



# Early Learning Initiative

National College of Ireland



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

# END-OF-YEAR REPORT 2019-20

CHY 9928

[WWW.NCIRL.IE/ELI](http://WWW.NCIRL.IE/ELI)



The **A**rea **B**ased **C**hildhood Programme



## 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

In the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), National College of Ireland (NCI), we often say, *'It's all about the learning'*, particularly when things don't go to plan. Safe to say that in 2019/20 this phrase was used frequently. We began the year finalising our 2020-25 Strategic Plan and finished with ongoing COVID-19 risk assessments and contingency planning. Our commitment to vulnerable children and families remained constant with 14,683 people engaged in ELI's programmes. Satisfaction rates remained high with children's language 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](http://www.ncirl.ie/eli) and from our ELI team. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful partners for their loyal support and to note our key highlights and learnings this year.

### **Strategic long-term sustainable planning is critical.**

ELI's forward thinking and strategic planning paid dividends this year, when despite the public health risks and missing social safety nets, the ELI Team and our dedicated volunteers pivoted effectively from face-to-face visits to phone/video calls, social media and doorstep visits.

### **Home Visiting is an essential local peer-led community lifeline for children and families.**

You, like us, will be aware that this was a year when families needed the support provided by ELI's Home Visitors more than ever. As usual, they rose to the challenges posed by COVID-19 and provided children with much needed educational supports and materials; thereby improving the morale, mental health, and home learning environment in many homes. We have had so many messages from parents explaining how this support got them and their children through this difficult time.

### **Our ParentChild+ Graduates are doing well.**

Contacting our ParentChild+ graduates to see what, if any, help they needed around home schooling was one of our responses to COVID-19. You will be interested to hear that the families are doing well with their children remaining engaged in learning. The books and toys were still being used and there was a very real appreciation for the support they had received from their Home Visitors and an acknowledgement of the long-term impact ParentChild+ had on them and their children.

### **Centre of Expertise, Research and Innovation (CERI) was established in January.**

It will help us manage the expansion of our home visiting programmes to other areas in Ireland and ensure 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 for their support this year. They played a vital role in helping ELI mitigate the educational and digital divides and ensure that 6,500 children and young people are developing the language, social, literacy and numeracy skills needed for success in education, career and life. 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.



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

## 1.1. 2019/20 Key Indicators



**14, 683** participants engaged

Indicators of **satisfaction** (94%, n=1462)



Indicators of **learning** (81%, n=1675)

**6,458** parents engaged



**271** volunteers engaged

**19** corporate partners supporting ELI



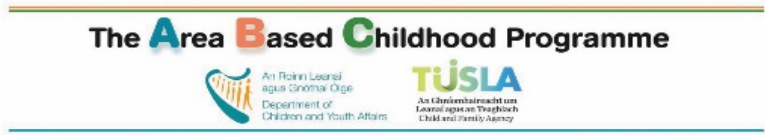
**4,596** virtual visits completed during COVID-19

**1,367** activity packs and **306** play mats delivered



**100%** (N=32) reported that ELI responded well to COVID-19

## 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](mailto:maryanne.stokes@ncirl.ie)) for more information.



### 1.3. Key Programmes in 2019/20

ELI provides an integrated programme of educational support from early years up to third level. While priority is given to developing children's social, language, numeracy and thinking skills from an early age, they and their parents will need on-going support as they progress through the education system.

	Programmes	Ready for	Children & Parents	Budget
<b>Educational Guidance</b>	Third Level Internship (17+ yrs)	Employment	4	9%
	Discover University (14-17 yrs)	Third Level	41	
	A Day in the Life		83	
	Educational Guidance 2nd Level (12-14 yrs)		108	
	Educational Guidance Primary (10-13 yrs)	Second Level	134	
	Restorative Practice		87	
	Educational Scholarships		52	
<b>Literacies</b>	Tuition Support Programme (15-18 yrs)	Third Level	27	21%
	Language Cafes (14-15 years)		20	
	Robotic Coding Clubs	Second Level	198	
	Literacy & Numeracy Challenges (7-11 yrs)		183	
	Doodle Den (4-5 years) - literacy		162	
	Zoom Ahead with Books (4-7 yrs)		2,752	
	Early Numeracy Project (0-6 yrs)	Primary School	3,163	
<b>Parent Support</b>	COVID-19 Family Support	Second Level	3,553	12%
	ABC Parent Support Sessions (0-3 years)		1,138	
	ABC 0-3 Summer Programme (0-3 years)	Primary School	738	
	Restorative Parenting (0-11 years)		88	
<b>Home Visiting</b>	ParentChild+ (18 months - 3 years)		754	58%
	Home from Home		46	
	ABC 0-2 Years Home Visiting		287	

## 2. FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

The Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland is committed to good governance and has in place systems and processes to ensure that we achieve our objectives with integrity by managing ELI in an effective, efficient, accountable and transparent manner. This section accounts for ELI's 2019/20 income and expenditure along with its governance structures.

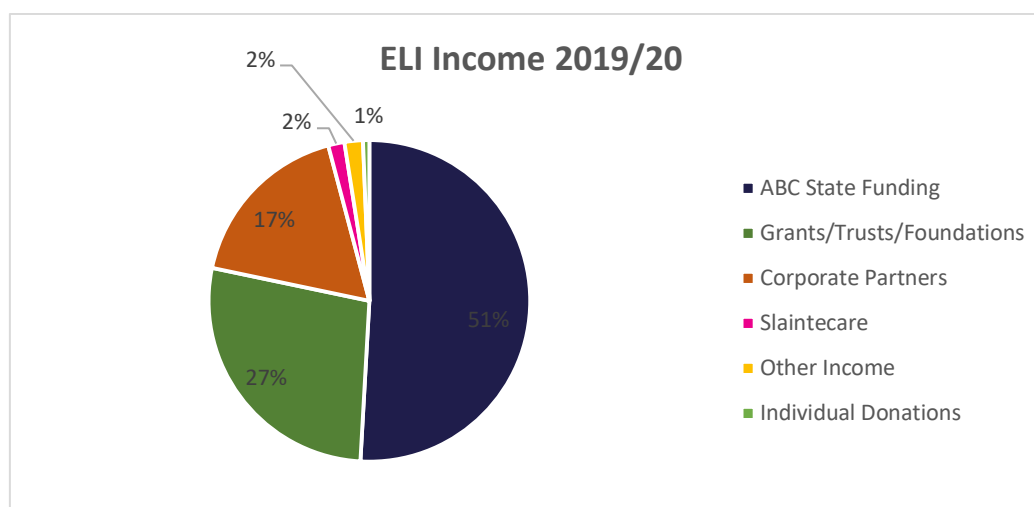
### 2.1. Finance

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 philanthropic funding. This section details the income, expenditure and budgets for CERI, ELI and ABC Programmes.

	Income 2019/20	Actual Expenditure 2019/20	Variance in Income and Expenditure	Estimated Expenditure 2020/21
	€	€	€	€
<b>Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme</b>	795,683	847,196	(51,513)	796,100
<b>Dublin's Inner City (ELI)</b>	570,719	671,324	(100,605)	600,000
<b>Centre for Expertise Research &amp; Innovation (CERI)</b>	197,078	197,078	-	400,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,563,481</b>	<b>1,715,598</b>	<b>(152,117)</b>	<b>1,796,100</b>

#### 2.1.1. Income 2019/20

ELI raised a total income of €1.56m in 2019/20, of which €821k (52%, down from 61% in 2018/19) came from statutory funding (Tusla and HSE) with the remaining €742k (48%, up from 39% in 2018/19) coming from our Corporate partners, Trusts, Foundations and Individuals. The increase in philanthropic funding was mainly due to an increase in grants (27% compared to 12% in 2018/19) rather than our corporate and individual partners, which decreased (17% compared to 27% in 2018/19).



We would like to pay tribute to the generosity of all our donors, many of whom are long-term valued partners in improving outcomes for children, families and communities. A special thank you to Dan

O'Connor (Director, CRH), Declan Quilligan (Managing Director, Citco Fund Services), Sean Reilly (Executive Chairman, McGarrell Reilly Group), Michael Hartwell (Partner, Deloitte), Tadhg Young (COO & Senior VP, State Street) and Joe O'Reilly (Executive Chairman, Chartered Land) for their 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](mailto:maryanne.stokes@ncirl.ie))

### 2.1.2. Expenditure 2019/20

Dept.	Programmes	Projected Expenditure Year ending 30th June 2020 €	Actual Expenditure Year ending 30th June 2020 €	Variance in Expenditure Year End 30th June 2020 €	Projected Expenditure Year ending 30th June 2021 €
CERI	National	-	197,078	(197,078)	353,000
ELI	Dublin's Inner City	850,000	671,324	178,676	550,900
ABC	Dublin's Inner City	796,100	847,196	(51,096)	796,100
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,646,100</b>	<b>1,715,598</b>	<b>(69,498)</b>	<b>1,700,000</b>
CERI	ParentChild+ National	-	142,234	(142,234)	266,000
ELI	ParentChild+ National	170,000	122,228	47,772	-
ABC	ParentChild+ ABC	300,100	294,069	6,031	300,000
ELI	ParentChild+ - ELI	150,000	123,557	26,443	127,000
	ParentChild+ AMIF	80,000	72,581	7,419	45,000
CERI	Sláintecare Community Mothers	-	54,844	(54,844)	87,000
ABC	ABC 0-2 Home Visiting	150,000	185,379	(35,379)	180,000
ELI	Home Visiting	40,000	-	40,000	50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>Home Visiting</b>	<b>890,100</b>	<b>994,892</b>	<b>(104,792)</b>	<b>1,055,000</b>
ELI	COVID-19 Home Support	-	37,254	(37,254)	40,000
ABC	ABC 0-3 Parent Groups	50,000	66,561	(16,561)	70,000
ELI	Parent Support Groups	40,000	28,956	11,044	30,000
ABC	ABC RP Parenting	66,000	73,962	(7,962)	50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>Parent Support Groups</b>	<b>156,000</b>	<b>206,733</b>	<b>(50,733)</b>	<b>190,000</b>
ABC	ABC Early Numeracy	75,000	78,733	(3,733)	60,000
	ABC Zoom Ahead Books	25,000	46,968	(21,968)	36,100
	ABC Doodle Den	130,000	101,524	28,476	100,000
ELI	Literacies	90,000	65,751	24,249	70,900
	Robotic Coding Clubs	80,000	69,832	10,168	70,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>Literacies</b>	<b>400,000</b>	<b>362,808</b>	<b>37,192</b>	<b>337,000</b>
ELI	Educational Guidance	150,000	83,863	66,137	75,000
	NEIC Brighter Futures	50,000	67,302	(17,302)	43,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>Educational Guidance</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>151,165</b>	<b>48,835</b>	<b>118,000</b>

**Notes:**

- The costs 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.
- The higher spend was due to increased participation rates and additional restricted funding.
- The ABC Projected Expenditure 2020/21 is based on the 2019 reinstated budget approved by Tusla for the calendar year 2020. Funding from January to June 2021 is subject to its inclusion in the Government's 2021 Budget and the projected expenditure will be amended to reflect the 2021 ABC budget agreed with Tusla.
- The CERl and ELI Docklands Projected Expenditure 2020/21 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 2020/21. 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 overhead to ELI and has absorbed historical deficits between funding available and the cost of delivering ELI programmes and services. The generous commitment of Leonard Moloney, 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.

<b>NCI Governing Body as of June 2020</b> <b>*Members of Governing Body who sit on the ELI Advisory Committee, which in turn reports to Governing Body.</b>	
<b>Chairman - Fr. Leonard Moloney S.J.</b> <b>Mr. Michael Brady</b> <b>Ms. Barbara Cotter</b> <b>Dr. Tish Gibbons</b> <b>Mr. Brendan McGinty</b> <b>Ms. Brigid McManus</b> <b>Mr. Patrick Clancy</b> <b>Ms. Maureen Brogan</b> <b>Mr. Tony O'Malley</b>	Ms. Gina Quin – College President Ms. Sheila Nunan* Fr. Kevin O'Higgins S.J.* Mr. Jonathan Lambert Ms. Dajana Sinik - NCISU President Mr. Dave Cormack Mr. Kevin Callinan Mr. John McGarrigle - Secretary and Registered Officer

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 2020/21. Membership of ELI Committees are listed below with more information on ELI Governance available on our website: [www.ncirl.ie/eli](http://www.ncirl.ie/eli).

ELI Advisory Committee as of June 2020	
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	Dan O’Connor, Chair of ELI’s Development Committee Jenny Barnard Professor Alan Barrett, Chair of ELI’s Research Committee Mary Doyle
ABC Steering Group as of June 2020	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairperson – Frank Ryan, Chairperson ELI Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Donnchadh Ó Madagáin, NCI Finance Director</li> <li>• Dan O’Connor, Chair of ELI’s Development Committee</li> <li>• Mark Shinnick, Principal</li> <li>• Niall Heneghan, Principal</li> <li>• John Peelo, Tusla Northside Representative</li> <li>• Denise Hevey, Early Years Representative</li> <li>• Dr Josephine Bleach, ELI Director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lorraine Doherty, Tusla Southside Representative</li> <li>• Angela Nolan, Assistant Director of Public Health Nursing. PHN Representative.</li> <li>• Alison McCormack, Community Representative</li> <li>• Dara Terry, Voluntary Sector Representative</li> <li>• Martin Moloney, Garda Representative</li> <li>• Lana Cummins, ELI Assistant Director</li> </ul>
ELI Development Group as of June 2020	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairperson – Mr Dan O’Connor, Non-Executive Director Glanbia</li> <li>• Mr Sean Reilly, Executive Chairman Alcove Properties</li> <li>• Mr Tadhg Young, COO &amp; Senior VP State Street International (Ireland) Ltd.</li> <li>• Mr Declan Quilligan, Managing Director Citco Fund Services (Ireland) Ltd.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Michael Hartwell, Partner, Deloitte</li> <li>• Joe O’Reilly, Executive Chairman Chartered Land</li> <li>• Gina Quin, President NCI</li> <li>• Dr Josephine Bleach, Director Early Learning Initiative</li> <li>• Mary Anne Stokes - ELI Development and Volunteering Officer</li> </ul>
ELI Research Committee as of June 2020 is set out below:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairperson: Professor Alan Barrett</li> <li>• Dan O’Connor, Chair of ELI Development Committee</li> <li>• Mary Doyle, ELI Advisory Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grainne Kent, ELI Researcher</li> <li>• Josephine Bleach, Director of ELI</li> </ul>

### 3. CENTRE FOR EXPERTISE, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

From the beginning, ELI envisaged acting as a Centre of Excellence from which other communities and governments could learn; thereby improving the educational and life chances of children and their families across Ireland. While ELI has been very successful in Dublin's Inner City, it has also been successful in influencing government policy, sharing learning with other communities and in replicating its ParentChild+ Programme in other areas in Ireland.

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. 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.

The following goals are incorporated into all ELI's programmes:

- ✓ Improving children's emotional, social, language, literacy, numeracy and coding skills.
- ✓ Raising educational, career and life aspirations.
- ✓ Encouraging parental involvement in their children's education.
- ✓ Acting as the bridge between third level education, statutory, business and the community.
- ✓ Advocating for prevention and early intervention services for children and families.

Balancing local programme delivery with national advocacy and mainstreaming activities was challenging, particularly as both ELI's local and national activities were increasing in complexity and demand. ELI's 2020-25 Strategy proposed to clearly differentiate between local and national activities through the creation of a Centre of Expertise, Research and Innovation (CERI), which will operate alongside ELI's suite of programmes in Dublin's Inner City.

Established in January 2020, CERI provides a focal point within ELI and NCI for knowledge management, capacity-building, communication and influencing in relation to educational disadvantage and access, with the overall goal being the ability to capture new knowledge and practices in these areas and disseminate them locally, nationally and internationally. It will support and learn from ELI's work in Dublin's Inner City and use it as an example of best practice from which other communities can learn.

This section will summarise the activities of CERI this year, including the development of ParentChild+ National Home Visiting Training, Research and Support Centre; implementation of Sláintecare Integration Fund: *Prevention is Better than Cure: A Community Mothers Programme Development* and My Place to Play Projects along with our research, dissemination and capacity-building activities. COVID-19 required us to pivot from face-to-face programme delivery to a responsive evolving hybrid remote delivery model that provided vulnerable children and families with essential home learning supports. Our innovative cross-programme responses along with perspectives on the virtual delivery of programmes and the technological divide are included.

### 3.1. ParentChild+ National Centre

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 10 years, ELI has delivered ParentChild+ to vulnerable families with children aged 18 months to 3 years in Dublin, Galway, Limerick and more recently Louth. Beginning with 15 families in 2007, numbers have grown to 376 in 2020. 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 they need 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. Establishing a ParentChild+ National Home Visiting Training, Research and Support Centre is the first step to scaling up ParentChild+ in a sustainable way and providing ongoing comprehensive support to ParentChild+ Managers, Coordinators and Home Visitors around the country.

#### Programme Delivery

- 376 families in Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Louth received
  - 6,558 home visits from September 2019 – March 2020.
  - 4,083 virtual calls, and 362 socially distanced doorstep/garden visits from March-June 2020.
  - 698 activity packs (167 in Docklands and East Inner City and 531 across remaining sites) were distributed during COVID-19.

PCHP Area	Started	No. of families	No. of Home Visitors
Docklands and East Inner City (NCI)	2007	173	29
Dublin South City Partnership	2009	9	3
ABC Grangegorman/DoCCS	2014	20	3
Garryowen, Limerick	2015	73	8
Ballinasloe, Galway	2015	43	6
Ballyfermot Partnership (ABC)	2017	22	4
St Ultans, Cherry Orchard	2017	17	4
Clondalkin – Blue Skies (ABC)	2019	12	4
Louth Genesis (ABC)	2019	7	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>376</b>	<b>65</b>

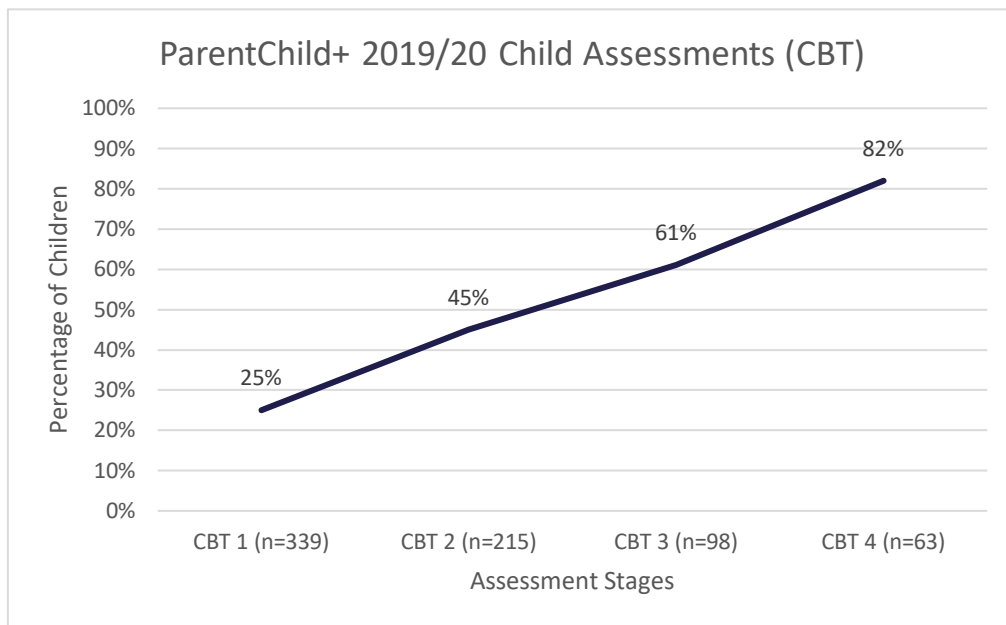
#### ParentChild+ Programme Assessment – Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)

In order 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:

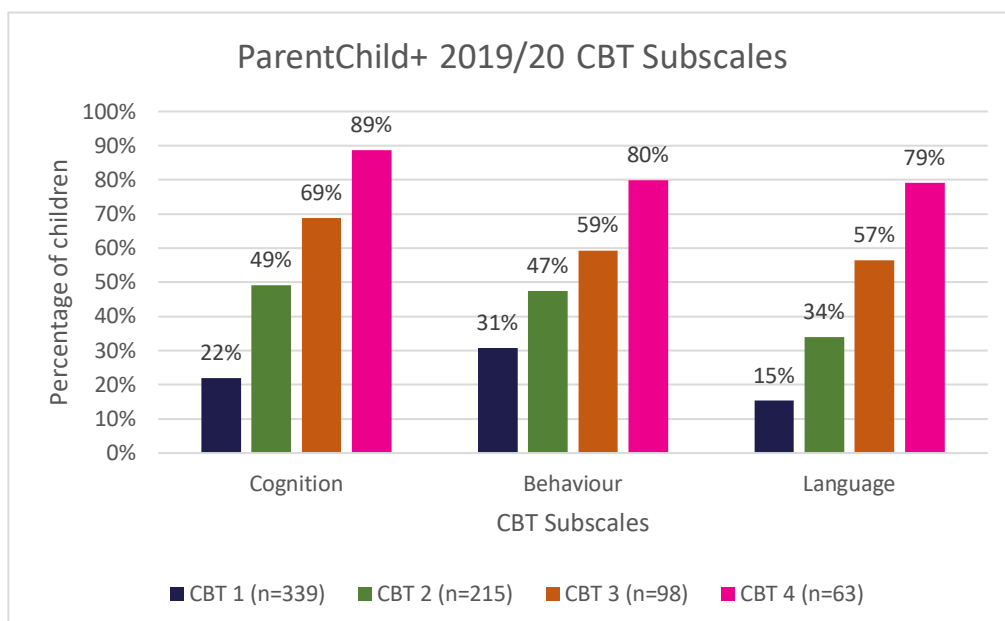
- CBT & PACT 1 after the 6<sup>th</sup> visit
- CBT & PACT 2 after the 44<sup>th</sup> visit
- CBT & PACT 3 after the 68<sup>th</sup> visit
- CBT & PACT 4 after the 92<sup>nd</sup> visit

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 45%, 61% and, finally, 82% on completion of the programme.

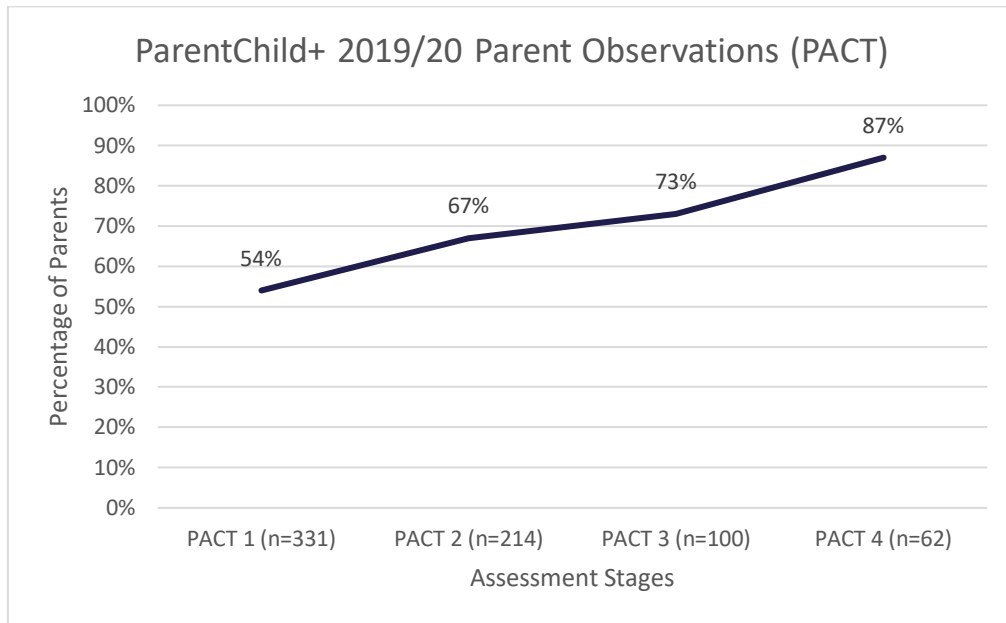


Children engaging in the programme demonstrated developmental increases across the three CBT subscales (cognition, behaviour and language) at each stage of the programme. As can be seen below the greatest overall increase was found in the percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones in the area of cognition (67%), followed by increases in language (64%) and behaviour (49%).

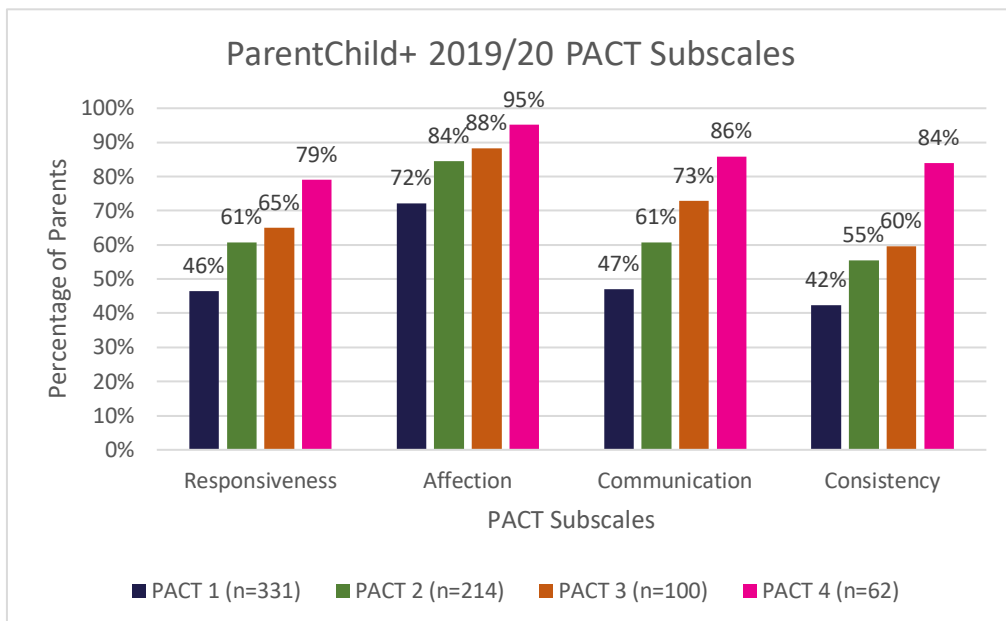




There was also a significant increase in the percentage of parents across all ParentChild+ sites having high-quality interactions with their children from 54% at PACT 1 to 87% at PACT 4.



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, parents 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 with their children, which increased by 42% overall. This was followed by increases in positive communication (39%), responsiveness (33%) and affection (23%).



Comments from participants included:

*“Our child has profound additional needs. The Nurse was at the house during a home visit and has expressed how she has noticed the progress that they are making since they started the Programme.” [Parent]*

*“One of the children on the Programme who has speech difficulties has started saying lots of new words. The child has been spending lots of time with his older brother who has been really patient with him. The Mam said that both she and her son have been modelling what I [Home Visitor] have been doing on the video sessions and repeating all the words to him and positively praising him. She is thrilled and looks forward to each video call to show me what new words he is saying.” [Home Visitor]*

*“After watching their Home Visitors modelling how to use the books and toys in their home, two parents enquired about becoming a Home Visitor. They said that after been part of the Programme they now understood how important it is for parents to be part of their child's education.” [Coordinator]*

### **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.

Previous training paid dividends this year, when despite the public health risks and missing social safety nets, the Home Visiting Teams pivoted effectively from the couch/floor to WhatsApp, social media and doorstep visits. A combination of face to face and online training was delivered this year, including:

- Mandatory training each year for all Home Visitors with weekly supervision supplemented by additional training in self-care; Restorative Practice; paediatric and basic first aid; engaging children with additional needs; Cultural, Diversity & Inclusion Training; attachment; Speech and Language; play therapy; and a session from As I Am on the topic of life for children with Autism.
- 37 Coordinators and Home Visitors are pursuing academic/professional qualifications:
  - 5 members of the Home visiting programme are engaging in the BA in Early Childhood Education with all home visiting coordinators and 4 Home Visitors qualified to Level 8.
  - 1 Home Visitor completed her Certificate in Therapeutic Play Skills.
  - 28 Home Visitors are undertaking their level 6 and level 5 in FETAC Early Childhood Care and Education with FETAC Level 5 the minimum qualification and standard practice.
  - 7 Home Visitors have been trained by Tulsa to become the lead practitioners in the Meitheal approach.
  - 1 Home Visitor trained with CAMHS in Non-Violent Resistance Training in order to help her support one particular family.

- All Home Visitors have been supported to engage in E Learning:
  - 372 times an e-learning course was completed from the range offered in the CPD e-learning handbook.
  - Child Protection Training with Tusla (the National Child and Family Agency); E-Learning General Data Protection Regulations training; Cyber Security E-learning and Working From Home E-Learning.
- Ongoing upskilling of the team in IT Skills, Apps and Systems:
  - CRM Training for Docklands Team on early 2020 upgrades, which improved the effectiveness of the system in relation to the linking of books and toys and completing assessments.
  - 3 Home Visitors engaged in individualized IT mentoring sessions provided by Mason, Hayes & Curran
  - SharePoint training to access manuals, curriculum materials and training PowerPoints.
  - Evasys used to record Home Visitors observations.
  - Excel for Coordinators' reports.
  - WhatsApp, Zoom and Teams during COVID-19.
- Communities of Practice:
  - 10 Coordinators attended two Community of Practice Day sessions in NCI to receive up to date training in fidelity to programme, leadership, GDPR and self-care.



**A Home Visitor Interacting with a Child and Parent**

## 3.2. Sláintecare

### Prevention is better than cure – The 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 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 the ten local CMP sites, the Katharine Howard Foundation, the HSE, Tusla and ELI with ELI the lead partner.

In 2019/20, 89 Community Mothers across the ten CMP sites in Dublin, Kerry, Laois, Longford, Meath, Offaly, Roscommon, Tipperary and Westmeath provide supports to a total of 1,228 families.

Interagency working and relationships with key stakeholders are essential to ensuring the success of this project. Over the past six months, the ten Programme sites have engaged in a process to align core elements, e.g. outcomes, measures and indicators; systems of delivery; training for home visitors; and consolidating core material. The process brings together research, national policy and on-the-ground expertise and experience, while honouring the core values of the original model of the CMP. To date, there have been five virtual information workshops and consultation sessions with sites as well as numerous phone calls. The Oversight Group, which oversees the project and ensures that it is fully aligned with the strategic priorities of the Health Service Executive and Tusla and with the implementation of First 5: The National Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and Their Families, has met five times.

The process of sustaining quality home visiting programmes requires a consistent investment of time, expertise and resources. Our aim over the next two years is to develop a standardised national model for the CMP which is evidence-based; integrated into wider service provision and has the potential to be replicated in other communities. Ultimately, our goal is that every first-time parent in Ireland will be offered a high-quality home visiting programme.

### 3.3. 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.



**Mother and baby play on their My Place to Play mat**

#### Programme Delivery

- 306 My Place to Play Packs, containing a portable play mat, a ball, mini maraca and wrist rattles were delivered to families nationally this year (116 of these being delivered locally in ELI's community):
  - 60 Meath CYPSC
  - 20 Focus Ireland
  - 6 Sligo emergency accommodation services
  - 40 Fingal CYPSC
  - 80 Dublin City North CYPSC (30 were delivered locally by ELI)
  - 20 Dublin City South CYPSC (6 were delivered locally by ELI)
  - 80 ELI COVID-19 community response (all were delivered locally by ELI)
- 40 professionals attended two face to face briefing session.
- 2 sites received remote virtual briefing devised during COVID-19 with 3 engaging in telephone support.
- 1 Irish Healthcare Centre Awards, under the category *Healthcare Initiative Project Child Health and Wellbeing*.
- 3 Presentations
  - OMEP Ireland conference in November 2019

- Tusla Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Conference in December 2019
- Multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences Project (MACE) Working Group in January 2020 as part of a scoping exercises to see if My Place to Play was the right fit for the work they are doing

### Participant Feedback

The majority of practitioners (88%, n=7) who provided the mats to parents reported that the mats provided valuable learning opportunities for the children; more opportunities for parents to play with their children and increased the awareness of the importance of play and tummy time. The mat also supported parent-child attachment, encouraged positive fun learning interactions and provided a safe clean place for parents and their baby to play. All practitioners would recommend the mat to other parents (100%, N=9).

Comments from practitioners included:

*“Women who were coming into refuge with babies felt that it supported them to providing a safe space for the children and access to toys that would support their development.”*

*“Mum advised me the mat saved her during a very difficult time period in her life when she had 3 small children in one room in a hotel. Mum was already stressed and then felt completely overwhelmed when the PHN noticed her baby was not lifting his head. Mum felt like she had no room for tummy time. Once I delivered the mat to mum and discussed the benefits, mum began using the mat daily and is now continuing with mat time since being moved to a bigger home. Mum said the mat has “definitely” improved and strengthened her baby.”*

*“Some of the women had to leave their home quite abruptly so did not have time to bring some of their child’s toys or did not have access to money when they were at home so therefore could not buy suitable developmental toys for their child. The mat provided them with this.”*

### 3.4. COVID-19 Response

From January 2020, Ireland was faced with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 12<sup>th</sup> the country went into lockdown and it was no longer possible to continue to deliver the range of supports offered by ELI to the local community. The team were required to quickly adapt to working from home, while developing novel provisions for their programme delivery. While each programmes' response is recorded throughout the report, this section highlights cross-programme specific responses to supporting parents at this challenging time. This included reaching out to past graduates of the ParentChild+ programme and the delivery of activity packs to families in need. In addition to the learnings emerging from the community on the virtual delivery of programmes and the technological divide will be presented. We are delighted that the community were satisfied with the ELI's response with 100% (N=32) of participants who responded saying that ELI responded well to the crisis and 82% (n=18) of services/schools reporting that ELI were a support to them during COVID-19.

#### 3.4.1. ParentChild+ Graduates Check in 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. Between March and June 2020, a total of 120 ParentChild+ graduates parent/guardians were contacted, with 40 engaging with interviews, with their children ranging in age from four to 13 years of age.

It was great to see that many parents reported to be doing well (44%, n=17) with a few reporting to be having a difficult time and rating their family's well-being as low (13%, n=5). Similarly, some parents were reported to be managing well with their children home from school (38% n=14) while some (19%, n=7) 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=24) satisfied but some being dissatisfied (18%, n=7). In relation to the quality of the home environment they were providing their children, some (34%, n=12) were happy with it while others (20%, n=7) were unhappy. Some parents (34%, n=15) requested activity packs as a support for them and their child during the COVID-19 crisis. Others requested online learning materials (18%, n=8), links to ELI's social media (23%, n=10), regular check ins (11%, n=5) and group sessions (9%, n=4).

#### 3.4.2. COVID-19 Activity Packs

With the sudden closure of early year services and schools throughout the country, parents were faced with the unfamiliar task of providing their children with a stimulating and educational home learning environment experience. To support parents in our community the ELI developed activity packs with simple age appropriate educational materials containing art and craft supplies, books, toys and physical activity equipment. Families in need of activity packs were identified through referrals from the Home Visitors and the range of interagency services the ELI engages with. Packs were tailored to meeting the individual needs of the families ensuring they were both age and developmental level appropriate. They were delivered by ELI staff in line with Public Health advice.

In total 836 activity packs were distributed across the community to ParentChild+ Graduates, families living in



emergency accommodation, vulnerable families referred by TUSLA/ Public Health Nurses/ Family Support Workers, families engaged in Meitheal, Restorative Parenting, Doodle Den, ParentChild+ and 0-2 Home Visiting. A further 116 My Place to Play Mats were delivered across the community during COVID-19.

In order to capture the needs being met by families in the community through the activity packs, a key worker evaluation was designed. In total, 12 key worker evaluations were completed with the average key worker delivering activity packs to 20 families. The most commonly reported concerns of families were the home learning environment (83%, n=10), financial (50%, n=6), isolation (42%, n=5) and homelessness (42%, n=5). Key workers specifically mentioned parents not having the resources at home to support their child's learning in addition to not having the understanding on the importance of education. The majority of key workers delivered activity packs (92%, n=11) while some also delivered play dough packs (17%, n=2). In relation to feedback received from families most key workers mentioned how grateful families were and how much they appreciated the supports.

Comments from key workers included:

*"I got the impression the families felt supported. Some of the families were in fear of going out to buy products and a couple stated that as the creche was closed they were under financial strain to purchase more groceries as usually their child/children were provided with 3 meals each day."*

*"I think the activity packs made a huge difference to the families that received them at the time. All families were so grateful and stated that the kids loved them, they relieved boredom and gave the family something fun and different to do, increased quality of time spent together with the packs and took the financial worry away from parents."*

*"Provided stimulating home based activities for children (under the current covid-19 restrictions); was reassuring for parents and took a little bit of pressure off of them (i.e. children kept busy and entertained/stimulated); useful particularly in the small physical confines of the rooms for homeless families (i.e. in the hubs/hotels)."*

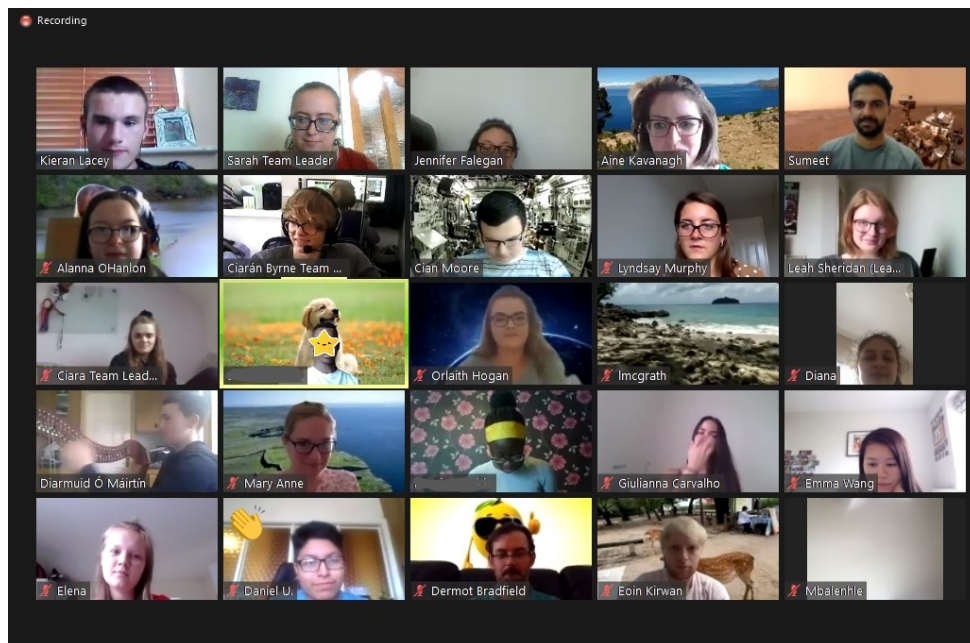
### **3.4.3. Virtual Engagement**

The virtual format of revised delivery of our programmes across Zoom and Microsoft teams worked well with 63% (n=97) of programme respondents (students, parents and professionals) reporting that children/young people achieved the same learning through virtual delivery. The value of virtual delivery was evident in this story from the Home Visitor team *"One of the Home Visitor sent me a screen shot of her video call with the child and her mum. Dad who lives elsewhere (whom the Home Visitor has never met) also joined in on the video call. It was great for the Home Visitor to meet and involve dad as the child always mentions her dad. This would have never happened if we were not having video calls"*.

The move towards virtual delivery of meetings and training also worked well with all respondents (100%, N=16) reporting that it improved their ability to attend meetings and most (81%, n=17) reporting that they would like the option of continuing to engage virtually next year. However, there were also challenges to the change to virtual delivery with one Home Visitor stating *"It's not been*



*easy, video calls have been a real struggle, I've felt that with everything going on for families that I'm a bit of a burden, just one more person they feel they need to respond to”.*



**Students Participating in Virtual Discover University**

### 3.4.4. Technological Divide

With evidence of the technological divide across socio-economic groups, we explored whether families had sufficient access to technology to support learning in the home by asking parents and educators if *families had enough technology (e.g. smartphones, laptops, ipads) in the home to support learning during COVID-19?* Technology was reported to be a barrier by 15% (n=32) of respondents (parents and professionals). This was most prevalent among staff working in early year services, primary and secondary schools where 77% (n=17) of respondents reported technology as a barrier to engagement.

Comments from participants included:

*“Parents did not have the access to Zoom or Microsoft team or enough devices or internet connection to comfortable and easily access to online programs.” [Service Manager]*

*“Not enough devices in the home, or in some cases only one parent with a smart phone. Some children in temporary accommodation not having access to WiFi. Lack of understanding of technology... some of our Roma families not understanding what an email address was. Literacy issues in helping the child access the technology.” [Primary Level Principal]*

*“Access to technology and using the technology was a barrier to the engagement of our students in online learning. We felt as a school we overcame it as best we could. Initially they didn’t have devices, however we got in touch with any students who didn’t have access to a device or WiFi and organised some for them.” [Second Level Principal]*

## 3.5. 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 2019/20, 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 2020/21 and building on past successes.

### 3.5.1. 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 and Youth Affairs, 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)** helps 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 new 2 year project. Working 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.

### 3.5.2. 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 2019/20 for Restorative Practice and Educational Guidance at second level.

### 3.5.3. 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 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](mailto:maryanne.stokes@ncirl.ie)) for more information on how your organisation could get involved with ELI.

#### **3.5.4. 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.

#### **3.5.5. 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.

#### **3.5.6. 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 and the local community, 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.

#### **3.5.7. 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 Leonard Moloney, 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

### **3.6. Research and Dissemination**

Research and evaluation are central components of ELI's commitment to evidence-based practice. Considered essential in order 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. This section outlines the key research conducted by ELI in 2019/20 in addition to providing an overview of the learning shared by ELI across local, national and international audiences in 2019/20.

#### **3.6.1. Research Projects**

##### **Ongoing 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), feedback boxes, 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 focused measures including the 0-2 Child and Parent Well-being Measure (0-2 Home Visiting Programme), the Parent Child+ Measures (CBT and PACT), Assessing Children's Numeracy Skills (Early Numeracy Programme), Assessing Children's Phonics, Writing, Sight Vocab and Social Skills (Doodle Den Programme), Assessing Children's Understanding, Knowledge and Skills in Coding (Coding Programme) and Assessing Children's Outcomes in Readings and Maths (Standardised Assessments). This year a new 0-2 Parent and Child Observation tool was developed to support the Home Visitors in reflecting on the parent and child wellbeing and identifying areas for progress.

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 2019) and term 2 (June 2020). 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. Of the staff involved across both events, 97% (n=31) reported that they learnt something new about ELI at the event. Due to COVID-19, the event in term 2 took place online with 72% (n=13) of participants at the term 2 event reporting that the virtual format of the event worked well.

##### **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 26 post programme surveys. A preliminary report on the findings of this research study is available on request from the research team.

##### **ParentChild+ Follow-Up Study**

This year 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, 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 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.

### 3.6.2. Conference Presentations

Bleach (2019). *Changing Lives through Community Action Research*. Presented at the JUC Public Administration Conference, 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> September.

Bleach (2019). *Imagining, Strategizing, Sharing and Scaling the Future through Community Action Research*. Presented at the CARN ALARA conference, 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> October.

Byrne (2019). *My Place to Play - meet demands of parents and children living in Emergency Homeless Accommodation*. Presented at the OMEP Conference CIT Cork, 16<sup>th</sup> November.

Cummins (2019). *My Place to Play - An Interagency Response to Support Infants and Parents Living in Emergency Homeless Accommodation*. Presented at the PPS National Conference, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> December.

Bleach (2020). *A Home School Community Approach to Supporting Parents as the Primary Educators of their Children*. DES inspectorate Conference 26<sup>th</sup> February.

### 3.6.3. Academic Publications

Kent, Traynor, Darmody & O'Leary (2019). Enhancing the Administration of an Early Intervention Educational Programme Through Technology; Exploring Usage, Acceptance and Attitudes. *Irish Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning*, 5, 1.

Bleach (2019). Mentoring and Coaching and their relationship to Management and Leadership in the Early Childhood Education, In Gasper and Walker ed., *Mentoring and Coaching in Early Childhood Education*, London: Bloomsbury

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)

### 3.7. Social Media

ELI's social media presence aims to build connections, sustain relationships and share information, achievements and learning. In March, due to COVID-19, social media suddenly became an essential platform and gateway for ELI to continue to support parents, suddenly thrust in the role of Home Educators, to maintain a positive nurturing home learning environment, and to signpost available supports and services.

An extensive range of quality learning content, ideas and activities for children from birth right up to third level was provided as well as two series of parent support and self-care videos to support parents during this challenging situation. These were complemented by access and signposting to our suite of online parent and child groups with a storytelling group, song-time 'Sing and Smile' group, online 'Mam and Baby Fitness' classes and online 'Baby Massage' classes. Other content included suggested activities, news and updates from all programme areas including; 0-2 Home Visiting, ParentChild+ Home Visiting, Parent and Child Groups, Doodle Den, Zoom Ahead with Books, Early Numeracy, Robotic Coding, Restorative Practices and Discover University.

#### Programme Figures

As can be seen from the table below, there was substantial growth across our four social media platforms, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Other highlights are listed below.

Social Media Platform	Total followers end June 2019	Total followers end June 2020	Increase in 2019/20	% Increase in 2019/20	Increase from March - June	% Increase from March-June
Facebook	1,866	2,373	507	21%	353	15%
Instagram	140	357	217	61%	142	40%
Twitter	860	1,027	167	16%	70	7%
LinkedIn	0	196	196	100%	160	82%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,866</b>	<b>3,953</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>18%</b>

- 431 posts across all platforms during COVID-19.
- 5,230 reach with 616 engagements for Irish Healthcare Award for 'My Place to Play' post on Facebook in September 2019.
- 2,362 reach and 791 engagements for Home Visitor of the Year post in June 2020.
- 4,204 average reach and 305 average engagement per post for Discover University (11 posts).
- 999 average reach and 167 average engagement per post for ParentChild+ Home Visiting suggested activities and updates (12 posts).
- 1,978 average reach and 156 average engagement per post for Restorative Practice Self Care/Parent Support Video Series (7 episodes).
- 1,402 average reach and 122 average engagement per post for 'A Day in The Life' Education Guidance Video Series (16 episodes) created by our corporate volunteers.
- 1,136 average reach and 87 average engagement per post for Numeracy Theme Activity Series and Numeracy Week (18 posts).
- 1,431 average reach and 40 average engagement per post for Robotic Coding (4 posts).
- 1,149 average reach and 38 average engagement per post for Father's Day Dads of ELI Video and Photo Series (8 posts).

### 3.8. 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

<b>Capacity- Building - Training and Mentoring</b>	<b>Professionals</b>
National Síolta Aistear Initiative Introductory Training	62
Restorative Practice Getting Started	79
Restorative Practice Upskilling/ Moving Forward	18
Restorative Practice CPD	72
Restorative Practice Training of Trainers	12
Restorative Practice Summer Course for Teachers	27
Restorative Practice Selfcare	40
Restorative Practice Emotional Literacy	9
ELI Interns	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>323</b>

### 3.8.1. Early Years Professionals

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:

- 36 early years educators attending 4 Early Numeracy Working Group meetings - reflective space and peer learning opportunity (average of 10 attendees per meeting).
- 34 participants attended 5 face-to-face and 1 virtual Pre-Numeracy Workshops – shared planning for the upcoming numeracy week (average of 11 attendees per workshop).
- 62 participants attended National Síolta Aistear Initiative Introductory Awareness Workshops, including three full-service teams as well as individual participants from other services.
- 172 numeracy mentoring visits from July 2019-March 2020, which were replaced by 187 text/emails/ phone/video calls from March-June 2020.
- 9 Doodle Den facilitators engaged in monthly communities of practice and 2 emotional literacy CPD training sessions - creating a 'relationship-based' learning environment, where safety, trust, students' needs, teacher/facilitators' needs, and modes of communication are the key considerations.
- Mandatory training for all Home Visitors and Group Facilitators with weekly supervision supplemented by additional training in self-care; Restorative Practice; paediatric and basic first aid; engaging children with additional needs; Cultural, Diversity & Inclusion Training; attachment; Speech and Language; nutrition; play therapy; and a session from As I Am on the topic of life for children with Autism.
- 2 group facilitators completed training and became certified Infant Massage Instructors (CIMI's) from the IAIM and Baby Massage Ireland.
- 40 members of the National ABC Learning Community engaged in a mindfulness session during COVID-19.
- 3 self-care videos (Role of Routine and Structure; Connection and Practicing Self-Compassion and Gratitude) were created and shared on ELI's social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) during the COVID-19 lockdown with an average reach of 1,978 and average engagement of 156 (clicks, likes, comments, shares).

#### Participant Feedback

Feedback from post-training surveys indicated that 99% (n=78) of participants found their relevant training sessions useful, and that they benefited from the training through learning new skills or knowledge that they can use to improve their own practice.

Comments from participants included:

*"It was a great way to network with other services and develop ideas for the upcoming event."*

*"I found this training very beneficial and will use the principals and guidelines in my planning and evaluation."*

*"Listening to other facilitators, sharing ideas, it gave me an awareness of self support"*



### 3.8.2. 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.

#### Programme Delivery

- 66 different organisations participated, an increase of eight services from last year.
- 208 professionals, educators and other stakeholders attending RP training and workshops - a decrease on 2018/19 (N=469) due to COVID-19. Despite the decrease, this included new services and community members beginning their restorative implementation journeys.
- 12 professionals engaged in Train the Trainer in July 2019 and received ongoing mentoring and support with 6 trainers completed their facilitation commitment prior to COVID-19 lockdown. The remaining six will complete the facilitation component in 2020/21.
- 79 participants engaged in Getting Started Training; which was delivered by facilitators trained in July 2019.
- 18 participants engaged in Moving Forward Training.
- 27 teachers and principals participated in Skills for Positive Classroom and School Norms Summer Course.
- 72 professionals engaged in Continued Professional Development:
  - 17 leaders in schools and services attended two CPD workshops. One further workshop which was scheduled to take place in April was cancelled due to COVID-19.
  - 55 professionals attended individualised CPD training for ASEP (N=27); Central Model SNS (N=17) and ELI Home Visitors (N=11). Further workshops scheduled to take place were cancelled due to COVID-19.
- 138 Mentoring and Support visits took place in total, 104 face-to-face, with 34 online or by phone.
- 4 face-to-face Community of Practice meetings facilitated by ELI and An Garda Síochána with an average of 6 attendees from September to February
- 13 weekly virtual Community of Practice meetings with an average of 12 attendees, from 20+ organisations, from March to end of June.
- 5 organisations completed the self-assessment 'Reflection on Implementation' tool in 2019/20 with COVID-19 impacting on organisations' capacity to engage in this reflective exercise.



**Graduates of the Train the Trainer Programme**

## Participant Feedback

Satisfaction rates are high with 99% (n=125) finding it a valuable learning opportunity that was transferable to their role, and 92% (n=105) feeling confident to implement the skills learned into their workplace post-training. With most (31%, n=61) 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 71% on completion of their training.

Comments from participants included:

*"I believe restorative practices have never been more important than now. Being stuck in the same home as one another can lead to relationships being frayed and strained. It's for this reason restorative values and practices are vital to strengthening/maintaining healthy and positive relationships."*

*"This course has been practical, insightful and inspiring. I have never left a course feeling so ready to take [things] on in my own life and professional. It has also given me the skills, tools, and ideas to approach my colleagues and work towards making restorative practice a whole school approach. The trainers are very informative, practical. I really enjoyed my week. Thanks!"*

*"One of the positives about this [experience] is the common discourse being developed. It's great to see a lot of likeminded people in different areas and sectors [trained as trainers] which gives us an opportunity to create a holistic approach towards restorative practice and restorative conversations, which is really good and really important."*

### 3.8.3. 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

- 66 applications to the programme in 2019/20, ten of whom were interviewed.
- 4 successful applicants studying Business (2), Computing and Psychology.



**Intern Engages with a Child at the Love Education Event**

#### Participant Feedback

All interns agreed that the internship developed both the personal and professional skills needed for their future careers.

Comments from interns included:

*“Everything about the internship was brilliant and rewarding. The highlights would have to be participating and helping out all the local schools in the table quiz weeks. The events also that were held were really enjoyable and was great to meet and talk to all the different corporate volunteers that were present. And finally, working in the whole ELI environment and in the office was a true learning curve but also a great atmosphere to be around and I really enjoyed coming into work every day.”*

*“Getting to work with the kids in the schools first-hand was a major high point of the internship. It was also really helpful both personally and in terms of career development to learn how to do admin tasks and get experience in a proper office environment.*

## 4. DUBLIN'S INNER CITY

*This section gives a brief summary of all ELI's Dublin Docklands and East Inner City programmes in 2019/20. More details on each programme are available on the website: [www.ncirl.ie/eli](http://www.ncirl.ie/eli). If you would like more information on a particular programme, please contact Lána Cummins by e-mail [лана.сummins@ncirl.ie](mailto:лана.сummins@ncirl.ie) or phone: 086 4672204.*

While much has changed since ELI began in 2006, **key values** remain, including the message from parents: "We love our children. We want them to do well. We don't know how. I never had it as a kid". ELI remains committed to working with parents in Dublin's Inner City to ensure that their children have the social, language, literacy and numeracy skills they need for success in education, employment and life.

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

- **Home Visiting and Parent Support** (N=2,961 families) - positive home environment through playful learning interactions.
- **Literacies** (N=2,819 children) – improving social, language, coding and thinking skills.
- **Educational Guidance** (N=473 children) - accessing further education and career opportunities.

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. Our 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 sustains 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:**

- To enable children and young people to develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions they will need to achieve their educational, career and life goals
- To increase parental involvement and skills in supporting their children's development and education
- To ensure smooth transitions, continuity and progression in learning for children moving from home to early years' settings to the local schools and afterschool services and on to higher education
- To enable a safe, secure, caring, holistic, restorative learning environment at home, in school, after-schools and youth organisations in Dublin's Inner City community
- To support family needs through interagency collaboration in Dublin's Inner City

## 4.1. Home Visiting and Parent Support

This section examines ELI's 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 0-2 Community Parent Support Groups; ParentChild+ (formerly Parent Child Home Programme); Home from Home Transition Programme and Restorative Parenting.

### 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

	Children	Parents	Total
<b>Home Visiting and Parent Support Programmes</b>	<b>2,961</b>	<b>3,235</b>	<b>6,196</b>
<b>Home Visiting Programmes</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Total</b>
ABC 0-2 Home Visiting Programme (0-2 years)	134	153	287
ABC ParentChild+ (18-36 months)	173	173	346
Home from Home	24	22	46
<b>Total - Home Visiting</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>679</b>
<b>ABC Parent Support Programmes</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Total</b>
ABC Parenting Group Support Sessions (0-3 years)	569	569	1,138
ABC 0-3 Summer Programme (0-3 years)	388	350	738
Restorative Parenting (0-11 years)	0	88	88
<b>Total - Parent Support</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>1,007</b>	<b>1,964</b>
<b>COVID-19 Family Support</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Total</b>
Support Calls	0	207	207
Activity Packs	1,367	1,367	2,734
My Place to Play	306	306	612
<b>Total - COVID-19 Family Support</b>	<b>1,673</b>	<b>1,880</b>	<b>3,553</b>

#### 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 fifth 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 Participant at the Christmas Event**

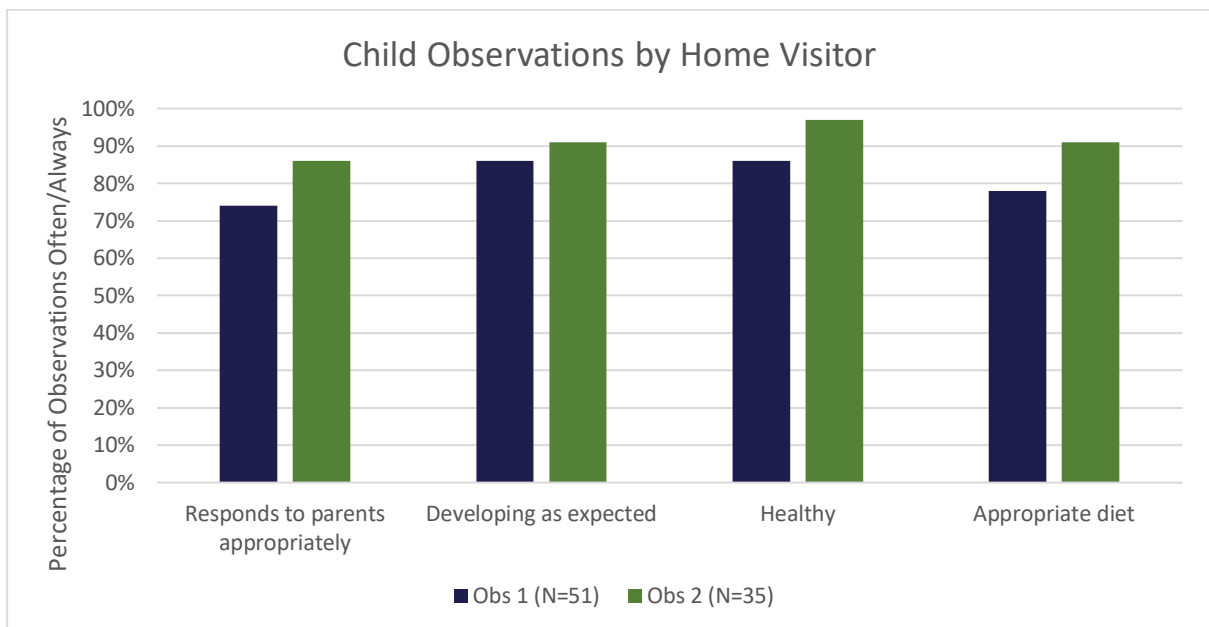
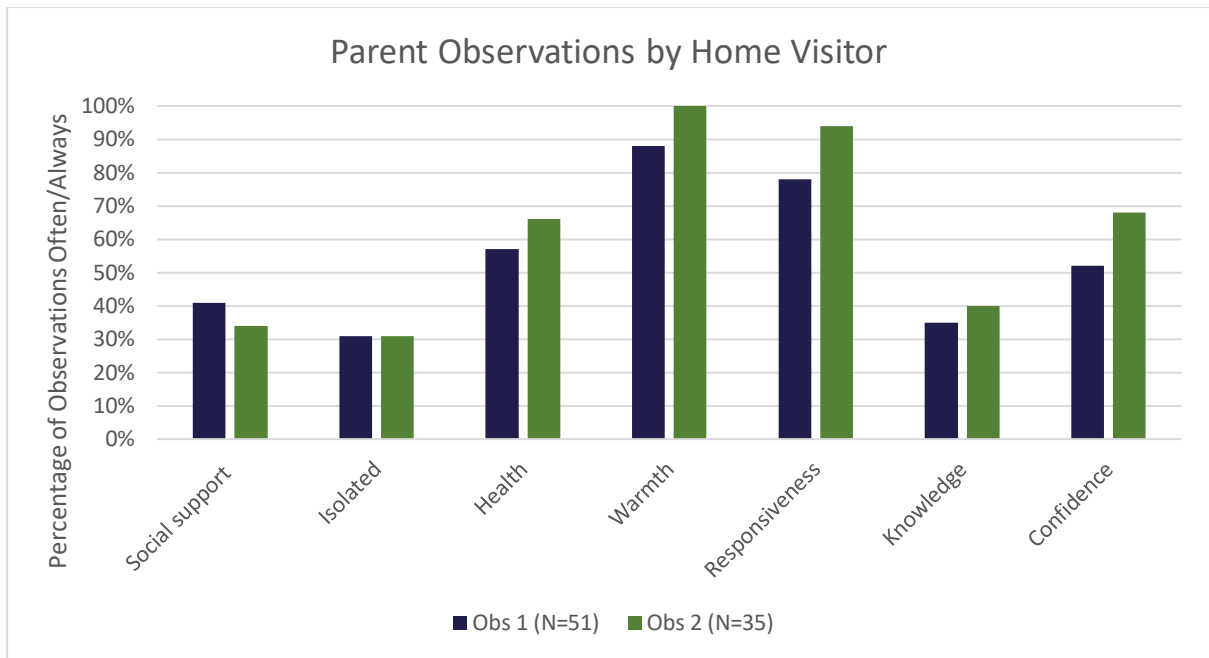
#### Programme Delivery

- 134 families took part with 12 new families taken on during COVID-19.
- 976 face-to-face visits until 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- 169 phone calls and 250 video calls taking place between March and June. Some families on monthly or fortnightly visits reverted to weekly communication with their home visitors as their usual support networks were suspended.
- 27 garden visits in June to allow for the delivery of learning materials to families and a physical socially distanced check-in.
- Significant increase in referrals through the Public Health Nurse (PHN). The team continued to work in partnership with the families' PHN, and Family Support Practitioners to provide continuity of care and share the one key message of integrated support.
- 52 children and their families attended NCI's Christmas event - the largest turn out to date.

The 0-2 team are delighted to be involved in the Sláintecare Community Mothers project. Further information on this project can be found in section 3.2.

#### Child and Parent Observation Tool

Across 2019/20 a total of 51 Stage 1 Observations, 35 Stage 2 Observations and 3 Stage 3 Observations were completed. Given the large discrepancy in sample size it is only meaningful to compare Stages 1 and 2 Observations with the graphs below presenting the parent and child observations at these timepoints.



### Participant Feedback

All programme parents (100%, N=63) reported finding the programme useful/ beneficial; that they learnt new approaches/ideas and 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. Nearly a third of parents (32%, n=13) were finishing the programme to move over to ParentChild+ with other reasons being returning to work (24%, n=10), baby turning two (22%, n=9), moving out of the area (17%, n=7) and the move towards virtual visits (5%, n=2).

Comments from parents/guardians included:

*“Our discussions helped me to understand actions and gestures of babies and to engage accordingly. She (the home visitor) offered me the opportunities of learning more about babies and my wellbeing after C section. She has been like a more skilful big sister, extremely helpful when I needed her.”*

*“I have learned how to help my child's development and language skills through different play activities.”*

*“Using different mediums and new, interesting ways to play with my baby e.g. sensory development with scarves. Also I got reassurance e.g. using tooth brush for 1st time. Also I am teaching my baby words and numbers whenever I see an opportunity as suggested by the teacher and I approach it more lightly.”*

### Virtual Visits

Parental engagement was reported to be strong in virtual visits with 87% of parents (n=27) agreeing that they found it easy to engage and 83% of home visitors' reflections (n=298) reporting strong parental engagement. However, engaging children was found to be a bigger challenge with only 55% (n=17) of parents agreeing that their child found it easy to engage and only 21% (n=74) of home visitor reflections reporting good child engagement.

The most common challenges of virtual visits were reported to be the child being too young (41% of parents and 18% of Home Visitor reflections), the home environment being busy (19% of parents and 12% of Home Visitor reflections), arranging calls around the families busy schedule (16% of parents and 10% of Home Visitor reflections) and engaging the child (28% of parents and 10% of Home Visitor reflections).



**A Mother and Baby Engage in a 0-2 Programme Virtual Visit**



### 4.1.2. 0-2 Community Parent Support Programme

The ABC 0-2 Parent Support Programme, now in its fifth 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.



**Parents and Babies Taking Part in Baby Yoga in a Local Park**

### Programme Delivery

In 2019/20, 26 groups were delivered with a potential reach of 569 children and their parents/guardians along with the ABC Summer Programme and ICEP Parental Awareness of Gender Stereotyping in Children event. During COVID-19 online groups and social media were used to maintain the support for parents:

- 12 face-to-face groups (Storytelling, Parent-Toddler groups, Parent and Child Play group, Mam and Baby Fitness Classes, Family Baby Group, Play groups and Pop-Up Parenting) were held in the local libraries, homeless hubs, primary care centres and other locations between September and March with a total of 487 children and their parents/guardians attending.
- 8 Baby Massage courses were held between September and March with a total of 82 children and their parents/guardians attending.
- 6 online groups (Storytime, Songtime 'Sing and Smile' group, Mammy and Child Fitness x2 weekly, Children's Yoga- baby, toddler & family classes and 1 Baby Massage group) during the COVID-19 pandemic with a total of 472 log ins across these groups.
- 8 Summer Programme events with 388 children and their parents/guardians attending.
- ICEP Parental Awareness of Gender Stereotyping in Children event with 41 children and their parents/guardians attending.
- 80 Facebook posts over 16 weeks with an average engagement of 4,376.1 per week.

### Facilitator Observations

At the end of each session, group facilitators complete an observational tool with a total of 229 completed in 2019/20. Areas of development were social skills (95%, n=217), communication (95%, n=217), fine motor skills (94%, n=213) and gross motor skills (89%, n=203) with each session supporting at least one of the four Aistear themes - wellbeing (94%, n=215), identity and belonging (94%, n=215), communication (95%, n=217), and exploring and thinking (92%, n=210).

### Participant Feedback

Evaluation feedback indicated a high level of satisfaction across all groups (99%, n=93) with participants citing benefits to their own well-being and parenting (98%, n=92) and their child's development and well-being (96%, n=77). Furthermore, 98% (n=92) felt supported by the facilitator and 99% (n=85) would recommend the programme to a friend.

Comments from parents/guardians included:

*"There is a lovely warm supportive atmosphere among everyone in the group and it all comes down from the facilitators."*

*"The opportunity for children to play freely and interact with one another. I don't get other opportunities to do this with her."*

*"The girls were so enthusiastic, smiley, friendly. My child was totally immersed in the session and this was great because she is missing her friends so much. She could also see other children interacting, so this was great encouragement for her."*



Participants who Engaged in Baby Message through Mandarin

### 4.1.3. ABC ParentChild+ Programme

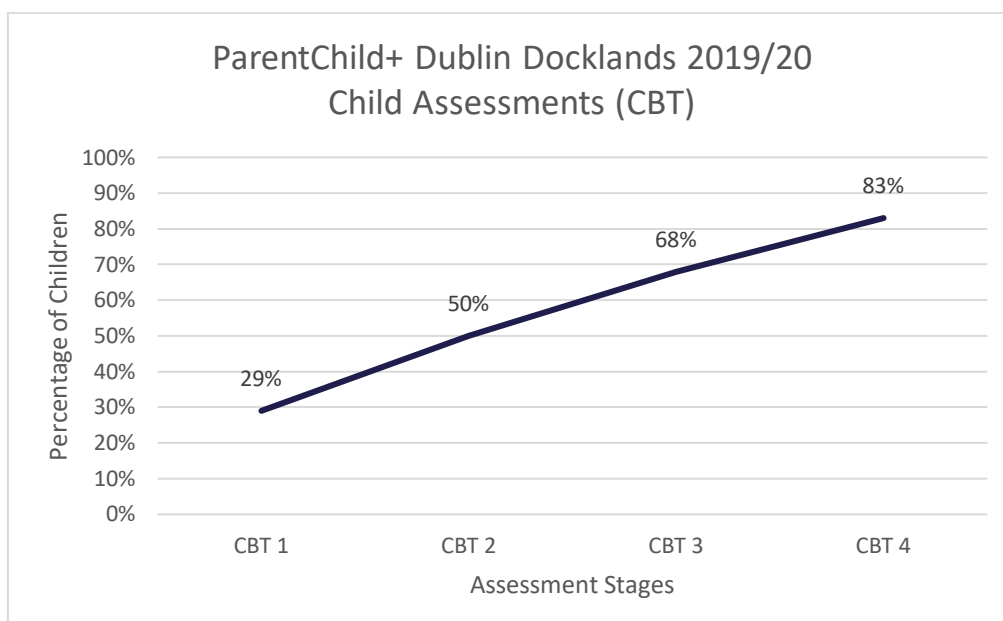
Originally from the US, the ParentChild+ programme is an innovative, home-based literacy and parenting programme that strengthens families and prepares children to succeed academically. For over 12 years, we have been delivering ParentChild+ to vulnerable families with children aged 18 months - 3 years in Dublin's Inner City. Beginning with 15 families in 2007, the numbers have grown to 173 in 2020. 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 of this report.

#### Programme Delivery

- 173 families engaged in 2,631 home visits as of 12<sup>th</sup> March (pre-COVID-19).
- 108 families engaged virtually from March to June through 255 phone calls and 1496 video calls.
- 167 activity packs were distributed during COVID-19.
- 6 weeks supply of books and toys were delivered in May for use during video calls in June.
- 39 children graduated.
- 21 families left the programme before completion.
- 86% retention rate, an increase of 7% from 79% in 2018/19.
- 61 female, 89 male children with the gender of seven children not specified by the parents.
- 148 female adults and four male adults participated in the programme.
- 45% Irish; 23% Chinese; 9% Eastern European, 8% African, 8% Asian; 3% Western European and, 1% of families South American.

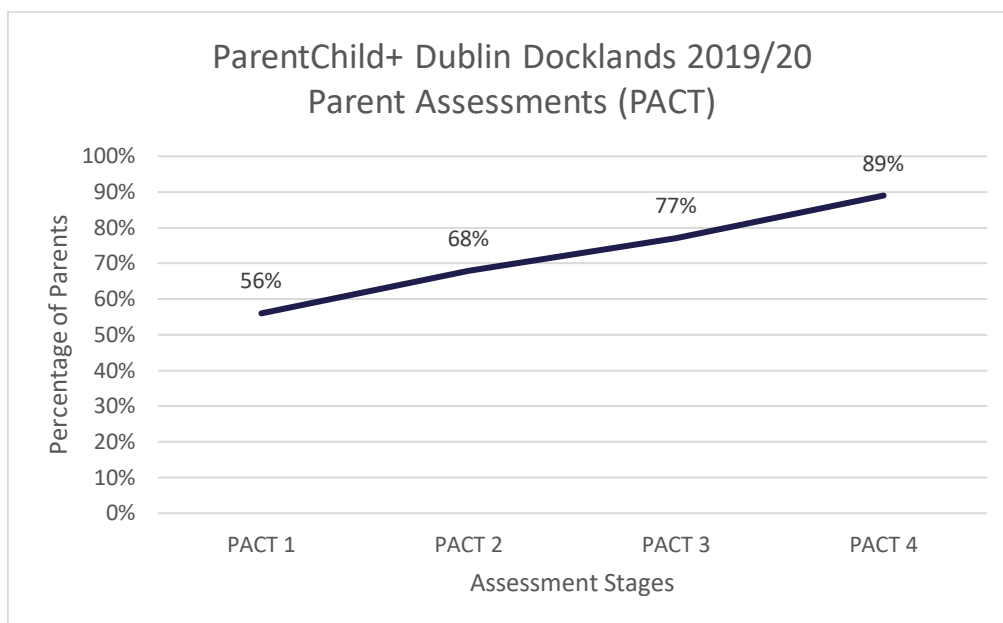
#### ParentChild+ Programme Assessment- Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)

Throughout the programme Home Visitors complete two observational assessments (CBT and PACT). For more information on the assessments please see section 3.1. 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 29% at the beginning of the programme to 50%, 68% and, finally, 83% on completion of the programme. This 54% increase over all is a slight improvement on that of the 2018/19 cohort (50%) and, also, similar to the 2019/20 increase across all ParentChild+ sites (57%, see section 3.1).



The average CBT score of children who completed the programme in 2019/20 increased from 71 at CBT 1 to 107 at CBT 4, with 98% of children demonstrating an increase in positive verbal interaction and behaviour. This percentage of increase is the same as that of 2018/19, and an improvement on the overall increase of the 2017/18 cohort (86%). 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 a slight improvement on the figures from 2018/19 in which 82% parents were demonstrating high-quality interactions with their children at PACT 4. The percentage of increase from PACT 1 to PACT 4 (33%) is also the same as that of the overall ParentChild+ 2019/20 cohort (see section 3.1).



The average PACT score of children and parents who completed the programme in 2019 increased from 69 at the early stages of the programme to 88 at PACT 4, with 100% of parents demonstrating an increase in positive verbal interaction and behaviour. An increase of 13% from 2018/19. 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 81% of parents in 2018/19 to 84% in 2019/20. Thirteen percent of parents in 2019/20 were reported as somewhat engaged with the visits. Sixty-nine percent of the children were reported as fully engaged in their visits in 2019/20, in comparison to 65% in 2018/19. Twenty-four percent of children were somewhat engaged while 6% were not engaged with the visits.

### Participant Feedback

The majority of programme parents reported learning new approaches and ideas from participating in the programme (97%, n=66) and would recommend the programme to a friend (99%, n=68). Parents reported their children are benefitting most in the areas of speech and language skills (78%, n=55), social skills (75%, n=52), numeracy skills (58%, n=35) and literacy skills (53%, n=37). The majority of

families (63%, n=15) finished the programme as they had completed the full 92 visits. Other reasons for leaving included moving from the area (17%, n=4), parent returning to work or education (8%, n=2), family unable to commit to visits for personal reasons (8%, n=2) and the child receiving a place in creche (4%, n=1).

Comments from parents/ guardians included:

*"I learned how to encourage kids to express their own ideas and how to help kids to set up a positive view of themselves."*

*"The entire engagement with our home visitor has helped my child in all areas. My child has delayed speech and being part of this programme has been so beneficial for him. He has a great connection with the Home Visitor. I learnt how to be more patient and appreciate the small steps of progress as and when they happen. The main focus is having my child happy content and engaged."*

*"My son has a lovely relationship with his Home Visitor and it was lovely to see him talking to her. She really developed his confidence, and ours as parents, and showed us how the books and toys could be used as tools to help to develop his speech."*

### Virtual Visits

Parental engagement reduced somewhat throughout the virtual visits, with 70% (n=40) of parents agreeing that they found it easy to engage, and 71% (n=871) of Home Visitors' reflections reporting strong parental engagement. Engaging with the children was also a greater challenge with just 54% (n=31) of parents agreeing that their child found it easy to engage and only 32% (n=545) of Home Visitor reflections reporting strong child engagement.

The most frequently reported challenge with virtual visits was keeping the child engaged (61% of parents and 24% of Home Visitor reflections). Other challenges experienced were the home environment being busy (16% of parents and 11% of Home Visitor reflections), child too young (16% of parents and 5% of Home Visitor reflections), child's frustration (12% of parents and 7% of Home Visitor reflections), and finding time for calls within the family's schedule (12% of parents and 7% of Home Visitor reflections).



Children Graduating from ParentChild+ in NCI (January 2020)

#### **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**

- 22 families engaged with 89 Home Visits completed as of 12<sup>th</sup> March (pre-COVID-19).
- 13 families engaged virtually from March-June with 34 phone calls and 60 video calls.
- 11 services including Family Hubs, Bed and Breakfasts, Hotel and Transitional Housing Units.

##### **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 2<sup>nd</sup> visit and a second CBT and PACT after the 12<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> visit, a final CBT and PACT assessment are completed after their final visit. (Please see section 3.1 for further details on the 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 points.

On entering the programme 40% of the children were reaching their developmental milestones, increasing to 49% of the children at CBT 2. The children demonstrated improvements across all three of the CBT subscales. The greatest increase was seen in the domain of cognition, which increased by 18%, followed by a 10% increase in children's language and a 4% increase in children demonstrating positive behaviour.

The percentage of parents having quality interactions with their children increased overall from PACT 1 (60%) to PACT 2 (64%). The parents of the Home from Home programme demonstrated increases across three of the PACT subscales. Most notably parents' affection towards their children increased from 79% to 90%. There was also a 7% increase in parents' positive communication with their children and a 5% increase in parents' consistency with their children. There was, however, a 6% decrease in parents' responsiveness to their children.

##### **Parent and Child Engagement**

Parents were fully engaged for 83% of the visits, comparable to 84% of the Dublin Docklands ParentChild+ cohort. However, the children in the Home from Home cohort were fully engaged for 53% of the visits, 16% less than that of the ParentChild+ cohort (69%). 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**

Twelve parents responded to an end of year evaluation in June 2020. All the parents reported finding both the programme and the books and toys provided useful. They also indicated that they learned new approaches and ideas and were confident in implementing the strategies they learnt while participating. The majority of parents reported that their child is benefiting in the areas of speech and language skills and improved attention span (67%, n=8 each), with half of the parents reporting their child developed in their literacy skills and numeracy skills (50%, n=6 each). While a slightly smaller percentage (42%, n=5) that their child showed development in their numeracy skills.

Comments from parents/guardians included:

*"I think it's great for interacting with the children as before I couldn't get them to sit easy to read a book unless it was bed time."*

*"My child became outgoing, she can know more from these books and toys, it all depends on her teacher's help and Early Learning Initiative."*

*"That it's in the comfort of child's home so the child is going to be there true explorative self."*

### Virtual Visits

Home Visitors' perceptions of parental engagement reduced somewhat throughout the virtual delivery, with just 49% (n=39) of Home Visitor reflections reporting the parents were fully engaged. However, 83% (n=10) of parents agreed that they found it easy to engage with the visits. Similarly, 32% (n=25) of Home Visitor reflections indicated strong engagement from the children, whereas 66% (n=8) of parents noted their children found it easy to engage with the visits.

The greatest challenges experienced while conducting the virtual visits was retaining the child's attention (58% parents and 17% Home Visitor reflections), the home environment being too busy (25% of parents and 22% of Home Visitor reflections), and connection issues (25% of parents and 14% of Home Visitor Reflections).



**Child Used Her Activity Pack to Create a Motivational Drawing for Her Window**

#### 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

- 42 parents engaged in 8 parenting courses (one of these was online).
- 46 parents engaged in 7 pop up parenting sessions (three of these were online).
- 7 parenting videos were created and posted on social media to support parents during COVID-19 (3 self-care videos on Routine; Connection and Self-compassion/Gratitude and 4 on Supporting Challenging Behaviour; Supporting Identifying And Naming Feelings; Understanding Attention Seeking; Resolving Disagreements/Arguments. The average reach for each of these videos was 1,978 and an average engagement (clicks, likes, comments, shares) of 156.

##### Participant Feedback

Parents (100%, N=20) found the Restorative Parenting programme helpful and felt confident in using the suggested parenting strategies. Pre-course, parents reported struggling to deal with their child when they are disruptive (85%, n=19). However, post-course all parents (100%, N=17) reported experiencing less incidences of their child misbehaving. All parents (100%, N=21) reported that they would be interested in taking part in a follow-on course.

Through the facilitators' reflections on the pop-up parenting sessions (N=7) it was evident that the relaxed nature of the sessions worked well without the requirement of parents availing of formal childcare. The appreciation of parents of the opportunity to connect with others and receive support in this informal structure was noted.

Comments from parents/ guardians included:

*"Great tips on how to communicate and understand my kids' feelings."*

*"I look at things different now and it was great meeting new people."*

*"It was really hard coming to the course each week for personal reasons, but I knew the facilitator genuinely cared and that it was*



## 4.2. Literacy, Numeracy and Coding

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, NCI Challenges, 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
- To widen participation in higher education within the Docklands

Literacies Programmes	Children	Parents
Early Numeracy Project (0-8 years)	1,265	1,898
Zoom Ahead with Books (4-6 years)	1,101	1,651
Doodle Den (Senior Infants)	65	97
Rummikub (2nd class)	77	29
Table Quiz (3rd class)	66	11
Robotic Coding Club (afterschools)	198	0
Tuition Support (15-18 years)	27	0
Language Cafe Events	20	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,819</b>	<b>3,686</b>

### 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 38 organisations and 1,265 children in 2019/20. 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

- 1,265 children and 1,898 parents overall.
- 11 schools, 12 early years services, 5 after school services, 5 Libraries and 5 Health centres engaged from July 2019-March 2020 and received numeracy cards and activity packs to be used at home and in school/service.
- 9 schools, 8 early years services and 5 afterschool services engaged virtually from March – June 2020 with the libraries actively promoting the programme on social media. There were daily posts of play-based numeracy activities on social media as well as links to numeracy cards.
- 18 numeracy themed posts from March to June with a reach of 20,439 and 1,642 engagements.

#### Participant Learning and Feedback

On completion of each Early Numeracy Week both staff and parents were asked to provide feedback through an evaluation. In total across the three terms 250 parents and 126 staff completed evaluations. Although these figures are both lower than those of 2018/19 (432 and 193 respectively), it must be noted that the lockdown of schools and services in March of 2020 hindered the collection of evaluations for Early Numeracy Weeks 2 and 3. The majority of both staff (89%, n=112) and parents (96%, n=210) agreed or strongly agreed that the Early Numeracy Weeks were an enjoyable experience for the children involved. Ninety-two percent (n=209) of parents also highlighted their own enjoyment in completing the activities with their child.

Staff also reported that the Early Numeracy Weeks provided valuable learning opportunities for the children (91%, n=109), parents (89%, n=105) and staff (82%, n=97). According to staff, the Early Numeracy Weeks improved children's understanding of the numeracy theme (75%, n=94) and increased parental involvement (53%, n=67). Along with enjoyment, parents found the Early Numeracy Weeks encouraged them to become more involved with their child's learning (92%, n=216), talk and play with their child more (88%, n=205) and improve their teaching skills/knowledge (83%, n=191). Parents also reported the Early Numeracy Weeks improved their child's numeracy skills (94%, n=217), provided their children with the opportunity to learn more about numeracy (93%, n=214), improved their child's understanding of each numeracy theme (91%, n=207), and provided their child with the opportunity to spend more quality time with adults (84%, n=190).

Staff reported that the Early Numeracy Weeks positively impacted their own practices and learning, primarily in the areas of learning new ideas for incorporating numeracy into their teaching (29%, n=29), finding ways to make learning numeracy fun (22%, n=22) and gaining a better understanding of the children's abilities (17%, n=17).

During COVID-19, positive messages regarding the engagement of families during the numeracy week were received regularly. Feedback from teachers indicated that the numeracy week provided a

positive focus to their teaching plans as well as an engagement tool for family involvement in children's learning.

Comments from parents/ guardians included:

*“Helped my child see how many ways numbers are in everyday life in lots of different ways.”*

*“Having children and parents working together, building your child’s confidence by becoming involved.”*

*“I'm very happy that my son attended your early years’ service and benefited from the Numeracy Programme. He is in Junior Infants now and the teacher is impressed from the start with his Math's abilities and how smart he is. During the first Parent Teacher meeting his teacher told me that his Math's is at a high level and she had never seen a child on their first school day building blocks and counting them. I was so proud of him.”*

### Numeracy Assessments

In 2019/20 two services opted to engage in the assessments with a total of 25 parents consenting for their children to be involved. The baseline assessments were completed in November 2019, however unfortunately due to the sudden closure of early year services in response to COVID-19 it was not possible to complete the end of year assessments in June.

In total 25 children took part in November 2019 across the two early year services with ages ranging from 3.01 years to 4.02 years. Of the children involved 88% were three years of age while 44% (n=11) of children were boys and 56% (n=14) were girls. On average girls scored slightly higher (M=59.43%) than boys (M=56.64%). This finding is similar to the results from 2018/19 and 2017/18 where girls scored slightly better than boys. The table below presents the trends in the percentage scores of the baseline assessments for this year along with the data for the past seven years. As can be seen in the table below in the current academic year, 2019/20, the average percentage score was 58% which was an increase from the average score of 2018/19 which was 54%.

	Number	Early Maths Skills	Direction & Position	Size & Comparison	Mental Maths	Shape	Overall Score
<b>2019/2020</b>	42%	82%	77%	76%	Removed	68%	58%
<b>2018/2019</b>	39%	71%	67%	81%	Removed	64%	54%
<b>2017/2018</b>	52%	69%	79%	79%	Removed	81%	64%
<b>2016/2017</b>	42%	68%	78%	80%	43%	71%	56%
<b>2015/2016</b>	44%	63%	60%	74%	40%	73%	55%
<b>2014/2015</b>	38%	67%	67%	67%	38%	69%	50%
<b>2013/2014</b>	38%	70%	52%	61%	33%	67%	53%
<b>2012/2013</b>	40%	62%		65%	11%	67%	53%

### 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

- 1,101 children and 1,651 parents from 11 schools, one preschool and two afterschool services participated, which is an increase of 168 children from last year.
- 24 volunteers participated as book buddies.
- 7,464 books were read i.e. each child, on average, reading 8 books. This overall figure is slightly lower than previous years due to some schools not continuing the programme for week 3.
- 12 children and their families attended an exhibition event in Central Bank in January.
- Cut short by COVID-19 lockdown and services closures, families were encouraged to continue the programme at home:
  - Volunteers prepared a list of online reading and drawing resources which staff sent on to the families.
  - Some schools sent home extra books so families were in a better position to continue participating. Others shared links to e-books, storytelling videos, libraries e-resources.
  - ELI also shared a series of posts on social media with the Zoom Ahead with Books prompt cards, and links to online reading resources to encourage families to continue using the strategies and to share their artwork.
  - Families' capacity to engage varied due to parental literacy and language difficulties, technology access and wider issues of educational disadvantage.
- Zoom Ahead with Books related social media posts recorded total reach of 4,034 people and 328 engagements.
- No school exhibitions were held due to COVID-19 closures, but some educators did report parents sending them photos of artwork with some sharing on their school online learning platforms and social media.

#### Participant Feedback

All children (100%, N=10), volunteers (100%, N=9), educators (100%, N=38) and book buddies (100%, N=34) agreed that the programme was enjoyable for the child. All book buddies (100%, N=34) and educators (100%, N=38) reported the programme as being a valuable learning opportunity for the child.

From the perspective of children involved through the afterschools, all children agreed that the programme helped them with their reading (100%, N=10). While 62% of book buddies (N=21) and 100% of educators (N=38) reported the biggest impact on children was an increased interest and enthusiasm for reading. The majority of the volunteers reported that the programme had enhanced the children's social and communications skills (90%; n=8). Book buddies also highlighted how the programme gave the child the opportunity to spend more quality time with adults (58.8%, n=20) while the majority of educators (92%, n=33) agreed that the programme increased parental involvement in children's learning.

All children reported their favourite part of the programme as being drawing (100%, N=10), with 80% (n=8) reporting reading as their favourite part while 50% (n=5) reported their favourite part as being the book buddy. Book buddies reported the biggest impact on themselves as being enjoyment (73%, n=25) followed by spending more time with the child (65%, n=22) and being more aware of the child's

learning (65%, n=22). All volunteers reported that the programme allowed them to make a valuable contribution to the local community and wider society (100%, N=9).

Of the educators, 48.6% (n=17) reported that they had actively encouraged parents to continue during COVID-19 lockdown with 79% (n=27) of book buddies reporting that they were encouraged to continue the programme after school closures.



**Zoom Ahead with Books in Action**

Comments from participants included:

*“There are so many positive outcomes from the programme. The interest in reading is obviously the main one but other literacy areas such as recap, sequencing, scanning, predicting and sharing all of this information with peers is what I notice most in the classroom. The children are having conversations about their books with no input from parents or teachers. They are developing their communication and social skills alongside it all.”* [Educator]

*“We really enjoyed the drawing after the story was finished. We then had lots of discussion with open ended questions. Also, myself and my husband took turns each night.”* [Book Buddy]

*“My intention was to give my time and add something to the children's lives, however it soon became clear that they were adding something to mine! It was a truly uplifting experience.”*

[Corporate Volunteer]

### 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.

#### Programme Delivery

- 65 children enrolled in the programme across the four sites funded by the ABC Programme.
- 3 new NEIC sites had to be postponed due to lockdown.
- 35 eBooks were created during COVID-19 and forwarded on a weekly basis to the 47 children involved at lockdown. These books were interactive books which followed the Doodle Den programme and had fun activities for the children to do. If the children engaged and did any of the work that was set out for them it would appear in the following week's book.
- 15 volunteers involved in the programme.
- 68 parents attended one of the 3 parent events (art activities; shared reading and library time) held at each of the 4 sites.
- 35% of children had a high level of literacy needs, 28% medium and 34% a low level.
- 38% of children had English as an Additional Language while 9% had a Special Educational Need.
- 47 children graduated in June 2020 (28% attrition rate which is similar to last year) by post or socially distanced doorstep graduation with Rutland St NS enabling a social distanced graduation in reception area of school.

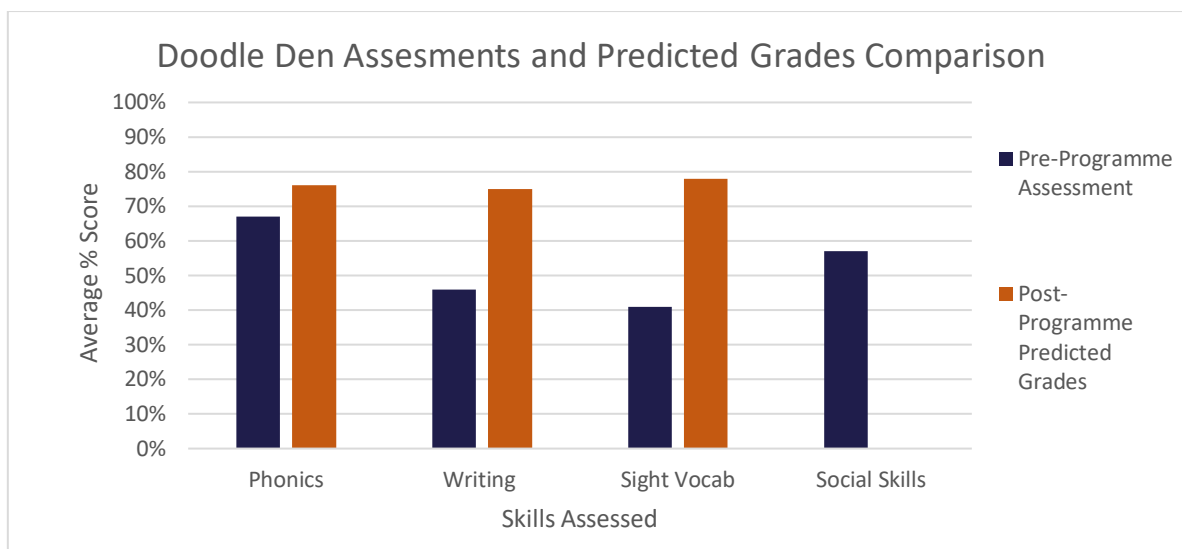


**A Doodle Den Doorstop Graduation**

#### Participant Learning

In the course of the typical academic year, Doodle Den assessments of children's Phonic Skills, Writing Skills, Sight Vocabulary and Social Skills are completed at the start of the programme in September and then again at the end of the programme in June. This year it was not possible to complete the post programme assessments due to COVID-19. Instead predictive grades were introduced whereby the facilitators were asked to rate whether each child had improved in each of the assessment areas.

Across each of the Doodle Den sites 98% (n=45) of children were rated as having improved in their Phonics and Socials skills while 100% (N=46) of children were rated as having improved in their Writing skills and Sight Vocab skills. Facilitators were also asked to provide an estimated grade of the children's literacy ability on a five-point scale going from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good). On average children's Phonic Skills were rated as 76%, their Writing skills as 75% and their Sight Vocab as 78% at post programme. 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 estimated grades in each of the three literacy skills.



Comparisons of this data, however, must be interpreted with caution as the estimated grades may not be a true representation of the children’s abilities. The 2019/20 estimated grades are lower than the overall average scores of the 2018/19 cohort, for whom the post programme percentages scores for Phonics Skills, Writing Skills and Sight Vocabulary were 91%, 82% and 85% respectively. This could be attributed to the children not completing the programme as designed in 2019/20.

### Participant Feedback

All parents reported that the Doodle Den programme was an enjoyable experience for their child and that it had helped their child (100%, N=8) with making friends (100%, N=8), reading (88%, n=7), writing (88%, n=7), understanding (88%, n=7), and homework (88%, n=7). The majority of parents (88%, n=7) reported that they used the online resources during COVID-19. Likewise, children (88%, n=7) reported the work as being an enjoyable fun experience with Doodle Den helping them with their reading (75%, n=6), writing (75%, n=6) and schoolwork (80%, n=4).

All Doodle Den facilitators reported that the Doodle Den programme was both an enjoyable and valuable learning opportunity for the children (100%, N=9) benefitting their reading and understanding (100%, n=9), listening (89%, n=8), writing (89%, n=8), making new friends (89%, n=8) and using the library (89%, n=58). Most (89%, n=8) reported that the adaption to the virtual format continued to support children’s learning during COVID-19. All volunteers (100%, N=6) reported being happy that they volunteered with ELI, satisfied with the support they received and reported that the experience had enhanced their skills.

Comments from parents/ guardians included:

*“The one thing I have to say about Doodle Den is that the days it is on I have no problem with my child going to school. When she comes down for breakfast, she says ‘yes today is Doodle Den day’. It makes my life a lot easier.”*

*“The best thing about the Doodle Den programme is that there is no other like it. It is an amazing programme that focuses wholly on children's' literacy in the most creative ways.*

*He’s having very fun time with this work [eBooks during COVID-19]. It’s much more fun than work from school that they’ve given. Every time when I ask which work would you do first he says doodle den works.”*

#### 4.2.4. NCI Challenges

The NCI Challenges are designed to encourage the development of cross-curricular skills as well as encouraging parental involvement in their children's education and schools. The inter-school challenges promote the development of children's literacy, numeracy, general knowledge and social skills through playing board-games like Monopoly (money, number, problem-solving), Rummikub (number, pattern, sorting) and the table Quiz (general knowledge, literacy).

#### Programme Delivery

- 496 children across 11 schools took part in the class practices for Rummikub and Table Quiz.
- 77 children took part in the Rummikub Challenges and 29 parents attended this event.
- 66 children from 11 schools were due to attend the table quiz event on 19<sup>th</sup> March but the event was cancelled due to COVID-19.
- Monopoly class practices or challenge did not go ahead due to COVID-19. All schools were contacted re: remote online option but delivery of the core curriculum took priority.
- 20 corporate volunteers (13 Rummikub and 7 Table Quiz).
- 55 approx. parents (an average of five) supported the in-class practices with some parents purchasing the games to transition the learning to the home environment.



**Rutland Street N.S. Students at the Rummikub Challenge Event**

#### Participant Learning and Feedback

Feedback from students and volunteers was very positive. Students enjoyed the event (95%, n=71) and reported learning about the game and strategic playing (35%, n=26), social skills (17%, n=13), mathematical skills (16%, n=12) and general knowledge (11%, n=8). All volunteers (100%, N=13) reported being happy they volunteered with ELI, satisfied with the support they received and would recommend the experience to a colleague.

Comments from participants included:

*"The planning + organization of events and meetings with the school really enhanced the programme. The team really benefit the lives of these children. It's a great initiative for all involved."* [Corporate Volunteer]

*"ELI do a wonderful job in a very imperfect environment. Keep up the good work."* [Corporate Volunteer]

*"It was fun! I love the challenge and I won."* [Child]



#### 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

- 198 students were involved from July 2019-March 2020 across 10 sites - six schools and four afterschools.
- 25 children attended an Audit World Class Challenge Day in Deloitte's offices.
- 24 children attended the Coding Challenge in the NCI.
- 55 volunteers engaged from corporate companies including Deloitte, Mc Cann FitzGerald, Central Bank and RBC.
- Due to COVID-19 the second term of coding and second event were cancelled
- From March 2020, corporate volunteers provided links to online coding platforms, which services shared with the families who were engaging in the programme. Coding opportunities ranged from solving logical problems to building apps and games.



**A Robotic Coding Club Student Proudly Showing His Work**

##### Participant Learning and Feedback

The children participating in Robotic Coding Club were presented with a brief online survey at the beginning and end of each session to assess their understanding of the learning outcomes, and were also asked questions relating to their attitudes and learning disposition towards STEM at three time points; week 1 before they begin the programme, week 5 at the mid-point, and week 8 as they finish the programme. Unfortunately, due to the closure of schools and services in March 2020, the cohort of students participating in spring 2019/20 responded to these questions up till week four only.

Across the eight weeks of Robotic Coding Club an average of 44% of children acknowledged an improvement in their understanding of the learning outcomes after each session, while another 44%

reported their understanding remained at the same level after the session. The children also reported a growing level of confidence in their skills throughout the programme, with confidence in computer skills growing by 12% across the programme and confidence in coding skills by 33%. Aspirations to attend third level education were also high, with 84% (n=113) of children reporting they would like to progress to third level education.

Comments from students included:

*"I liked that it inspired us and it made me think of my future job."*

*"It was the most fun thing I've had in a while."*

*"I loved being able to code robots."*

Comments from volunteers included:

*"The children enjoyed coding and it helped that they were working in pairs. Sometimes they didn't want to work with certain classmates but by the end of the course they had mixed well."*

*"Coding, I hadn't a clue and didn't think I could do it. I am delighted that I put myself forward."*

*"The kids were really keen to participate and learn from us. Great having knowledgeable supports from NCI experts to support this learning for both us volunteers and the kids."*

#### 4.2.6. Tuition Support

Community-based Tuition Support provides additional support to Junior and Leaving Certificate students in Maths and Irish in St. Mary's Youth Club, East Wall. Due to COVID-19, the maths sessions moved online, with an extra Leaving Certificate Maths Higher Level session added due to demand.

#### Programme Delivery

- 8 students were enrolled in Maths Leaving Certificate Higher Level and Ordinary Level this year, with an average of 5 students attending each week. This number increased after the sessions were moved online, and an additional session of Maths Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level was added in early April, with 6 more students enrolled. The average weekly figures then increased to 7 students.
- 6 students attended Maths Junior Certificate mixed-level groups, with full attendance each week. In March 2020, the mixed level group were split into Higher and Ordinary Level students and numbers enrolled increased slightly to 3 and 5, respectively, with an average of 7 in attendance each week. With the introduction of online sessions, the total number of Junior Certificate students enrolled increased to 10, however the numbers began to drop off to an average of 6 attending each week, due to the cancellation of the Junior Certificate exams.
- 3 students attended Irish Leaving Certificate mixed Higher/Ordinary Level support, which ran from January 2020 until the cancellation of the oral examinations in March 2020.

#### Participant Feedback

The majority of students (90%, n=9) who completed end of year tuition evaluations reported that the programme supported them in improving their skills, the content was easy to understand and that they were able to participate in discussions. The move towards virtual delivery was well received with 70% (n=7) of students reporting that the sessions were easy to access, 80% (n=8) reporting that the sessions worked well and 50% (n=10) reporting that they achieved the same learning as they would have in person. Asked whether they prefer digital or in person tuition the majority (50%, n=5) were indifferent, while 30% (n=3) said in person and 20% (n=2) said digital.

Feedback from the tutors (N=2) was also very positive with both tutors reporting that the programme worked well both face-to-face and online, with good attendance. Both tutors strongly agreed that the students benefited from the support received during the programme.

*"My son is learning loads and the tutor is very good supporting them, he's always prepared and sends on lesson plans early. Big thanks from the Mummy side of me, it's taken a bit of worry off us all at this pressured time. Thanks for setting it all up." [Parent]*

*"I really enjoyed being able to pick what topics I would want to revise. The preparation was great as it helped the class be prepared. Overall everything was excellent". [Student]*

*"It was brilliant I feel my maths is now stronger than what it was before I started grinds." [Student]*

*"In the uncertain circumstances surrounding this year's state examinations, students particularly benefitted from the additional support provided by the programme. In the absence of their normal interaction with their school teachers the programme provided much-needed help and reassurance and bolstered confidence that they were on track with their studies". [Teacher]*

#### 4.2.7. Language Café

Language Café is a round-table event, which facilitates language-learning in a fun, immersive and interesting environment with games, props, prompt cards, prompt questions and snacks to help get the conversation flowing.



Students Engaged in Conversation with a Corporate Volunteer

#### Programme Delivery

- 20 students from two schools (Marian College and St. Joseph's CBS) attended in December.
- Second language café due to be held on March 19<sup>th</sup> was cancelled due to COVID-19.

#### Participant Feedback

Feedback was positive with 75% (n=15) of students agreeing that the programme made them more confident speaking another language, while 57% (n=12) reported being interested in learning a second language after participating. Teachers (100%, N=3) considered the programme to be an enjoyable experience; a valuable learning opportunity, which allowed their students to meaningfully engage in language skills, made students more confident and prepared for the oral examinations and provided a fun engaging learning environment. All volunteers (100%, n=10) reported being happy that they volunteered with ELI with the majority (88%, n=8) willing to recommend the experience to a friend.

Comments from participants included:

*"The 10 minute rotation was brilliant allowing students to practice with a number of different speakers and accents." [Teacher]*

*"The volunteers were very nice and it was really fun." [Student]*

*"Well [it was] fun, moving around worked well. No harm that there were repeats, people were a bit more relaxed on the second session. 10 minutes about right." [Teacher]*

### 4.3. Educational Guidance

The main focus of ELI’s 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; Primary Awards, Love Education; A Day in the Life; NEIC Brighter Futures; Discover University, Third Level Internships and Educational Support Fund.

#### Objectives:

- To raise children’s and young people’s educational and career expectations
- To support young people and their parents to successfully navigate the education system and access interesting career opportunities
- To widen participation in higher education within the Docklands

<b>Educational and Career Guidance</b>	<b>Young People</b>	<b>Parents</b>
<b>ELI Educational Scholarships</b>	26	26
<b>Educational Guidance (5th/6th class)</b>	128	6
<b>Educational Guidance Exhibition (secondary)</b>	108	0
<b>A Day in the Life Events</b>	83	0
<b>Discover University (14-17 years)</b>	41	0
<b>Restorative Practice Children and Young People</b>	87	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>32</b>

### 4.3.1. Love Education

February is Love Education month. The aim is to raise children and young people's aspirations by highlighting the exciting career opportunities that are available for those with the relevant dispositions, skills and qualifications.



**A Child and ELI Facilitator Engaging in a STEM Experiment at a Love Education Event**

#### Programme Delivery

- 50 children from local early education services and primary schools attended the event in St Laurence O'Toole's Recreation Centre. Encouraging critical thinking and problem solving, career-based role play saw children become Gardai, paramedics, doctors and fire-fighters.
- 58 students from local primary schools attended an educational guidance exhibition event in St. Laurence O'Toole's Recreation Centre to showcase their projects.
- 59 students from local secondary schools attended an educational guidance exhibition event in Citco to showcase their projects.

#### Participant Feedback

Eighty-three percent (n=10) of teachers and parents in attendance at the early years love education event agreed that the activities at the event were developmentally appropriate for the children attending. In relation to the suitability of the venue, 75% (n=9) agreed that it was suitable. The opportunity to present to the judges at the educational guidance exhibitions was rated as being the best thing about the programme by 41% (n=20) of the students.

Comments from participants included:

*“The staff at the stations were very friendly. It was great that the children could explore themselves. There was at least two activities that every boy really enjoyed. Great job by all involved.” [Teacher]*

*“Fantastic stations set up - great variety of stations for all levels. Football station was a bit difficult for senior infant boys to manage - became too loose at times. Great experience for our boys. Thanks a mill.” [Teacher]*

*“The children were very happy playing. Everything was great.” [Parent]*

### 4.3.2. Educational Guidance Primary

Educational Guidance is a project-based learning Career Guidance programme for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class primary school students, which raises awareness among students (and their parents) of the importance of third level education in the pursuit of certain careers.

#### Programme Delivery

- 128 students from six local primary schools and one afterschool service, which supports children living in homeless accommodation participated this year.
- 4 schools attended the main exhibition on February 28<sup>th</sup> in St. Laurence O’Toole’s Recreation Centre, as well as corporate judges.
- 2 on-site mini events in one school and the afterschool service.
- 2 feedback visits by ELI Coordinator and an ELI intern.
- 6 virtual feedback sessions during COVID-19 incorporating:
  - video of a corporate volunteer judge speaking about her job and career history;
  - group project feedback and marks, which teachers distributed to students online;
  - prizes sent by post to the winning groups.



**Students Present their Educational Guidance Project**

#### Participant Feedback

Educational aspirations increased with 93% (n=13) of students reportedly wanting to go to college and all of the teachers (N=4) agreeing. Ninety-four percent (n=17) of both students and teachers felt the programme was an enjoyable experience. Furthermore, 79% (n=11) of the students reported that they learned a lot from participating in the programme, specifically, about possible careers (79%, n=11), educational opportunities (64%, n=9), and skills and attitude (57%, n=8).

Comments from participants included:

*“I think the programme was great, it improves searching skills and teamwork. I really enjoyed the programme.” [Student]*

*“The children loved researching their career paths. It was great to look at different routes into careers that weren’t always academically focused.” [Teacher]*

*“From doing the project some children then realised they didn’t want to do the career, after doing a project on it, which made them think differently of another career down the line they might want to do after they leave school. It opened their eyes a lot.” [Teacher]*



### 4.3.3. Educational Guidance Second Level

In its first year, NEIC Educational Guidance, a project-based learning Career Guidance programme, was designed to enable 1<sup>st</sup> year second level students to explore career aspirations and opportunities; and help awareness among students (and their parents) of the importance of third level education in the pursuit of certain careers.

#### Programme Delivery

- 108 first year students from three schools (Marino College, Larkin Community College, Mount Carmel Secondary School) and one youth service (Belvedere Youth Club) participated.
- 91 students attended A Day in the Life event.
- 1 exhibition event hosted by Citco.



**Students Present their Educational Guidance Project**

#### Participant Feedback

Students' responses to a post-programme survey (N=55) indicated that the key learning outcomes were achieved. Most students (88.2%, n=45) 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=4). Students (89%, n=49) also reported that their knowledge of the wide variety of jobs and career paths available improved. Students enjoyed working in a group (55%, n=30), learning about jobs and workplaces (40%, n=22) and doing the project (35%, n=19). Aspirations towards third level education were quite high amongst the group with 78% (n=43) expressing a desire to go to college while 18% (n=10) were uncertain, with 75% (n=3) of their teachers believing that students' future aspirations had risen. Comments from participants included:

*"I felt the programme was very well structured and all resources were made available which made it easier to run. It links in really well as part of the wellbeing curriculum and is very student centred. The ELI coordinator was always available for any queries." [Teacher]*

*"The best thing about the programme was talking to people about their jobs and experiences in life, I got to do the project and go on a trip, I learned about some new jobs and working with different classmates." [Students]*

*"Filled in for a colleague who was unable to make it, jumped at the opportunity as he had raved about his previous experience." [Volunteer]*

#### 4.3.4. 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 9-17 years) participated in restorative-focused activities facilitated in primary and secondary schools, youth services, corporate organisations and NCI.
- 20 young people and 7 youth leaders from two youth services (Belvedere and East Wall) along with 19 corporate volunteers from Arthur Cox and Kennedy Wilson engaged in Opening the Door - Restorative Practice Conversations. A third group, due to begin in April, has been deferred until autumn.
- 14 young people (from fourth, fifth and sixth years) from Larkin Community School trained as 'relationship keepers' in NCI – with the aim to create a sense of connection and belonging within their school community.
- 12 young people in Central Model SNS engaged in Relationship Keepers with teachers receiving mentoring and support.
- 41 young people participating in Discover University online engaged in RP training at the beginning of Discover University week as well as daily check-in and closing circles.



**Kennedy Wilson Corporate Volunteers and East Wall Youth Club Members in the Opening the Door Between Corporates and Community Initiative**



### 4.3.5. 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

- 1<sup>st</sup> ever Virtual Discover University this year through Zoom.
- 41 young people (14-17 years) participated.
- 8 team leaders (NCI students).
- 7 project leaders (NCI faculty staff).
- 28 volunteers.
- 1 alumnus (2010) Deborah Somorin, spoke about her own experiences of Discover University, education and the working world along with the many barriers she faced, as a young, single mother growing up in foster care in Ireland.

Moving the programme to an online platform posed various challenges. Key learnings were that the more accessible and uncomplicated an online programme can be made for participants, the better. It was vital to inject some humour and fun into the programme to break up the monotony of staring at a laptop screen. Daily challenges provided students with something exciting and fun to distract from the academic side of the programme.



**A Virtual Visit to Dublin Fire Brigade**

#### Participant Feedback

Both students and their parents (97%, n=44) reported that the programme was an enjoyable experience and all (100%, N=45) agreed that it was useful for the future. All students and their parents (100%, N=45) agreed that their communication skills, learning/study skills, critical thinking skills and group work skills improved and they developed a better understanding of third level education. Most (97%, n=44) reported feeling better prepared and more likely to go to third level. Virtual delivery worked well with all (100%, N=45) agreeing that it was easy to access and use. Team leaders (100%, N=9) were very positive about their experience, the future benefits and would recommend it to a friend. Most agreed (89%, n=8) that it developed their group work, leadership and communication. They (100%, N=9) also reported improvements in their organization skills, facilitation skills and ability to work with young people. Lastly, all volunteers (100%, N=7) reported being happy that they volunteered and would recommend the experience to a friend.

Comments from participants included:

*"I liked the online lectures. In particular, I felt that the Business lectures had a great comfortable environment and it was easy to give input without any judgement." [Student]*

*"I'd definitely say that in trying a virtual format and changing things, although it was new, it all managed to work well for it! While there were some unavoidable technical hiccups sometimes, It was evident that there was a lot of things put in that gave a similar experience as normal Discover University, such as the Breakout Rooms, Physical Activities, Virtual Tours, Lectures and meeting others! For what was done here, It was done excellently in a Virtual Format even when being so new!" [Student]*

*"Most importantly they got to learn how to access zoom, it's more like a tool for future and building interest would definitely be helpful." [Team Leader]*

#### 4.3.6. Educational Support Fund

The Educational Support Fund provided assessments (educational, psychological, developmental emotional and behavioural) and therapies (speech and language and art) to enable children at risk to access educational and other supports promptly.

##### Programme Delivery

- 46 applications received.
- 26 successful applications (9 early years, 8 primary and 9 second level).

Comments from participants included:

*“The Educational Fund Support was very beneficial as child was still awaiting a diagnosis from the HSE, moving up the waiting list very slowly. Due to this financial support they were able to go to a private clinic and get 5 support sessions and a diagnosis... what the private clinic has given is so valuable to child’s day to day supports.” [ELI Home Visitor]*

*“We had superb feedback [from the students who participated in Art Therapy. I especially noted a positive change in one of our young people who is on the autistic spectrum, it was her first positive experience of a group, she opened up and felt safe and accepted by her peers, it was incredibly powerful to watch.” [Teacher in a DEIS Secondary School]*

*“The awards that were made to fund psychological assessments had a massive positive impact on our young people. One of the young people assessed was identified as having a disability which in turn afforded him and his mother the choice to participate in a parallel Junior Cert programme, which is more suited to meet his needs, he is a much happier and more settled young man in school as his curricula addresses his strengths and will quip him with life skills for the future.” [Teacher in a DEIS Secondary School]*

## 4.4. Corporate Volunteer Programme

ELI's Corporate Volunteer Programme, which began in 2010 with eight volunteers, provides rewarding, diverse volunteering experiences, which give employees in our corporate partners 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 2019/20, 233 corporate employees volunteered with ELI, which due to COVID-19 and face-to-face class visits and events being cancelled, is a reduction from last year (346 in 2018/19). However, the swift pivot of ELI's volunteering programmes to online delivery following the COVID-19 restrictions from March 12<sup>th</sup> 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, with 47 online Volunteers from Mar-June 2020. This figure is for corporate volunteers only with a further 38 non-corporate volunteers also volunteering with our educational and career guidance programmes.

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Number of Volunteers</i>	<i>Lead Corporate Partner</i>
<b><i>Mentoring and Support</i></b>		
Staff Upskilling & Capacity Building	19	Bank of Ireland, Facebook, Google
Researching Online Learning Resources	5	Deloitte
<b><i>Afterschool and Community Programmes</i></b>		
Doodle Den	15	KPMG
Zoom Ahead with Books	24	Central Bank, Citco, FMS-WM, BNP Paribas
Robotic Coding Club	55	Deloitte, McCann FitzGerald, Central Bank, RBC Investor and Treasury Services
RP Opening the Door	19	Arthur Cox, Kennedy Wilson
<b><i>Primary Level Programmes</i></b>		
NCI Rummikub Challenge	13	Deloitte, Central Bank
NCI Quiz Challenge	7	Central Bank, McGarrell Reilly
Educational Guidance	10	FMS-SG, Philip Lee, Centaur FS
<b><i>Second Level Programmes</i></b>		
Virtual Discover University	17	Facebook, McCann-FitzGerald, Arthur Cox, Deloitte
A Day in the Life Events	10	Deloitte, Kennedy Wilson, Facebook, Centaur FS, Citco
Virtual A Day in the Life	22	Arthur Cox, Centaur FS, Central Bank, Deloitte, Facebook, McCann-FitzGerald, The Panel
Language Cafés	9	Central Bank, BNP Paribas
Educational Guidance	8	Citco
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>	



**A Corporate Volunteer Presents a Zoom Ahead with Books Participant With Their Certificate**

### **Participant Feedback**

Feedback from our corporate volunteers indicated that 100% agreed that it was an enjoyable experience for their staff; that staff were well prepared for their volunteering placements while 90% agreed that the volunteers were well supported by ELI staff.

Comments from volunteers included:

*“The exposure to a different group of people [corporate volunteers] probably enhances a child's interpersonal skills. Later in life, it might result in the child being less limited 'career wise' in that it could open the child's mind to career opportunities within the corporate sector as well as other areas.”*

*“It was great to do something rewarding during the workday. Gives a sense of reality to the stats we are bombarded with on social issues.”*

*“My intention was to give my time and add something to the children's lives, however it soon became clear that they were adding something to mine! It was a truly uplifting experience.”*



## 5. LOOKING FORWARD 2020/21

Looking ahead to 2020/21, a responsive evolving hybrid approach by ELI is envisaged. This year more than ever, 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 during these challenging times.

### 5.1. 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.

### 5.2. Programme Delivery

At present, all programmes are being delivered virtually, apart from socially distanced outdoor visits. In August, there will be a limited number of invitation-only outdoor events with a maximum of 10 families. Resumption of face-to-face 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 will be more important than ever.

Supplemented by socially distanced outdoor visits, home visits will continue remotely via video calls for the foreseeable future with monthly educational packs delivered to families. Referrals, intakes and introductions will also continue virtually with training and reflective weekly supervision delivered using a blended approach. Parent support groups such as Infant Massage, Story Telling etc. will continue using Zoom with invitation-only socially distanced outdoor groups beginning in August.

Online and remote solutions are being sought for programmes such Educational Guidance; Early Numeracy Programme; Robotic Coding Clubs; Zoom Ahead with Books; Restorative Practice; NCI Challenges; Doodle Den, which traditionally involved face-to-face engagement with local services, schools and businesses. Some such as Early Numeracy Week, Discover University, Tuition Support and Restorative Practice have successfully transitioned online, and we will build on this learning as we move to a blended delivery model for all programmes. Remote corporate volunteering opportunities are being incorporated into all our programmes as are more extensive parental involvement and home learning activities.

Home schooling, along with remote working, was a defining feature of COVID-19. Never in the history of the State did the role of educator fall primarily on parents. For most parents, this was extremely challenging but for families experiencing intergenerational poverty, unemployment, violence/abuse, social isolation, trauma, mental health issues, educational disadvantage, homelessness/emergency accommodation, it exacerbated existing issues and widen the poverty, educational and digital gaps for their children. While it appears that children will return to school in September, it is not clear what this will look like. We are predicting a mix of direct teaching in school and remote delivery at home. The educational support provided to vulnerable families during COVID-19 will be developed further to

adapt to the everchanging situation in which home learning is more critical than ever. A blended flexible e-learning approach will be adopted using regular phone/video contact, home learning packs as well as access to online learning resources and services.

With a challenging year ahead, we are prioritising communicating with and upskilling ELI's wonderful staff, volunteers and partners to deliver high quality responsive hybrid programmes that ensure vulnerable children and young people bridge the educational and digital divide and thrive in this new era of COVID-19. Developing our knowledge, skills and capacity in eLearning and social media will be integral elements of this strategy as they have become essential tools for us in communicating with and supporting children, young people, parents and families.

### **5.3. 2020-25 Strategy**

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

As you can see from this report, we have clearly differentiated between ELI's local and national activities through the creation of a Centre of Expertise, Research and Innovation (CERI) in January 2020. Operating alongside ELI's suite of programmes in Dublin's Inner City, its research, dissemination and capacity-building activities will continue to support the development of our responsive evolving hybrid remote delivery model as well as building on our 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*.

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). While ELI supports some families, we would like to do more as we know that Home Visiting and Parent Support Programmes have a profound positive impact on families and children's life trajectories. The development of ParentChild+ National Home Visiting Training, Research and Support Centre along with the implementation of Sláintecare Integration Fund project: Prevention is Better than Cure: A Community Mothers Programme Development Project will be key to extending ELI's Home Visiting Programmes to other areas across Ireland; thereby ensuring children in Ireland's most marginalised communities gets the support they need 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.

### **5.4. Changing Children's Lives through Partnership**

ELI achievements, particularly in 2019/20, are 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.

Looking forward to 2020/21, children are and will remain our priority. With a challenging year ahead, we believe that our high-quality responsive hybrid programmes will bridge the educational/digital divide and enable children and young people to thrive in this new era of COVID-19. With the goodwill, enthusiasm and determination of our fantastic partners, we can ensure, in spite of COVID-19, that our children and young people will have the hope, confidence and skills to achieve their dreams.