attention span had improved.

Comments from parents/guardians included:

"Our Home Visitor has managed to calm my son into participating in activities. In the summer when all he wanted was to go outside and play. She engages with him in a way that's cool and collected. I love it and he listens." [Parents]

"I learned to take time and understand my son's ques and really hear him out what he feels about a situation or certain things. Rather than just assume that he is meant to do a certain way." [Parent]

4.1.5. Restorative Parenting Programme

The Restorative Parenting Programme supports healthy parent-child relationships through the development of parents' self-awareness, communication skills, and self-care practices. It helps parents to engage mindfully rather than reactively, seeking to understand their children's behaviour, and taking time to reflect on the types of interactions that are helpful and supportive.

Programme Delivery

- 57 parents engaged in 8 online Restorative Parenting courses (there was a higher level of participation in the online courses than previous face to face delivery).
- 5 parents engaged in an online Family Wellbeing and Managing Uncertainty webinar.
- 3 self-care workshops for new moms were held with a total of 10 mothers engaging.
- 7 parents engaged in 12 one to one parent support sessions.
- 13 social media posts to support parents were developed and shared.
- 4 new services were engaged with this year on referrals to the programme.

Participant Feedback

Parents (91%, n=21) found the Restorative Parenting Programme helpful; 87% (n=20) reported confidence in using the suggested parenting strategies and 87% (n=20) would be interested in taking part in a follow-up course, or future training. On completing the programme 96% (n=22) of parents reported knowing why their child is upset or disruptive and 78% (n=18) are experiencing less instances of their child misbehaving. Furthermore 91% (n=21) of parents find it easy to play with their child and 96% (n=22) report that they can communicate clearly and directly with their child. Parents also provided feedback on the Family Wellbeing Webinar, (75%, n=3) found the session helpful and felt more equipped to support their child with difficult emotions. After attending the webinar (100%, n=4) would like to engage in further parenting training, or programmes.

Comments from parents/ guardians included:

“It was time put to learn new strategies and get support from the facilitator and other mums. We are missing out on group during covid and there was a really nice non-judgmental group with an excellent facilitator.”

“By connecting with other parents, I realise that I am not alone in struggling at times with being a parent. The support of the facilitator and the other parents is invaluable. Each week I came away with ideas and inspiration to become a better parent. I particularly enjoyed the meditation section to wind me down from the pressures of daily life.”

4.1.6. ParentChild+ Graduate Calls

In recognizing the challenging situation many parents were facing during COVID-19, ELI reached out to previous graduates of the ParentChild+ programme - checking in to see how they and their family were doing in addition to offering them some support through ELI. This support has continued throughout 2020-21 with the aim to ensure that parents whose children we have supported through their early years education will have the confidence, understanding, skills, and knowledge to continue to support their children’s educations in this new everchanging situation in which home learning is more critical than ever. This initiative is now being developed into the Stretch Graduate Programme, which will be rolled out in 2021/22.

Programme Delivery

- 215 families were contacted in 2020-21
 - 84 completed an interview
 - 19 families engaged in a conversation with the ELI staff member yet decided not to participate in an interview
 - 92 families did not answer the call, these families also received a text and were invited to call back if they wished to participate
 - 20 phone numbers were unfortunately no longer in service, letter were sent to each of their addresses to invite them to call us if they wished to participate

Participant Feedback

It was great to see that many parents reported to be doing well (63%, n=53), and that this increased from 44% of families in 2019-20. However, a few reported to be having a difficult time and rated their family’s well-being as low (11%, n=9). Similarly, some parents were reported to be managing well with their children home from school (61% n=17) while some (14%, n=4) were finding it challenging. There were also mixed reports at how satisfied parents were with the level support they were receiving from their children’s school with most (63%, n=17) satisfied but some being dissatisfied (7%, n=2). In

relation to the quality of the home environment they were providing their children, half of the parents (50%, n=13) were happy with it while others (12%, n=3) were unhappy. Of those that were interviewed after children had returned to school (N=53), very little (8%, n=4) missed much school due to COVID-19. The most commonly requested support from parents was links to our social media (48%, n=41). Some parents (24%, n=21) requested activity packs as a support for them and their child during the COVID-19 crisis. Others requested group sessions (16%, n=14), online learning materials (12%, n=10), and regular check ins (6%, n=5).

Comments from participants included:

“My daughter received an activity pack and was delighted that ELI remembered her. It kept her going and now I use it with smaller children.” [Parent]

“Parent said they are doing fine but thinks the pandemic has affected everybody in some way. Their child has a great love of reading and parent put this down to the Home Visiting programme. Parent said they got lots of books from the programme and they continued this and kept their child busy.” [ELI Interviewer]

4.2. Literacies and STEM

ELI's Literacy, Numeracy and Coding Programmes focus on supporting parents, services and schools to develop children's social, language and thinking skills from an early age; thereby, ensuring that the children and young people in the area continue to develop the skills needed to achieve their educational, career and life goals. These programmes, developed through careful collaboration with local services and schools, are Early Numeracy Programme, Zoom Ahead with Books, Doodle Den, STEM Family Learning, Robotic Coding Clubs, Community Based Tuition Support and Language Cafés.

Objectives:

- Enable children and young people to continue to develop the skills they will need to achieve their educational and career goals
- Develop a learning rich environment in inner city Dublin
- Support parental involvement in their children's education and learning
- Encourage children's and families' interest and pleasure in Literacy, Numeracy and Coding
- Widen participation in higher education within the Docklands

Literacies & STEM Programmes	Children	Parents
Early Numeracy Project (0-8 years)	1,031	1,546
Zoom Ahead with Books (4-6 years)	1,035	1,552
Doodle Den (Senior Infants)	84	126
Stretch Home Learning (6-9 years)	18	27
Family STEM Learning Events (6-9 years)	24	20
Robotic Coding Club (afterschools)	18	27
Tuition Support (15-18 years)	61	0
Language Cafe Events (15-18 years)	94	0
ListenHere (16-17 years)	4	0
Totals	2,369	3,298

4.2.1. Early Numeracy Programme

Beginning in 2011 with funding from the National Early Years Access Initiative (NEYAI), this programme is aimed at improving early year's numeracy and mathematical skills from birth to six years of age. With funding from the ABC Programme, this programme has grown from 16 organisations and 498 children in 2011-12 to 25 organisations and 1,031 children in 2020-21. The programme revolves around the three community Early Numeracy Weeks. This year's themes were Symbols of the Environment, Number and Money. Working group meetings and onsite mentoring support practitioners to reflect on and improve the quality of the programme and their practice using the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* as a resource.

Programme Delivery

- 1,031 children and 1,546 parents overall.
- 12 early years services, 10 schools, 4 afterschools, 5 libraries and 5 Public Health Centres engaged and received numeracy cards and activity packs to be used at home and in the school/service.
- 38 numeracy themed social media posts with a reach of 10,255 and 759 engagements.

Participant Learning and Feedback

On completion of each Early Numeracy Week, both staff and parents were asked to provide feedback through an online evaluation. In total across the three terms 70 parents and 87 staff members completed evaluations. Although these figures are both lower than those of 2019-20 (250 and 126

respectively), it must be noted that the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions of schools and services throughout the past 16 months disrupted the direct engagement with parents and hindered the distribution of evaluations of the 2020-21 Early Numeracy Weeks.

Despite the disruptions overall satisfaction with the programme was high and remained comparable to the previous year. Most staff (95%, n=83) and parents (95%, n=59) agreed or strongly agreed that the Early Numeracy Weeks were an enjoyable experience for the children involved. Ninety-two percent (n=56) of parents also highlighted their own enjoyment in completing the activities with their child and (97%, n=64) said they would recommend the Early Numeracy Weeks and its activities to a friend. Staff reported that the Early Numeracy Weeks provided valuable learning opportunities for the children (100%, n=87), parents (79%, n=67), and staff (89%, n=75).

Interestingly, although parents' reports of children's learning dropped slightly (4% or 5%) from last year staff's reports increased by 11%. Eighty nine percent (n=56) of parents noted that the Early Numeracy Weeks improved their child's numeracy skills, and it provided their children with the opportunity to learn more about numeracy (94% and 93% respectively). According to 86% (n=75) of staff, the Early Numeracy Weeks improved children's understanding of the numeracy theme (75% in 2019/20).

It is also of note that both parents and staff noted a decrease in Early Numeracy Weeks involving the parents in their child's learning. Just 42% (n=37) of staff reported an increased level of parental involvement (53% in 2019-20). Eighty six percent of parents found the Early Numeracy Weeks encouraged them to become more involved in their child's learning in comparison to 92% in 2019-20. This could be due to parents having an increased level of involvement with their children's learning overall due to the pandemic. That said, opportunities to talk and play with their child more with their children (88%, n=58) and improve their teaching skills/knowledge (83%, n=54) for parents remained the same.

Staff also reported on the online delivery of the Early Numeracy Weeks, 81% (n=63) found the online resources provided by ELI to be accessible and 83% (n=63) said that the online meetings were accessible.

Comments from parents/ guardians included:

*"Being more aware on how to teach them numeracy and positional language."
[Teacher]*

"My child loved doing nursery rhymes each day. I also enjoyed it." [Parent]

"The focus on a theme which aided the planning of classes and encouraged team work and positive energy among all staff." [Teacher]

"Reinforced the importance of numeracy learning at this age and allowed the staff to gain an understanding of the different levels children are at. " [Teacher]

4.2.2. Zoom Ahead with Books

The Zoom Ahead with Books project encourages parental involvement and promotes children's enjoyment and motivation to read for pleasure. The programme is designed for children with family members as book buddies attending preschool, reception, junior infants, senior infants and 1st classes but can be used with children up to age 9 years with volunteer book buddies in after-schools services.

Programme Delivery

- 972 children and their families in 58 classes from 11 primary schools and 1 preschool participated in the programme despite COVID-19 restrictions.
- 1000 extra books were provided to schools (approx. 1 per child) to support the delivery of the programme and managing of COVID-19 restrictions. Most schools also engaged with parents online through Seesaw to appraise pictures and encourage involvement.
- 6,804 books were read over the 3 weeks, i.e. each child, on average reading 7 books.
- In response to previous teacher feedback, translated parent resources were developed in Polish, Mandarin and Romanian, including a voice-note in Romanian to explain the programme for families without literacy skills.
- While the school exhibition events could not take place as usual, all children received a framed picture of their artwork to bring home and schools shared virtual exhibitions on their school websites, learning platforms like Seesaw and their social media. Two schools organised outside exhibitions, one on the railings of their building which was wonderful for children and parents.
- All children received their resource pack from ELI and teachers managed the exchange of books, allowing a three-day rest period between homes due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- 63 families participated in the ZAWB Virtual Book Club that was newly developed to reach and support families during the COVID -19 restrictions and school closures, using ELI social media
 - 120 books and activity packs were posted directly to family homes
 - 11 corporate volunteers created 12 story-time videos to complement the books and packs.
- 28 Zoom Ahead with Books themed social media posts throughout 2020-21 with a reach of 24,189 and an engagement of 2,383.

Participant Feedback

Ninety-nine percent (n=85) of children, 90% (n=17) of educators and 92% (n=83) of book buddies agreed that the programme was enjoyable for the child. The majority of book buddies (92%, n=83) and educators (68%, n=13) reported the programme as being a valuable learning opportunity for the child.

Ninety-three percent (n=80) children agreed that the programme helped them with their reading. While 62% of book buddies (n=56) reported the biggest impact on the child was improved language and reading skills, and 79% of educators (n=15) reported the biggest impact on children was an increased interest and enthusiasm for reading. Book buddies also highlighted how the programme gave the child the opportunity to spend more quality time with adults (53%, n=48) while the majority of educators (68%, n=13) agreed that the programme increased parental involvement in children's learning.

Most children reported their favourite part of the programme as being drawing (70%, n=63), with 57% (n=51) reporting reading as their favourite part while 36% (n=32) reported their favourite part as being the book buddy. Book buddies reported the biggest impact on themselves as being enjoyment (64%, n=58) followed by spending more time with the child (52%, n=47) and being more aware of how they can support the child's learning (43%, n=39).

The best part of the ZAWB Virtual Book Club for 90% of the participants was the book and 89% (n=8) engaged in the suggested activities in the tip sheet provided with the book, 89% (n=8) also reported that their child learned from taking part in the Virtual Book Club.



Central Bank of Ireland Volunteer Sharing her Wonderful Story-time Video in Virtual Book Club

Comments from participants included:

"I had fun and my mammy made it fun and loved the drawing and picking our favourite page."

[Child]

"Sounding out words has been something my child flat out refused to do he preferred to guess based on other words he already knew. Sitting with the books encouraged him to try sounding out and he began to gain confidence in this new skill." [Book Buddy]

"I think it helped reconnect the children with the parents and improve parents relationship with their children's education, specifically literacy. It was really interesting and motivational project with lots of focus on oral language and expression, vocabulary development and discussion."

[Teacher]

4.2.3. Doodle Den

Doodle Den is an evidence based after school programme that aims to address literacy needs amongst senior infants' children (aged five to six-years of age) using a range of fun learning activities. However, COVID-19 regulations and school/service closures have required the adaptation of the programme to a blended mix of virtual and face-to-face deliveries, outlined below. As a result of this blended delivery, new curriculum and assessment practices are required to ensure that the programme continues to improve literacy outcomes for the children involved. Going forward a blended mix of virtual and face-to-face delivery will continue, dependent on government recommendations and HSE guidelines as well as each site's own practice and decisions regarding COVID-19.

Programme Delivery

- 84 children enrolled in the programme across the four ABC (n=37) and three NEIC sites (n=47).
 - 1 ABC site and 3 NEIC sites delivered the standard programme in a classroom setting.
 - 3 ABC sites delivered an adapted programme online with one site progressing to outdoor face-to-face sessions in May and the other 2 holding occasional outdoor sessions.

- From the 4 sites engaging in standard delivery (N=47):
 - 49% of children had a high level of literacy need, 28% medium and 21% a low level, which was the highest level of needs recorded since ELI began delivering the programme in 2015-16.
 - There was the lowest reported percentage of children with English as an Additional Language at 28%, while 9% had a Special Educational Need.
- 5 sites (3 ABC and 2 NEIC) delivered the programme online during school closures.
 - 57 literacy packs were delivered to all online participants making the sessions more interactive.
 - Increased parental involvement with 51 parents attending the 52 online sessions.
 - 2 sites engaged in online delivery only and so no assessments were completed with these children, facilitators completed reflections and all participants were provided with a post-programme evaluation.
- 2 outdoor sessions were held for 16 children in Mud Island Community Garden in May
 - 8 children from ASEP (St Laurence O’Toole’s)
 - 6 participating children and 2 siblings from Gardiner Street NS
- 7 volunteers from KPMG were involved in the programme.
- 63 children graduated in June 2021 in outdoor settings. This represents a 20% attrition rate, less than 2019-20 (28%).



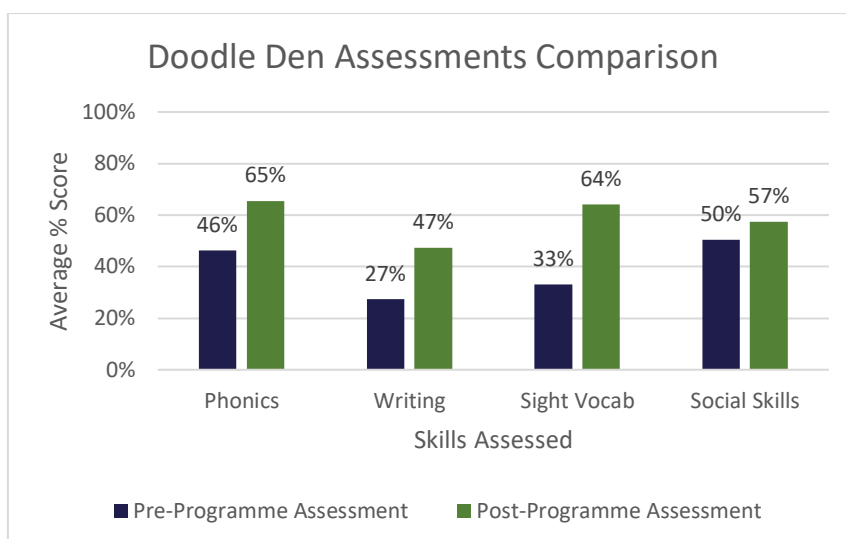
ASEP Doodle Den Graduation

Participant Learning

Typically Doodle Den assessments of children’s Phonic Skills, Writing Skills, Sight Vocabulary and Social Skills are completed pre-programme in September and post-programme in June. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, assessments are not available for the 3 sites that engaged in the adapted programme online. The assessment results below are only for the 4 sites that engaged in the traditional face-to-face programme.

Face-to-face Assessments

The figure below displays average pre programme assessment scores across the Doodle Den sites in each of the four domains, along with the post programme grades in each of the four skills. Although improvements can be seen in each of the skills assessed, both the baseline and the post-programme scores for the 2020-21 cohort of children are amongst the lowest recorded since 2015. This could be attributed to the numerous school closures that have occurred since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Virtual Delivery – Facilitator Reflections

In each of the five sites that engaged in the adapted virtual delivery of the Doodle Den programme the facilitator completed a brief reflection on the delivery of and the engagement with the session each week. Sixty-two reflections were completed over the course of the programme, with parents participating in 59. Engagement levels in the children were high with children reported to be *fully engaged* in 94% of the sessions, *somewhat engaged* for 3% and *not engaged* in just 1.5%. The parents were *fully engaged* in 63% of their sessions, *somewhat engaged* in 30.5% and *not engaged* for just 6.5%.

Participant Feedback

Satisfaction rates from the programme were high with all parents (n=6), children (n=6) and 87.5% (n=7) facilitators reporting that it was an enjoyable experience for the children. All parents also reported the programme helped their child, particularly with their child's reading (100%, n=6), and the majority also seeing improvements in writing (83%, n=5) and listening (83%, n=5). Staff reported the programme benefitted the children's understanding, listening (87.5%, n=7 each), reading, writing (75%, n=6 each), making new friends (62.5%, n=5), behaviour (50%, n=4), increased parental involvement with reading (37.5%, n=3) and using the library (25%, n=2). All children stated that Doodle Den has helped with their reading *a lot*, and 83% (n=5) that it has helped with their writing. Also 80% (n=4, only 5 responses to this question) reported that the help they are getting in Doodle Den is making reading easier at school and 83% (n=5) that it is making writing easier at school.

Comments from parents/ guardians included:

"This was the best day ever!" [Child returning from Mud Island Community Garden]

I would like to continue to do Doodle Den online. It is interesting and useful everything you do. My daughter really likes thank you." [Parent]

"Lots of chat engaging with observations from the story. Lots of open ended questions asked and answered. The children were enchanted by the outdoors and were delighted with the daffodils and the sunglasses!" [Virtual Doodle Den Facilitator]

"V is interested in doing Doodle Den she loves you and she is delighted to see you again."
[Parent]

4.2.4. STEM Family Learning

COVID-19 and closure of schools and services highlighted the need for more direct parental engagement and home-based programmes to support children's learning. A variety of home-based learning activities were trialled in 2020-21 as part of the development of the STEM Family Learning Programme. The aim was to ensure that the parents whose children we have supported through their early years education will have the confidence, understanding, skills and knowledge to continue to support their children's education in this new everchanging situation in which home learning is more critical than ever.

Programme Delivery

- 2 Stretch Graduate Programmes were held in 2020-21 promoting STEM through card games in which volunteers from Deloitte, RBC, KPMG, FMS and Mc Garrell Reilly engaged with families
 - 9 families participated in term 1 with 7 volunteers.
 - 9 families participated in term 2 with 8 volunteers
- 4 STEM events were held separately in 2020-21
 - 2 energy events were held in collaboration with Amber with 7 families in attendance
 - 2 Lego events were held with 10 children and their fathers
- 8 STEM themed social media posts were posted throughout the year.



Graduating from the STEM Family Learning Programme

Participant Learning and Feedback

Engagement was high throughout the Stretch Graduate programme, as volunteers reported that children and their parents were engaged in 97% of the sessions. Feedback was very positive with 100% of parents (N=11) and children (N=10) reporting that they enjoyed the programme and would recommend it to a friend. Majority of parents (81%, n=9) reported their child learning throughout the programme and showing more interest in playing card games at home. Parents (73%, n=8) also found that they were more involved in their child's learning at home after taking part in the programme. Feedback was also very positive within the volunteers, as 100% (N=6) reported that they were happy to have participated in the programme, would volunteer again, and would recommend it to a colleague.

All children (N=12) and their parents (N=13) enjoyed taking part in the STEM workshops. All the parents agreed that the workshops helped them to understand STEM better and 92% (n=12) agreed wanting to be more involved in helping their child learn about STEM. Majority of children (92%, n=11) reported learning something new through the workshops and 83% (n=10) reported wanting to find out more about STEM.

Comments from participants included:

“Fantastic communication throughout always felt there was someone at the end of the phone to provide support which is really important especially throughout a pilot programme.” [Volunteer]

“I think the whole programme overall was brilliant it's a great idea to keep the children interactive with each other while learning but also having fun as well. I would recommend the programme to everyone.” [Parent]

“My child loved getting to show everyone his creation when he was finished. Great the way in incorporated size and patterns into the programme.” [Parent]

4.2.5. Robotic Coding Clubs

The Robotic Coding Clubs is a collaboration with NCI's School of Computing. Participants learn about robotics, programming and electronics with an mbot, which is an easy-to-assemble robot that provides infinite possibilities for students to learn STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).

Programme Delivery

- 18 children and their parents participated in the Robotic Coding Club virtually across 3 groups, and an additional 30 families registered to participate from June-August 2021.
- 7 laptops were loaned to families without sufficient technology to engage for the duration of the programme.
- There was increased parental involvement because parents had to supervise and support their children for each session.
- 5 families attended a coding event in which children demonstrated their learning by engaging with an online quiz, supported by their parents.



Robotic Coding Club Participants Receiving their Certificates

Participant Learning and Feedback

The majority of the children (86%, n=6) enjoyed the Coding Club, would like to take part in it again, and would tell a friend to take part in it. Pre-programme, only 16% (n=2) said they were confident in

their coding skills, however the children’s confidence increased post-programme, with 86% (n=6) of the children reporting confidence in their coding skills. In relation to general computer skills, 57% (n=4) have a high/moderately high degree of confidence after completing the programme, while the remaining 43% (n=3) reported “a little” confidence. Children also saw (86%, n=6) improvement in their coding and computer skills as a result of the Robotic Coding Club. The children were also asked a few questions on what they learned through taking part in the Coding Club. 100% (n=7) of children learned; how to build a robot, how to control the robot using a remote, how to make it respond to its environment using its sensors, and how to make the robot move and light up using code. 100% of parents (n=8) reported increased confidence in their ability to support their child’s learning in STEM, and increased desire in helping their child to learn about STEM. All parents reported their child’s skills in STEM improved on the programme and believe that STEM skills are important for their child’s future education and career.

Comments from parents included:

“It was interesting for both of us it broadened our knowledge of coding.”

“Because my child would want to study electrical engineering in the future, this really helped my son to have a great confidence.”

“It is very beneficial for everyday learning as technology is the way forward.”

4.2.6. Language and Tuition Support

ELI’s Language and Tuition Support programmes aim to provide second level students with extra opportunities for learning in a safe and positive environment.



Students Participating in Language Café

Programme Delivery

158 young people participated in language and tuition support sessions, delivered online.

- 33 students enrolled in Maths Leaving Certificate tuition. Due to the high demand 4 weekly sessions (2 Ordinary Level and 2 Higher Level) were held across 23 weeks. Attendance fluctuated throughout the year due to changes in Covid restrictions, school closures and uncertainty around exams, however, in general attendance was good and there was an average attendance of 11 students each week.
- 2 weekly Maths sessions (1 Ordinary Level and 1 Higher Level) for Junior Certificate students were run over 23 weeks with an average of 3 students each week and a total of 14 students enrolled.
- 13 students enrolled in Leaving Certificate Irish Tuition Support, which catered to both Ordinary and Higher Level students. The format was changed this year and shortened to 30-minute oral sessions (6 per week) with 1-2 students at a time, over 14 weeks to prepare students for their Oral examinations, with an average of 7 students in attendance each week.
- 4 online English Language Cafés were held through Zoom with corporate volunteers. 94 students attended from 5 schools and 1 Youth Service. Additional events were requested by students and school staff, reflecting the huge need for additional EAL (English as an Additional Language) support for migrant learners in local schools.
 - The virtual Language Café format was developed to be accessible either on a smartphone, tablet or laptop, and students were provided with earphones to block out background noise in the classroom.
- 4 students completed the ListenHere lessons in their EAL class with the help of their EAL teacher to reinforce new vocabulary and enable them to revise the vocabulary at their own pace.
 - 6 students completed survey of need to identify barriers and challenges they were facing in learning English, their preferred ways of learning English and their general interests/hobbies (to inform the theme of lessons).
 - 2 Economics lessons were created on the ListenHere platform for the 5th year EAL class in collaboration with teachers. Each lesson consisted of a short video explaining a concept, followed by a series of 7-9 exercises based on the video, including cloze procedures, multiple-choice questionnaires and word-matching exercises.

Participant Feedback

Feedback was positive across the support sessions, with 83% (n=44) of students reported improving their skills throughout the programme. Online delivery of the sessions continues to be well received with 85% (n=29) of students reporting that the digital format of the sessions worked well. All teachers (N=12) considered the programme to be an enjoyable experience and a valuable learning opportunity for their students.

Comments from participants included:

*"I could express myself easily without being ashamed that I could do mistakes in anything."
[Language Café Student]*

"I think everything worked very well my tutor was sound and very helpful, I felt like I learned so much from the zoom calls and found myself doing better I Irish class in school. Loved the grind would recommend to anyone." [Irish Tuition Support Student]

"They really did engage so it's a win-win so far." [EAL Teacher of ListenHere Students]

"I honestly cannot think of anything that didn't work well with the classes and am delighted to hear that they may return next year." [Maths Tuition Support Student]

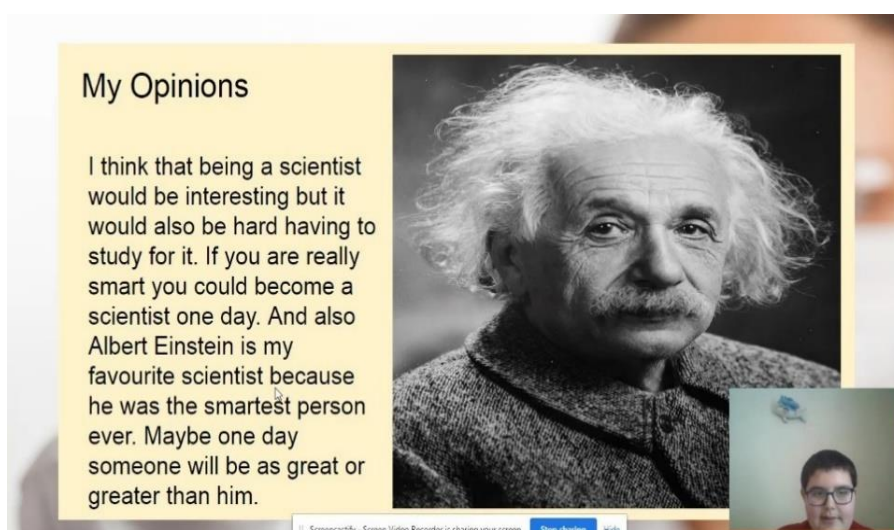
4.3. Educational Guidance

The main focus of the Dublin’s Inner City Educational Guidance Programmes is on supporting young people, parents and communities’ understanding of the education system and the impact of certain decisions such as subject choices on young people’s ability to access further education and career opportunities; thereby, ensuring that the children and young people in the area achieve their educational, life and career goals. These programmes, which are developed through careful collaboration with local schools, afterschools, youth and community services, are Educational Guidance; A Day in the Life; NEIC Brighter Futures; Discover University; and Third Level Internships.

Objectives:

- Raise children’s and young people’s educational and career expectations
- Support young people and their parents to successfully navigate the education system and access interesting career opportunities
- Widen participation in higher education within the Docklands

Educational and Career Guidance	Young People	Parents
Educational Guidance (5th/6th class)	78	0
Educational Guidance Exhibition (secondary)	82	10
A Day in the Life Events	58	0
Discover University (14-17 years)	29	0
Restorative Practice Children and Young People	58	0
Totals	305	10



Presenting Educational Guidance Project

4.3.1. Educational Guidance Programme

Educational Guidance is a project-based learning career guidance programme for primary (5th and 6th class) and secondary (1st year) students. The programme enables students to explore career aspirations and opportunities and raises awareness among students and their parents of the importance of third level education in the pursuit of certain careers.

Programme Delivery

- 160 students from 5 schools and 2 afterschools

- 11 students from St. Joseph’s CBS Primary School attended a virtual workplace tour of Dublin Fire Brigade
- 15 corporate volunteers participated in interviews, a ‘fact-finding mission’, with students.
- 10 parents attended an online parents information session by City of Dublin Education Training Board Adult Education Guidance Service, covering topics such as the CAO process, PLC courses, Undergraduate courses and subject choices and levels.
- 27 career projects were submitted by 39 students
- 3 online judging sessions were held with volunteer judges from RBC, Citco and Central Bank giving project feedback and announcing the winning project at each session

Participant Feedback

Students’ responses to a post-programme survey (N=20) indicated that the key learning outcomes were achieved. Most students (85%, n=17) reported learning about the level of education needed for different jobs and indicated a developed awareness of how their subject and subject level choices at second level can affect their future educational and career prospects. This learning was echoed in the responses from the teachers with all (N=6) reporting students’ increased awareness of the necessity of third level education. Students (85%, n=17) also reported that their knowledge of the wide variety of jobs and career paths available improved. Students enjoyed learning about jobs and workplaces (55%, n=11), working in a group (35%, n=7) and doing the project (35%, n=7). 75% (n=15) of students reported having aspirations to attend third level education. It is of note that the percentage secondary students (91%) was greater than that of primary (55%).

Comments from participants included:

“I learned what subjects I need to study in secondary school.” [Student]

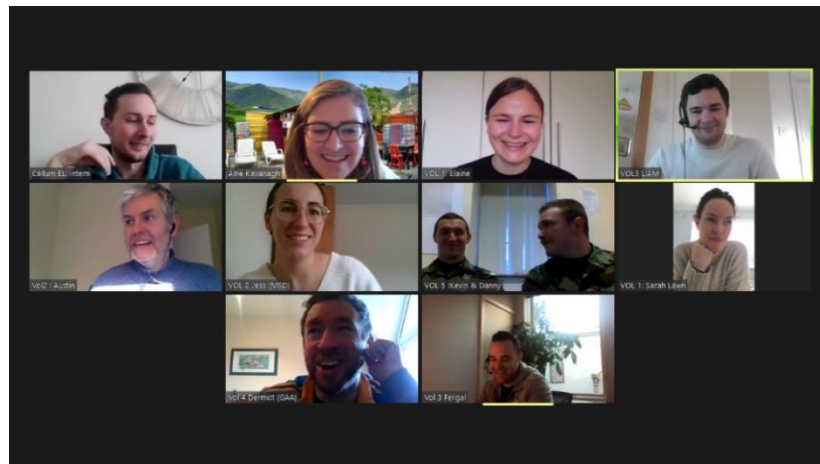
“The activities are excellent and are a great introduction for students into the world of work and careers. The links with people who work in different careers are also invaluable and open up a whole world for students.” [Teacher]

“Just to express how impressed we were at the overall standard. They were all terrific and it was a pleasure to review and be involved with the initiative. We would like to express how proud they should all be as they have all done a really good job.” [Volunteer]

4.3.2. A Day in the Life

- Two virtual *A Day in the Life* events were held this year, in November and December 2020.
- 58 secondary school students attended the events from two local schools.
- 18 volunteers from organisations such as Virtu Financial, Arthur Cox Law and Central Bank as well as professionals working in Pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, the GAA and members of the Defence Forces, and Dublin Fire Brigade.
- The events were held online through Zoom and students were assigned to different breakout rooms, where they chatted to a different corporate volunteer for 10-12 minutes about their job, what *A Day in the Life* looks like for them and how they got into that line of work.
- An additional *A Day in the Life* event was held in June 2021 as part of Discover University. This was a panel-style discussion held on Zoom with three breakout rooms: one for Computing/IT professionals, one for Business professionals and one for volunteers working in Psychology/Early Years Education. On the day, we had a sports psychologist, a UX designer, a parliamentary

assistant, and volunteers from Inner City Helping Homelessness, SpunOut, Arthur Cox, Deloitte, Maples, McGarrell Reilly and Virtu.



First Virtual A Day in the Life Volunteer Briefing

4.3.3. NEIC Brighter Futures Restorative Practice

In 2016-17, Restorative Practices (RP) was one of the Mulvey Report recommendations to support the North East Inner City (NEIC) community envision and plan for a better future for people in the area. Opening the Door and Relationship Keepers Programmes along with other restorative-focused activities support local children and young people to develop a greater sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem, sense of community, empathy, and emotional literacy; improve their communication skills and build mutually respectful relationships with young and old alike.

Programme Delivery

- 87 young people (aged 9-20 years) participated in restorative-focused activities facilitated online, through primary and secondary schools, youth services, corporate organisations and National College of Ireland.
 - 8 young people and 2 youth leaders from 1 youth service (Belvedere YC) along with 2 corporate volunteers from Arthur Cox engaged in Opening the Door - Restorative Practice Conversations, online. 2 other groups, due to pilot online groups, have been deferred until 2021-22 due to the challenges of online engagement.
 - 11 young people (from fifth and sixth years) from Larkin Community School who trained as 'relationship keepers' in NCI in 2019-20 continued to engage in this peer mentoring programme – with the aim to create a sense of connection and belonging within their school community.
 - 29 young people participating in Discover University online engaged in Restorative Practice training as well as daily check-in and closing circles.
 - 21 young people participating in NCI Computing Support Summer Camp, online, engaged in Restorative Practice training as well as using daily check-in and closing circles.
 - 11 young people and five school staff engaged in a Student Listening Circle, online, to support students returning to school following COVID restrictions.
 - 3 young people and 2 college lecturers and tutors engaged in Student Listening Circles, online, through National College of Ireland School of Computing, to support students during COVID restrictions.
 - 4 young people took part in 2 Listening Circles, online, as part of Educational Guidance supports offered to Leaving Certificate students.

Participant Feedback

Of those participating in *Opening the Door*, 75% (n=6) of the students found the online sessions enjoyable, reported the sessions both made it easy to build positive relationships and work together online. Eighty eight percent (n=7) of the young people reported the online format of the sessions worked well. When asked if they would prefer online sessions 75% (n=6) of students reported favouring online sessions over face-to-face, whereas 100% (n=5) of adults participating responded that face-to-face would be their preference.

Of those engaging in the Listening Circle, 100% (n=4) reported the Listening Circle gave them time and space to share what they were thinking and feeling about current events, and that they felt listened to during the Listening Circle.

Comments from participants included:

“I use check-in circles with younger students and it gives them a chance to talk about their feelings and the positives and negatives of school life. They feel they are being listened to and we come up with solutions together to resolve any problems they are having.” [Primary School Teacher – Restorative Practices in Classrooms and School Communities]

“Thank you for a really insightful experience for the students. They enjoyed it... the class would love to do a restorative practice session in NCI next term... their class teacher said she too would enjoy bringing them.” [Teacher – Listening Circles]

4.3.4. Discover University

Discover University is a summer programme held in NCI every June that aims to give young people the opportunity to experience a taste of life at NCI and to see college as part of their future.

Programme Delivery

- 29 young people participated in Virtual Discover University 2021
- 7 NCI students were recruited as team leaders to mentor and guide young people through the programme
- 15 volunteers from 5 local corporate organisations created challenges for young people to complete throughout the week, based on skills they deemed essential for their workplace
- 15 young people got to meet each other face-to-face and go on a kayaking adventure down the Liffey on the last day of the programme
- Students on the programme participated in talks with NCI Library, Clubs and Socs, a virtual tour of My Lovely Horse Charity, virtual A Day in the Life and Restorative practice workshops.
- 10 students presented at the online graduation ceremony (including one featuring harp music!), which also featured a prizegiving ceremony and guest speaker Gary Gannon TD.



Participant Feedback

All students (N=19) and their parents (N=7) reported that the programme was an enjoyable experience and agreed that it was useful for their future. Majority of the students (95%, n=18) would recommend the programme to a friend. All students (N=19) and their parents (N=7) reported the students being more excited and having a better understanding of 3rd level education. Most (95%, n=18) of students said they were more likely to go into 3rd level education. Student's showed strong development in their learning/study skills (84%, n=16), critical thinking skills (89%, n=17), and working in groups (83%, n=15). All the student's parents (100%, n=7) agreed that the student's communication skills, social and personal skills, and ability to work with different types of people improved. Virtual delivery worked well with 95% (n=18) of students agreeing that it was easy to access and 100% (n=19) agreeing that it was easy to use.

Team leaders (100%, N=8) were very positive about their experience, the future benefits and would recommend it to a friend. Most agreed (88%, n=7) that it developed their leadership, communication, and organisational skills. They (100%, N=8) also reported improvements in their facilitation skills and ability to work with young people. Project leaders (100%, n=4) were also very positive about their experience and would recommend it to a colleague. Lastly, all volunteers (100%, N=5) reported being happy that they volunteered, would volunteer again, and would recommend the experience to a friend.

Comments from participants included:

"It was fun, I learned a lot about jobs from a day in the life and I learned a lot about how to make a website." [Student]

"Choosing to get herself to the meet-up activity by herself was a huge step in independence for my daughter. That was something which she wouldn't have done without this course and is a great step towards the independence of university." [Parent]

"For me the best thing is to see young students enjoy the programme and learn more about themselves and see whether career in the area is going to be for them. [Project Leader]

"I think the programme is in its prime at the moment." [Student]

4.4. Capacity Building, Training and Mentoring

Long-term sustainable change requires continued innovation and upskilling. While changes in one family and service is always welcome, it is the collective impact on the community that will ensure that children and young people are growing up in a safe happy learning environment. ELI's aim is to collectively improve outcomes for children, young people and families through the provision of high-quality services. Continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities, which embed learning within services and allow for the dissemination of knowledge among practitioners and parents, is a critical element of ELI's work. Training, peer learning, communities of practice and on-site mentoring from ELI staff support practitioners to improve their practice and successfully manage innovation and change. Training and mentoring are provided in Home Visiting; My Place to Play; Digital Technology; Numeracy; STEM; Literacy; Síolta and Aistear; Restorative Practice; Self-care and Emotional Literacy.

Objectives:

- Empower and support professionals to be competent, confident, collaborative and restorative in their roles
- Improve the quality of service and learning environments provided by local services and schools through the provision of professional development, mentoring and networking.
- Enhance interagency collaboration and support the development of a shared/Meitheal community-wide consistent approach to service delivery for children, young people and families
- Improve the educational, life and career outcomes for the children and young people
- Build a strong, happy, positive and supportive community

Capacity- Building - Training and Mentoring	Professionals
Early Years Professionals	160
Restorative Practice Getting Started	57
Restorative Practice CPD	242
Restorative Practice Training of Trainers	12
Restorative Practice Summer Course for Teachers	22
ELI Interns	4
Corporate Mentoring and Support*	36
Totals	625

*Included in [Section 4.5](#).

4.4.1. Early Years Professionals and RP Self-care

As part of the ABC Programme, there are a number of different CPD and Mentoring opportunities aiming to support practitioners in their role as early years educators and embed best practice within services, including:

- 21 early years educators attending 4 Early Numeracy Working Group online meetings – reflective space and peer learning opportunity (average of 16 attendees per meeting)
- 35 participants attended 9 virtual Pre-Numeracy Workshops – shared planning for the upcoming numeracy week (average of 6 attendees per workshop)
- 274 numeracy mentoring support meetings were provided to schools and early childhood education care services throughout the year through phone and zoom calls.
- 1 online training session was provided by a local Librarian for educators in early childhood education care services and infant class teachers on accessing 'Tumblebooks' online resources through the local library.
- Home Visitors and Group Facilitators completed 388 hours of CPD training

- 0-2 Programme 309 hours
- Community Support Groups 79 hours
- 4 groups Facilitators and 1 Coordinator completed training in Birthlight Baby Yoga
- 1 Home Visitor completed training to become a certified Infant Massage Instructor from the IAIM and Baby Massage Ireland.
- 92 Early Years Professionals including ELI Home Visitors, ABC nationwide coordinators and Daughters of Charity Community Services engaged in 12 online self-care sessions.

Participant Feedback

Feedback from post-training surveys indicated that 95% (n=88) of participants found their relevant training sessions useful, and 94% (n=87) benefited from the training through learning new skills or knowledge that they can use to improve their own practice.

Comments from participants included:

“I found the values in a relationship why self-care and knowing myself can contribute a positive mindset with all the relationships I have (home, work, friendships and other family members).”

“I appreciated being able to still have access to training through zoom and that it could still be interactive.”

“The training worked well in everyone getting a chance to state their opinions and it was great to listen and learn.”

“I really enjoyed the opportunity to think about my own self-care needs and connect with others in similar roles. We had a wonderful facilitator.”

4.4.2. Restorative Practice

Restorative Practice (RP), which is funded by the North East Inner City (NEIC) Task Force and Government’s ABC Programme, is an approach to building and maintaining relationships and resolving conflict in a wide range of community organisations, while complementing other approaches, i.e., coaching, mediation, and restorative justice. The Restorative Practices programme was planned, delivered, and evaluated almost fully virtually during 2020-2021. Zoom was selected as the primary video-conferencing platform as it was deemed the most secure, straightforward, easy to access and was already utilised by the majority of community members — statutory, voluntary and corporate.

Programme Delivery

- 60 different organisations participated in restorative practice programmes.
- 333 professionals, educators and other stakeholders attended RP training, workshops and events
- 12 professionals continued to engage in Train the Trainer activities, ongoing mentoring and support, and course facilitation, online.
- 57 participants engaged in Getting Started with Restorative Practices training, online, which was delivered by the RP coordinator and RP facilitators trained in July 2019.
- 22 teachers and principals participated in the Drumcondra Education Summer Course, Restorative Practices for Classrooms and School Communities, in July and August 2020-21, which was delivered online for the first time.
- 185 professionals engaged in Continued Professional Development, including:

- 19 leaders in schools and services attended 3 CPD workshops, facilitated online
- 21 community members and professionals attended an online listening circle workshop event during International Restorative Justice Week
- 14 community members and professionals attended a collaborative Self-Care and Restorative Practice workshop, online
- 38 community members and professionals attended other individualised CPD training
- 93 participants engaged in Moving Forward with Restorative Practice training, online, learning and development was facilitated through standalone workshops.
- 143 mentoring and support visits took place in total — 11 face-to-face, and the remainder using video conferencing platforms, video calls or phone calls.
- 15 fortnightly/monthly virtual community of practice meetings with an average of 5 attendees, from 35+ organisations.
- 13 organisations completed the self-assessment ‘Reflection on Implementation’ tool in 2020-21, with an online, condensed version developed to encourage organisational engagement in this reflective exercise during continuing COVID-19 restrictions.
- 1 Restorative Practices webinar took place with 57 in attendance, including national and international experts in trauma-informed and restorative practices.

Participant Feedback

Satisfaction rates are high with 97% (n=67) reporting that the knowledge and skills learned is transferable to their role, and 91% (n=63) reporting they are likely or confident in implementing the skills learned into their practice. Pre-programme, the majority of participants rated their level of knowledge on Restorative Practices (75%, n=43) as poor, or fair and on completion of their training majority rated (95%, n=33) as good, very good, or excellent. With the most common motivation (26%, n=36) for doing the training to improve their ability to deal with conflict, there was an increase in participants rating their ability at handling conflict as moderately, or very high from 54% at pre-programme to 73% on completion of their training.

Comments from participants included:

“The main strategy I learned, and one that I think will prove very useful, is the Restorative Questions. I would hope that, with practice, these will become automatic and applied in all situations, big and small. I think they are even useful to resolve internal conflict within myself!”

“I feel that restorative practices could be an integral part of the progression in repairing harm in community organisations. It involved all parties in the process and gives all concerned a platform for understanding the harm that has been caused.”

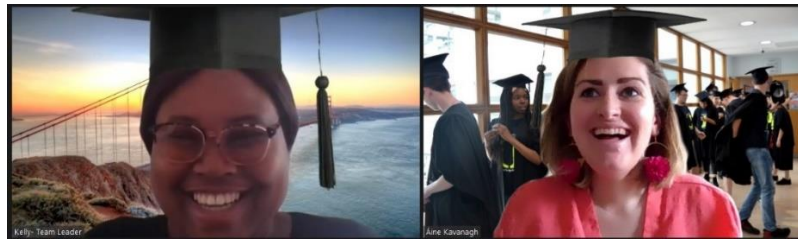
“Applying restorative practice with team members will assist with building open and transparent relationships within the team. It will support team members with feeling comfortable with addressing and discussing any issues which may arise, in an appropriate manner.”

4.4.3. Third Level Internship

The Third Level Internship programme offers NCI students the opportunity to develop their personal, academic and professional skills, while becoming active in their local community.

Programme Delivery

- 11 applications to the programme in 2020-21, 5 of whom were interviewed.
- 4 successful applicants studying Business (2), Cloud Computing and Early Childhood Educations and Care.
- 3 Interns assisted in various tasks across multiple programme areas including the delivery of Coding clubs, Language Café events, data monitoring, data analysis, compiling reports and social media analytics
- 1 intern presented on social media analytics at the ELI Annual Research Day in June 2021



Intern and Coordinator Delivering Discover University.

Participant Feedback

All interns agreed that the internship was rewarding and provided them with meaningful work that helped their career development. Comments from interns included:

“By participating as intern you see yourself develop as a person with more confidence and more skills under your belt. Such a leadership role and being given the opportunity to have more responsibility in the internship was a great learning experience.”

“It helped me feel more in my comfort zone.”

4.5. Corporate Volunteer Programme

ELI's Corporate Volunteer Programme, which began in 2010 with eight volunteers, provides rewarding, diverse volunteering experiences to the staff of ELI's corporate partners. Partners include Irish and multi-national organisations from the finance, technology, construction and legal sectors who are largely based in Dublin's Docklands. The programme gives employees the opportunity to interact directly with children and their families in the community in which they work. The programme offers mutual benefits – allowing corporate staff to enhance their own interpersonal communication skills while simultaneously making a positive difference to the educational life chances of the people in their locality. As can be seen from the table below, volunteers engage in an array of roles across many of ELI's programmes.

Programme Delivery

In 2020-21, 153 volunteers contributed to an array of ELI's programmes. All of this interaction was online as face-to-face volunteering was not feasible due to COVID-19 related restrictions throughout the year. The continued pivot of ELI's volunteering programmes to online delivery demonstrated both the programme's agility as well as the commitment of our corporate partners to the children, young people and families that we serve.

In October 2020 ELI convened six of our key corporate partners in an online focus group to explore meaningful volunteer engagement online. Suggestions and recommendations from this event contributed to programme planning during the year. While the number of corporate volunteers has decreased with the advent of virtual volunteering, the quality of interaction and commitment of individual volunteers has been sustained and even increased in most cases, with many participating in programmes throughout the year rather than once off events. Volunteers were pleased to link directly with families in the home for the first time through the Stretch Home Learning Programme. Over the years ELI has received many requests from corporate partners to include volunteers in the home visiting programmes. 2020-21 was the first year that this was possible through virtual visits.



Volunteer Attending Storytelling Training

Participant Feedback

Feedback from our corporate volunteers was positive across all programmes with 100% (N=41) reporting being happy that they volunteered and that they would volunteer again. Furthermore, all felt well supported by ELI staff and would recommend the experience to a colleague.

Comments from volunteers include:

“It’s amazing to see the work ELI is doing and to add a tiny bit to it. I’m very grateful my company supports these initiatives and am always happy to help if there’s a way for us to get involved.” [Volunteer]

“Thank you for setting up events that allowed us to help in a small way towards your amazing work over the past year. It was a pleasure doing the videos with the 6th class in St Joseph’s school and allowed us a break from our relentless day-to-day and to participate in something worthwhile. We even had fun doing it.!” [Volunteer]

“Both from a firm perspective and a personal perspective working with ELI is brilliant and seeing the impact that the folks at ELI make is a privilege. We continue to have a big demand from our team to be involved with the ELI, which I think speaks volumes for the work that is being done.” [Corporate Volunteering Link Person]

Programme	Number of Volunteers	Lead Corporate Partner
Mentoring and Support		
Virtual Breakfast Event	7	Deloitte, Arthur Cox
Development Committee	4	Citco, State Street, Deloitte, McGarrell-Reilly, Chartered Land
Corporate Advisors (NCI School of Computing)	11	NTMA, Arthur Cox, RBC, Citco, HubSpot, Virtu Financial
Volunteering Link People in Companies	14	Arthur Cox, BNP Paribas, Central Bank, Citco, Deloitte, FMS, HubSpot, KPMG, Maples, McGarrell-Reilly, NTMA, Philip Lee, RBC, State Street, Virtu Financial
Afterschool and Community Programmes		
Shape Game (Doodle Den)	7	KPMG
Storytelling (Zoom Ahead with Books)	11	Central Bank, State Street, FMS, BNP Paribas
Multilingual May	2	Arthur Cox, Central Bank
RP Pilot Programme	2	Arthur Cox
Primary Level Programmes		
Games Buddies (Stretch Graduate Home Learning Programme)	15	Deloitte, KPMG, FMS, McGarrell-Reilly
Educational Guidance	4	RBC, Central Bank
Second Level Programmes		
Virtual Discover University	15	McCann-FitzGerald, Arthur Cox, Deloitte
A Day in the Life Careers Events	10	Virtu Financial, Central Bank, Arthur Cox, Philip Lee
Language Cafés	25	Central Bank, Arthur Cox, State Street
Educational Guidance	10	Citco, Virtu Financial, Central Bank
A Day in the Life & Discover University	16	Volunteers from other companies/organisations
Total	153	

5. LOOKING FORWARD 2021/22

Looking ahead to 2021-22, we aim to build on the development of our National Centre for Expertise, Research and Innovation (CERI) and our responsive evolving hybrid approach to programme delivery in Dublin's Inner City. Similar to last year, our yearly plans are extremely multifaceted and fluid giving us the option to pivot as needed to ensure that ELI continues to support vulnerable children and families across Ireland during these challenging times.

5.1. Strategic Innovation

ELI's 2020-25 Strategy has two priorities:

1. Sustain ELI's existing commitments in Dublin's Inner City
2. Advance as a Centre of Expertise, Research and Innovation.

Balancing strategic planning with the day-to-day delivery of programmes in Dublin's Inner City and across Ireland will continue in 2021-22 with ELI and their partners prioritising support for at-risk children and their families to successfully navigate and thrive through the pandemic.

Each year in Ireland, approximately 12,400 babies are born into poverty with 4,800 babies born to first time parents living in poverty (CSO 2019). Establishing a national centre with the capacity to support the delivery and evaluation of high quality evidenced-based sustainable models of Home Visiting across Ireland is a key strategic goal for ELI. The development of ParentChild+ National Centre; Rethink QQI professional qualifications and the Home Visiting Alliance along with the implementation of Sláintecare Community Mothers Project are key to achieving this ambition. In 2021-22, we will continue to grow our expertise in supporting other organisations and communities to deliver high quality Home Visiting programmes, in line with the Irish Government's First 5 A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028.

Home schooling was a defining feature of COVID-19 lockdowns. For most parents, this was extremely challenging but for the families experiencing intergenerational poverty, unemployment, violence/abuse, social isolation, trauma, mental health issues, educational disadvantage, homelessness/emergency accommodation, it has exacerbated existing issues and widen the poverty, educational and digital gaps for their children. Since March 2020, ELI has been working on addressing this gap and we are delighted to pilot our Stretch Graduate Programme in 2021-22. Adopting a blended flexible e-learning approach, regular phone/video contact and home learning packs will be provided as well as access to online learning resources and services.

Other innovative initiatives include:

- NEIC Parenting Programme Coordination and Forum
- Parenting365 Programme,
- STEM Family eLearning Project
- Listening Circles for Young People.

Our community action research processes will enable us to develop these pioneering initiatives incrementally; capture new knowledge and practices; and disseminate them locally, nationally, and internationally. We will, as always remain, open to flexibly responding to emerging opportunities in collaborative innovative ways.

5.2. Risk Assessment and Contingency Planning

NCI's Governing Body along with the executive and management teams meet regularly to discuss risk and contingency plans, which includes dealing with COVID-19. ELI is addressed at these meetings and

is included in NCI's general risk register. As we have done since the beginning of COVID-19, regular risk reviews and contingency planning will be completed with the issues arising being discussed and addressed at NCI's Risk and COVID Committees, Governing Body, ELI Advisory Board and ABC Steering Group.

5.3. Programme Delivery

At present, the majority of programmes are being delivered virtually, apart from socially distanced outdoor visits/events and some indoor delivery, where it is deemed safe to do so. The situation will remain fluid enabling us to adapt to Government guidelines, as required.

Face-to-face and indoor delivery will be guided by Government, HSE and NCI Guidelines, risk of infections and fear of contagion. It will also be dependent on the willingness of families, schools and services to let us inside their homes and buildings. Optimising our connections with families, services and schools through multiple points of contact and interventions is more important than ever.

Online and remote solutions were found for programmes, which traditionally involved face-to-face engagement with local services, schools and businesses. Remote corporate volunteering opportunities continue to be incorporated into all our programmes as are more extensive parental involvement and home learning activities.

With another challenging year ahead, upskilling ELI's wonderful staff, volunteers and partners to deliver high quality responsive hybrid programmes remains a priority as is the development of our eLearning resources and social media platforms, all of which have become essential tools to communicate with and support children, young people, parents and families.

5.4. Changing Children's Lives through Partnership

Fifteen years of sustained cross sectoral collaboration continues to pay dividends. ELI achievements in 2020-21 were the result of many people working together to ensure that children, young people and their families develop the dispositions, skills and knowledge needed to achieve their educational, career and life goals. We would like to thank our wonderful partners for their sustained support.

With another challenging year ahead in 2021-22, we are confident that, with support from our wonderful partners, we can continue to provide critical supports during a historical and life-changing pandemic and help thousands of children achieve their long-term educational, career and life dreams.