



# Early Learning Initiative

National College of Ireland



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

## End-of-Year REPORT 2022-23

CHY 9928

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



## 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

The Early Learning Initiative (ELI), National College of Ireland (NCI), with the support of our amazing partners, enables vulnerable children to thrive in education, career and life. In 2022-23, 16,433 people across Ireland engaged in ELI's programmes. Satisfaction rates and learning indicators remain high with children's language, literacies and cognitive skills continuing to improve. This End-of-Year Report summarises this year's achievements with more information on our website: [www.ncirl.ie/eli](http://www.ncirl.ie/eli) I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone involved and to note some highlights this year.

### **Strategic Consolidation and Governance**

2022-23 focused on strategic consolidation and continued support for families through challenging times. ELI inclusion in NCI's Institutional Strategy strengthened our new National Centre, which supports communities across Ireland to deliver Parent Child Home Visiting and Family Engagement Programmes and our core Dublin's Inner-City Base, which delivers Programmes directly to children and families. A special thanks to ELI's Advisory Committee and Steering Groups for their insightful leadership, especially outgoing Chair Frank Ryan and incoming Chair Mary Doyle. We wish Frank every future success and look forward to working with Mary on an exciting new era for ELI.

### **Complex Responsive Innovative Evidenced Supports**

The complexity of our work increased with trauma and mental health issues more prevalent. Dedicated, experienced, partnership supported 14,000+ vulnerable at-risk children and families across Ireland. Our community action research methodology gave children, parents and professionals a voice in how best critical needs can be met. We continued to share our knowledge internationally and were honoured to host the CARN (Collaborative Action Research Network) Conference in October 2022.

### **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)**

This year for the first time, the UN SDGs are included in our End of Year Report. While the scale and scope of the global goals is unprecedented, together, through ELI, we are upholding our basic responsibilities to people and planet, but also setting the stage for long-term sustainable success.

### **Scaling Home Visiting Across Ireland**

The Home Visiting Alliance (HVA), in partnership with the DCEDIY What Works Project, completed a feasibility study on the scaling up, expansion and replication of Home Visiting Programmes across Ireland, which feeds into First 5, A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (DCYA 2018). With 12,400 born into poverty in Ireland each year, our new social reality requires skilled Home Visitors in every community in Ireland to enable children and parents to thrive.

### **Thank You**

Once again, thank you for your on-going partnership and support. We really appreciate it and can see the difference it is making to reducing poverty, preventing inequality, creating sustainable communities, and improving the education, health and well-being of at-risk children, young people and families across Ireland. We look forward to continuing to partner with you in 2023-24. If you want to know more about ELI, please come talk to us.



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

## 1.1. 2022-23 Key Indicators



**16,433 participants engaged**



**Indicators of satisfaction  
(94%, n=2,441)**



**Indicators of learning  
(91%, n=2,138)**



**7,885 parents engaged**



**165 volunteers engaged**



**24 corporate partners supporting ELI**



**13,975 home visits  
completed**



**379 interagency meetings attended**



## 1.2. UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This year for the first time, we are including our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the scale and scope of the global goals is unprecedented, together through ELI, we are upholding our basic responsibilities to people and planet, but also setting the stage for long-term success through prevention and early intervention programmes that consider a quality education the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development. Recognising that the SDGs are integrated, interdependent and indivisible, the following table illustrates our SDG priorities. We acknowledge that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, address climate change and spur economic growth.

| SDGs  | Priority   |
|---|--|
|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building resilience and empowering people living in poverty and vulnerable situations</li> </ul>  |
|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting well-being and healthy lives for children and parents</li> </ul>  |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring equal access to all levels of education, in particular children in vulnerable situations</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empower and promote gender equality for all</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status</li> </ul> |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable communities</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure public access to information and promote peaceful, responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making</li> </ul>  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships</li> </ul>  |

### 1.3. 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 Lána Cummins, ELI National Director (by phone: 086 4672204 or by email: [ana.cummins@ncirl.ie](mailto:ana.cummins@ncirl.ie)), or Brigina O'Riordan, ELI Dublin's Inner City Director (by phone: 086 7965572 or by email: [brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie](mailto:brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie)).



## 1.4 2022-23 Overview

National College of Ireland (NCI) is an independent third level institution providing programmes in business and IT to a diverse group of students from non-traditional backgrounds. In 2006, NCI established the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), as part of its mission to address educational underachievement in marginalised communities. ELI has grown from 400 participants (children, parents and professionals) to 16,433 and moved beyond its initial Dublin Docklands catchment area to supporting other communities across the country.

Part of ELI's 2020-25 Strategic Plan, the National Centre ([Chapter 3](#)), is working to support communities across Ireland to deliver high quality Home Visiting and Parent Engagement Programmes, in line with the Irish Government's First 5 A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028.

| National Centre                                | Families     | Professionals | % Expenditure |
|--|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| ParentChild+ and Home From Home (18-36 months) | 466          | 92            | 60%           |
| Sláintecare Community Mothers Project          | 971          | 30            | 7%            |
| My Place to Play                               | 1,377        | 216           | 9%            |
| Home Visiting Alliance                         | 0            | 389           | 8%            |
| Research & CRM Projects                        | 133          | 0             | 16%           |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>2,946</b> | <b>727</b>    | <b>100%</b>   |

Dublin's Inner City ([Chapter 4](#)) focuses on universal plus, wrap around, holistic integrated supports for children, parents, and families through the delivery of high-quality Home Visiting, Parent Support, Literacies and Educational Guidance Programmes. Dublin's Inner City is a best practice demonstration site for ELI's National Centre and other communities across Ireland. Programmes, having been successfully piloted and evaluated in Dublin's Inner City, are manualised and rolled out to other areas through the National Centre.

| Dublin's Inner City   | Families     | Professionals | % Expenditure |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Educational Guidance  | 612          | 42            | 10%           |
| Literacies & STEM     | 3,468        | 303           | 23%           |
| Parent Support Groups | 1,113        | 75            | 19%           |
| Home Visiting         | 335          | 44            | 48%           |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>5,528</b> | <b>464</b>    | <b>100%</b>   |

*\*165 families are also included in National Centre table above.*

ELI is a partnership ([Chapter 3.7](#)) between families and professionals from statutory, corporate, voluntary and community organisations. Sixteen years of sustained cross sectoral collaboration has paid dividends due to the goodwill, enthusiasm and determination of our wonderful partners. In 2022-23, ELI teamed with

- ✓ 1,562 professionals from community, statutory and voluntary organisations
- ✓ 24 corporate organisations and foundations along with 165 volunteers
- ✓ Irish Government through the Docklands and East Inner City Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme, Tusla, HSE, Children and Young People's Services Committees, Sláintecare, Rethink Ireland, Science Foundation of Ireland and the North East Inner City (NEIC) Initiative.

## 2. Finance, Governance and Strategy

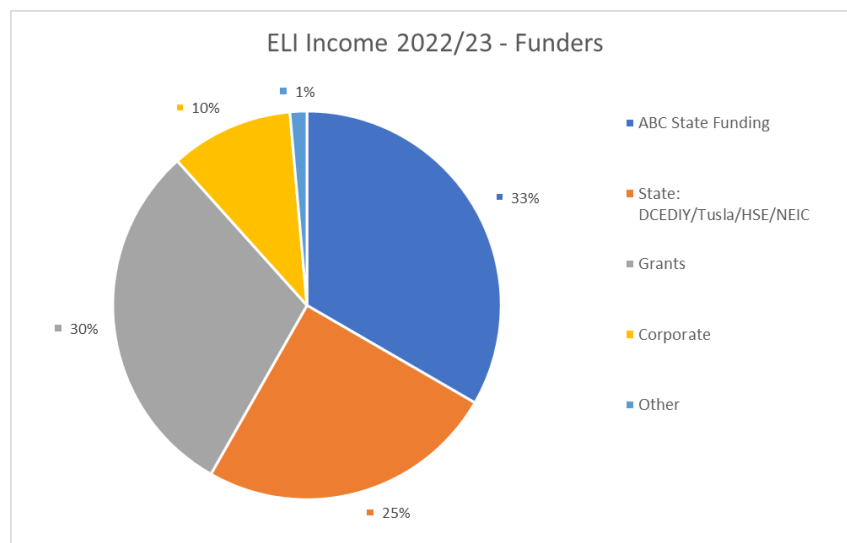
The Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland, is committed to good governance and put in place systems and processes to ensure we achieve our objectives with integrity by managing ELI in an effective, efficient, accountable and transparent manner. This section accounts for ELI's 2022-23 income and expenditure along with its governance structures and strategy.

### 2.1. Finance

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

#### 2.1.1. Income

ELI raised a total income of €2.4m in 2022-23, same as 2021-22; €1.4m (58% up from 43% in 2021-22) came from statutory funding (ABC, Tusla, NEIC, DCEDIY and HSE) with the remaining €1m (42% down from 52% in 2021-22) coming from our corporate partners, grants, trusts, foundations, and individuals. There was a decrease in grants (30% compared with 39% in 2021-22) and corporate and individual funding (10% compared with 13% in 2021-22).



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), Sandra Foley (Managing Director, State Street), Deirdre Giblin (NCI Director of Development and External Engagement) and Susan Dargan (Independent Director) for their invaluable input as part of our ELI Development Committee.

If you are interested in partnering with ELI, please contact Josephine Bleach, ELI Director (by phone: 086 466 6438 or email: [josephine.bleach@ncirl.ie](mailto:josephine.bleach@ncirl.ie)), Lána Cummins, ELI National Director (by phone: 086 4672204 or by email: [лана.cummins@ncirl.ie](mailto:лана.cummins@ncirl.ie)), or Brigina O'Riordan, ELI Dublin's Inner City Director (by phone: 086 7965572 or by email: [brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie](mailto:brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie)).

### 2.1.2. Expenditure

The combined spend for ELI for the 12 months to June 2023 was €2.4m (compared to the previous year of €2.5m). The spend for the National Centre was €759K (down from €843k in 2021-22) with Dublin's Inner City (including the ABC funding) €1.6m (same as 2021-22). More details of the breakdown in income and expenditure can be found in the relevant [National Centre](#) and [Dublin's Inner City](#) Sections.

|  | Income<br>2022-23 | Expenditure<br>2022-23 | Surplus/Deficit | Projected<br>Expenditure<br>2023-24 |
|--|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
|  | €                 | €                      | €               | €                                   |
| Docklands & East Inner City Area Based Childhood (ABC) | 796,100           | 882,683                | (86,583)        | 796,100                             |
| Dublin's Inner City                                    | 643,492           | 732,487                | (88,995)        | 703,900                             |
| National Centre  | 946,829           | 759,305                | 187,524         | 800,000                             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>2,386,421</b>  | <b>2,374,475</b>       | <b>11,946</b>   | <b>2,300,000</b>                    |

#### Notes:

- The costs above represent the direct costs incurred. They do not include services provided by NCI, such as accounting, payroll, HR, marketing. It is estimated that this would account for 20% additional cost or €474,895.
- The National Centre underspend was due to restricted funding received in 2022-23, which is being retained in reserve to cover contracted 2023-24 programme costs.
- Spending exceeded income in Dublin's Inner City. This was due to restricted funding awarded in 2021-22 to cover programmes costs in 2022-23 along with the timing of some payments.
- The combined ABC and Dublin's Inner City overspend is covered by restricted funding received in 2022-23, which was retained in reserve for contracted programme costs delivered in 2023-24.
- The ABC overspend, which is covered by philanthropic funding for Dublin's Inner City, reflects actual programme delivery costs rather than the Tusla ABC grant.
- ABC funding from January to June 2024 is subject to its inclusion in the Government's 2024 Budget and the projected expenditure will be amended to reflect the 2024 ABC budget agreed with Tusla.
- ELI National Centre and Dublin's Inner City Projected Expenditure 2023-24 is based on NCI's Strategic Plan, costs in previous years, pledged funding, outstanding grant applications as well as proposed programme expansion for 2023-24. It will be amended in December 2024 to reflect funding received and additional pledges/grants.

## 2.2. Governance

The Early Learning Initiative (ELI) is a department of National College of Ireland (NCI), an independent, not-for-profit higher education institution and a registered charity which operates under a Governing Body of 15 members. As a department of NCI, ELI operates under and adheres to all NCI's policies and procedures including financial, management, human resources, contracts, reporting and governance.

The generous commitment of Brendan McGinty (present) and Fr. Leonard Moloney SJ (former) Chairpersons 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. Membership of NCI's Governing Body and ELI Committees are listed below with more information on ELI Governance is available on our website: [www.ncirl.ie/eli](http://www.ncirl.ie/eli).

| NCI Governing Body as of June 2023  |  |
|---|--|
| *Members of Governing Body who sit on the ELI Advisory Committee, which in turn reports to Governing Body.  |  |
| Chairperson – Fr. Leonard Moloney S.J. – resigned December 2022<br>Chairperson - Mr. Brendan McGinty – appointed December 2022<br>Michael Brady<br>Barbara Cotter<br>Brigid McManus<br>Prof Patrick Clancy<br>Dave Cormack<br>Gina Quin – College President | Sheila Nunan*<br>Fr. Kevin O'Higgins S.J.* - resigned December 2022<br>Maureen Brogan<br>Tony O'Malley<br>Michelle Moore<br>Jennifer Treadwell - NCISU President<br>Kevin Callinan<br>Dr Donnchadh Ó Madagáin - Secretary and Registered Officer |

ELI is a discreet centre within NCI with its own dedicated staff and Advisory Committees. The ELI Advisory Committee has authority from NCI's Governing Body to provide oversight of ELI's compliance and financial responsibilities and advise on the ELI's delivery of services and strategy. The Advisory Committee is in turn responsible for the oversight of three sub committees: ABC Steering Group, National Steering Group and the ELI Development Group. The leadership and expertise shown by Frank Ryan, Chairperson of the ELI Advisory Committee and ABC Steering Group; Dan O'Connor (Chairperson) and Sean Reilly (Acting Chairperson) of the ELI Development Committee; Mary Doyle, Chairperson of ELI National Steering Group and the other members of the ELI Advisory Committee and Steering Groups 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 2023-23.

We would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution of Frank Ryan, who as ELI chair since September 2013, oversaw the expansion of ELI from its roots in Dublin Docklands to where it now supports 77 organisations across Ireland to deliver an ELI programme. He steered ELI through some very choppy waters, including the rise in homelessness, a major gangland feud, the Covid pandemic, cost of living increases, Ukrainian refugee crisis, increasing waiting lists for disability assessments, while encouraging sustainability, innovation and strategic decision making. His key focus was on ensuring that ELI made a positive difference to Ireland's most-at-risk children such that they would thrive in education, career and life. We wish him all the best for the future and look forward to building on his legacy.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| ELI Advisory Committee as of June 2023 is set out below:  |   |
| Chairperson – Frank Ryan – resigned June 2023<br>Incoming Chairperson - Mary Doyle, Chair of ELI’s National Steering Group<br>Gina Quin, President NCI<br>Fr. Kevin O’Higgins S.J., NCI Governing Body – resigned December 2022<br>Sheila Nunan, NCI Governing Body | Dan O’Connor, Chair of ELI’s Development Committee<br>Tom O Connor<br>Brian Hatton – joined February 2023<br>Joe O’Reilly<br>Sean Reilly,   |
| ABC Steering Group as of June 2023 is set out below:  |   |
| Chairperson – Frank Ryan, Chairperson ELI Advisory Committee<br>Donnchadh Ó Madagáin, NCI Finance Director<br>Dan O’Connor, Chair of ELI’s Development Committee<br>Dr Josephine Bleach, ELI Director   | Lorraine Doherty,<br>John Peelo<br>Denise Hevey,<br>Dara Terry<br>Denise McDonald<br>Niall Heneghan   |
| ELI Development Group as of June 2023 is set out below:   |   |
| Chairperson – Dan O’Connor<br>Acting Chairperson - Sean Reilly<br>Sandra Foley<br>Declan Quilligan<br>Michael Hartwell<br>Susan Dargan  | Dr Deirdre Giblin, NCI Director of Development and External Engagement<br>Dr Josephine Bleach, ELI Director<br>Lana Cummins, ELI Assistant Director<br>Catriona Flood, ELI Assistant Director |
| ELI National Steering Group as of June 2023 is set out below:   |   |
| Chairperson: Mary Doyle<br>Prof Jimmy Hill, NCI Vice President<br>Dan O’Connor, Chair of ELI’s Development Committee<br>Dr Josephine Bleach, Director of ELI  | Margaret Kernan<br>Tony White<br>Lisa Fox<br>Elaine McHugh<br>Christine McCann  |

### 2.3. Strategic Planning

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

- Sustaining and evolving our Dublin's Inner-City Hub on page 45.
- Advancing as a National Centre in Parent Child Home Visiting and Family Engagement on page 17.

NCI's 2022-27 Strategic Plan was launched in November 2022. At the ELI Advisory Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023, it was agreed to align and integrate both strategies. The following table outlines the key themes and objectives in NCI's Strategic Plan that are most relevant to ELI.

| Priorities  | Objective   | ELI Actions   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>1. Students</b> <i>(for ELI, these are the children, parents and professionals who engage in our programmes)</i> | 1.1 To deliver a distinctive higher education student experience aligned with mission to change lives through education that is built on access, academic excellence, enterprise focus, community engagement and social justice | Develop and deliver first class educational support programmes to 4,000+ children and parents in Dublin Inner City, contributing to SDGs: 1 'No Poverty'; 4 'Quality Education'; 5 'Gender Equality'; 10 'Reduce Inequality'; and 11 'Sustainable Cities and Communities'<br><br>Develop and deliver the ELI Annual Plan to upskill 2,000+ children and their parents from local communities across Ireland, contributing to SDGs: 1 'No Poverty'; 3 'Good Health And Well-Being' ; 4 'Quality Education'; 5 'Gender Equality'; 10 'Reduce Inequality'; and 11 'Sustainable Cities and Communities' ; 16 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions' ; 17 'Partnerships For The Goals' |
| <b>2. Staff</b>   | 2.1 To support all staff to excel in role and be student-centred, agile and responsive to our strategy  | Design and develop opportunities to enhance the capacity of the 90 ELI staff employed NCI to deliver through relevant professional development and role flexibility opportunities<br><br>Design and develop opportunities to enhance the capacity of the 500+ staff in 77 organisations contracted to deliver an ELI programme through relevant professional development and role flexibility opportunities   |



|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>3. Teaching</b> <i>(Delivery of ELI programmes to high standard in line with best practice internationally)</i> | 3.5 To align teaching, innovation and research with our academic and institutional strategies, our mission to change lives through education, and UN Sustainable Development Goals   | Design and deliver a series of programmes with faculty across NCI to enhance skills development and access to HE in alignment with SDG 4 'Quality Education'; 5 'Gender Equality and 10 'Reduce Inequality   |
| <b>4. Research</b>   | 4.2 To engage employers, external partners and community in research and innovation partnerships<br><br>4.4 To develop a research infrastructure to support research alignment, to identify funding opportunities, research collaborators and partners, and to provide research administration | Implement ELI's 2020-25 research strategy with a focus on disseminating learning through social media, papers and conferences, securing research partnerships and funding.<br><br>Review options to update/replace ELI's CRM (Customer Relation Management) data management system   |
| <b>5. Access</b>   | 5.5 To continue to provide transformative 'cradle to college' education services through our Early Learning Initiative, both locally to Inner City disadvantaged families and children, and nationally, through our ELI Centre of Excellence   | By the end of the strategic planning period, scale up to 5 sustainable models of Home Visiting programmes across Ireland as chair of the Home Visiting Alliance and the development of the National Model of Home Visiting as per the First 5   A Government Strategy For Babies & Young Children.<br><br>Secure sustainable funding and resources for the National Parent Child Home Visiting and Family Engagement Centre as well as supporting up to 15 ParentChild+ sites around the country by the end of the strategic planning period |
| <b>6. Positioning</b>  | 6.5 To continue our commitments to social justice and sustainability across all NCI strategic objectives ensuring that NCI and our students contribute to society  | Align ELI's strategy with NCI's Institutional Strategy to enhance NCI's impact and contributions to SDGs: 1 'No Poverty'; 4 'Quality Education'; 5 'Gender Equality'; 10 'Reduce Inequality; and 11 'Sustainable Cities and Communities  |

Described as ambitious and innovative in both the Irish and international context, ELI continues to develop **pioneering inclusive and diverse programmes** that address the needs of the children, families, and local organisations in Dublin's Inner City and across Ireland.

Dublin's Inner City is a sustainable proven model, which requires vigilance and monitoring to ensure accountability, consistency, quality and fidelity to the original vision and NCI's Governing Body's commitment to its local community. Retaining and expanding existing funding streams is important to sustain the work.

The National Centre is in its infancy with much work needed to define its identity, structures and processes. Its priority is to deliver on ELI's mission to bring home visiting and family engagement programmes to every community in Ireland, thereby ensuring that the 12,400 children born into poverty each year get the support they need to thrive in education, career and life. Securing sustainable multi-annual funding for the National Centre is critical to its future and ongoing development.

2023-24 is a significant year for ELI with work continuing on the development of National Model of Home Visiting as part of the [First 5 | A Government Strategy For Babies & Young Children](#). This model will outline the Government's vision for home visiting and will shape both the strategy and the work of ELI at both local and national level for the foreseeable future.

For more information about ELI's Strategic Objectives, please contact Dr Josephine Bleach (By phone 086 8153600 or email [josephine.bleach@ncirl.ie](mailto:josephine.bleach@ncirl.ie))

### 3. National Centre for Parent Child Home Visiting Family Engagement

#### 3.1. Introductory Letter

ELI's National Centre for Parent Child Home Visiting and Family Engagement continues to model best practice and thought leadership through our work supporting vulnerable communities. We align the work of ELI's National Centre with NCI's mission to change lives through education alongside Government policy and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

ELI's National Centre has made great strides in supporting communities to support children and families across Ireland in 2022-23. We are maintaining focus on sustainability and high-quality of ParentChild+ and are delighted to report that 13 sites nationally are implementing ParentChild+ in communities that need support most. More communities have also commenced the onboarding process for 2023-24. The partnerships we have established at local and national level have been crucial to reaching 419 families. We have also expanded our once locally based innovation My Place to Play to reach 1,377 families living in international protection, homeless accommodation and families fleeing the Ukrainian crisis.

This section of the End of Year Report gives the 2022-23 highlights along with a brief overview of ELI's National Centre for Parent Child Home Visiting and Family Engagement. More details are available on the website: [www.ncirl.ie/eli](http://www.ncirl.ie/eli). If you would like more information, please contact Lána Cummins.

#### Scaling Up and Scaling Deep

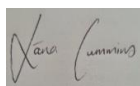
ELI's National Centre vision is to reach all children in Ireland born into poverty and disadvantage. While this means scaling up programmes, it also means deepening our footprint in the communities we work with. We remain committed to working in partnership with community organisations, corporate partners, philanthropists, research institutions, state agencies and government departments. This year, our partnerships were expanded through the work of the Home Visiting Alliance, Community Families and My Place to Play. While different in their approaches, each initiative harnesses local social infrastructures and expertise to impact on national structures influencing parent child home visiting and family engagement.

#### Research and Innovation

Knowledge dissemination allows us to highlight the innovative work happening at ground level and to influence policy, practice and research. We hosted the international Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) Conference in October 2022. Bringing 90 delegates together from around the world, our core community action research approach was further energised by the positive feedback to ELI's work and learnings from fellow action researchers and practitioners.

#### Thank you

Thank you to all our partners who make ELI's work possible. 2022-2023 saw the continuation of the cost of living, the international protection and housing crisis, and ongoing waitlists for children with disabilities. Without the vision, support, and collaboration of all involved, ELI would not be able to support the parents and children who need us most. With your support, we will continue to find ways to ensure children across are Ireland are supported to achieve their educational, career and life goals.



Lána Cummins,  
ELI National Assistant Director

### 3.2. Overview

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

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

**At present, the National Centre supports a combination of the following activities:**

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

**ELI's National Centre programmes and initiatives include:**

| National Centre                                | Families     | Professionals | % Expenditure |
|--|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| ParentChild+ and Home From Home (18-36 months) | 466          | 92            | 60%           |
| Sláintecare Community Mothers Project          | 971          | 30            | 7%            |
| My Place to Play                               | 1,377        | 216           | 9%            |
| Home Visiting Alliance                         | 0            | 389           | 8%            |
| Research & CRM Projects                        | 133          | 0             | 16%           |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>2,947</b> | <b>727</b>    | <b>100%</b>   |

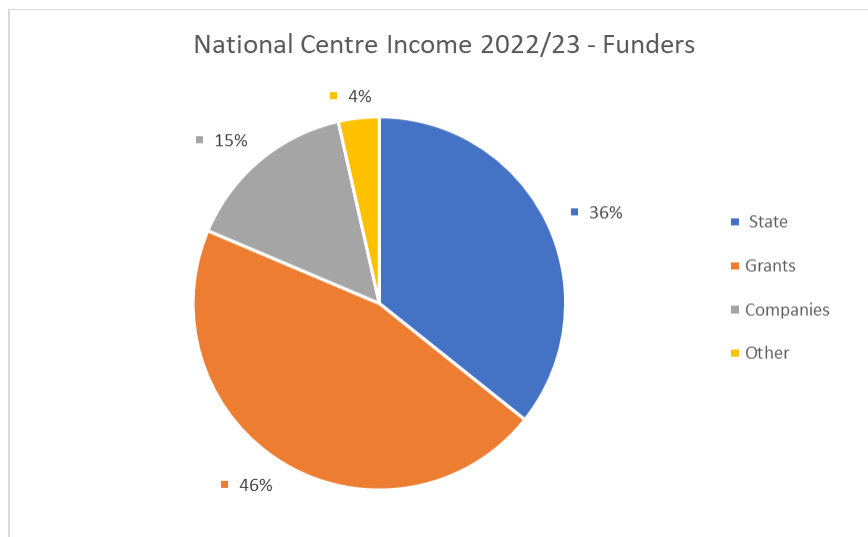
This section summarises the activities of ELI's National Centre for Home Visiting and Family Engagement this year, including National Home Visiting Support, research, innovation, communication and partnership activities.

### 3.3. Finance and Governance

This section accounts for ELI's National Centre 2022-23 income and expenditure along with its governance structures. Financed by a mix of statutory and voluntary funding, including Tusla and the HSE, it has tightly managed income and expenditure to ensure that programme and partner outcomes and commitments have been fully achieved.

#### Income

The income for the National Centre was €947K (up from €744k in 2021-22). The following graph illustrates the breakdown in income with 46% from grants, down from 75% in 2021-22, 19% from corporate and individual funding, up from 13% in 2021-22; and 36% from the State, primarily DCEDIY and Tusla, up from 11% in 2021-22.



We would like to pay tribute to the generosity of all our donors, many of whom are long-term visionary partners in improving outcomes for children, families and communities. A special thank you to Dan O'Connor (Director, CRH), Joe O'Reilly (Managing Director, Castlethorn), Declan Quilligan (Managing Director, Citco Fund Services), Sean Reilly (Executive Chairman, McGarrell Reilly Group), Michael Hartwell (Partner, Deloitte), Sandra Foley (Managing Director, State Street), Deirdre Giblin (NCI Director of Development and External Engagement) and Susan Dargan (Independent Director) for their generous invaluable input as part of our ELI Development Committee. If you are interested in partnering with ELI, please contact Lána Cummins, ELI National Assistant Director (by phone: 086 467 2204 or email: [лана.сummins@ncirl.ie](mailto:лана.сummins@ncirl.ie))

### Expenditure 2022-23

The spend for the National Centre for the 12 months to June 2023 was €759K, down from €843k in 2021-22. The underspend was due to restricted funding received in 2022-23, which is being retained in reserve to cover contracted 2023-24 programme costs. The table on the next page illustrates the breakdown of costs for national programmes.

| Programmes                           | Actual Costs<br>2022-23 | Projected Costs<br>2023-24 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
|                                      | €                       | €                          |
| Home Visiting Alliance               | 61,844                  | 50,000                     |
| ParentChild+ National Office         | 138,480                 | 140,000                    |
| ParentChild+ National Sites          | 302,216                 | 360,000                    |
| Rethink Ireland Innovate HV Training | 14,254                  | -                          |
| My Place to Play                     | 70,359                  | 70,000                     |
| Sláintecare Community Families       | 51,994                  | 100,000                    |
| Research & CRM Projects              | 96,918                  | 80,000                     |
| CARN Conference                      | 23,240                  | -                          |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>759,305</b>          | <b>800,000</b>             |

**Notes:**

- The costs included above represent the direct costs incurred of providing the Programmes. They do not include any charges for services provided by NCI such as accounting, payroll, HR, marketing, which is estimated at 20% of the above costs (€151,861).
- The ELI National Centre's Projected Expenditure 2023-24 is based on NCI's Strategic Plan, costs in previous years, pledged funding, outstanding grant applications as well as proposed programme expansion. It will be amended in December 2024 to reflect funding received and additional pledges/grants.

**Governance**

The National Steering Group provides oversight and direction for ELI's national Centre. It oversees the development of the overall vision, operating framework and effective management of the National Centre as a separate department within ELI with responsibility for national programmes and initiatives in relation to improving educational outcomes for children and families. We thank the Chair, Mary Doyle, and all steering group members list below for their advice, guidance and support over the past year and look forward to working with them in 2023-24.

| ELI National Steering Group as of June 2023 is set out below:  |  |
|--|--|
| Chairperson: Mary Doyle<br>Prof Jimmy Hill, NCI Vice President<br>Dan O'Connor, Chair of ELI's Development Committee<br>Dr Josephine Bleach, Director of ELI | Margaret Kernan<br>Tony White<br>Lisa Fox<br>Elaine McHugh<br>Christine McCann |



### 3.4. National Home Visiting Support

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

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

#### 3.4.1. 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 14 years, ELI has delivered ParentChild+ to vulnerable families with children aged 18 months to 3 years in Dublin, expanding to Galway, Limerick, Louth, Waterford, Wexford and more recently Tullamore in Offaly who will start delivering the programme to families in Autumn 2023. Beginning with 15 families in 2007, numbers have grown to 419 in 2023. Unfortunately, this is only 3.4% of the 12,400 babies born into

poverty in Ireland each year and 9% of 4,800 babies born to first time parents living in poverty (CSO 2019). We would like to do more.

Extending ParentChild+ to other disadvantaged communities across Ireland is central to ELI's 2020-25 Strategic Plan as we want to ensure that all children get the support needed to start school with the language, literacy and numeracy skills needed for success in education, no matter what their background is or where they live. The ParentChild+ National Home Visiting Training, Research and Support Centre is committed to scaling up ParentChild+ in a sustainable way with two new sites in Laois, Offaly and a sister site for Ballinasloe in Galway, Tuam, coming on board in 2023-24. It also ensures fidelity to the programme and high-quality service delivery through its ongoing comprehensive support to ParentChild+ Managers, Coordinators and Home Visitors around the country.

As part of our sustainability planning, ELI's National Centre are delighted to be awarded the Rethink Ireland Scaling Education Fund. This funding is Rethink Ireland's commitment to supporting ELI to continue to measure and maximise our social impact through the ParentChild+ Programme across Ireland. In addition to financial funding to support core costs and programme funding, Scaling Education will enable ELI's National Centre to continue to provide and grow capacity-building opportunities to support the delivery of high-quality evidence-based sustainable models of Home Visiting and innovative emerging future-orientated family home-based learning in community organisations across Ireland.

### Programme Delivery

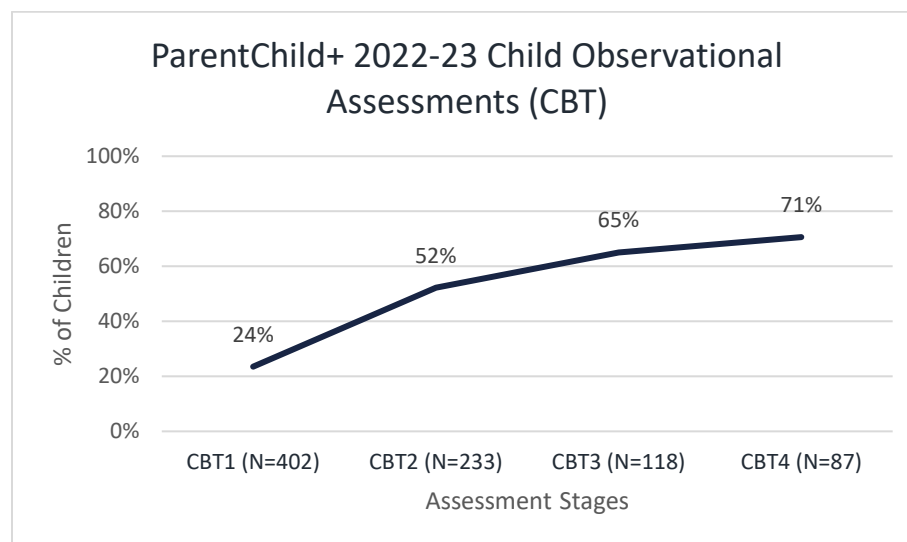
- 419 families in Dublin, Galway, Limerick, Louth, Waterford and Wexford received:
  - 12,682 home visits from September 2022 – June 2023.
  - 12,167 in home visits, 141 outdoor visits, 354 video call visits and 20 phone call visits.

| ParentChild+ Area             | Started | No. of families | No. of Home Visitors |
|-------------------------------|---------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Dublin's Inner City (NCI)     | 2007    | 138             | 25                   |
| Dublin South City Partnership | 2009    | 16              | 4                    |
| ABC Grangegorman/DoCCS        | 2014    | 22              | 5                    |
| Garryowen, Limerick           | 2015    | 54              | 5                    |
| Ballinasloe, Galway           | 2015    | 32              | 5                    |
| Ballyfermot Partnership (ABC) | 2017    | 26              | 6                    |
| St Ultan's, Cherry Orchard    | 2017    | 13              | 5                    |
| Clondalkin – Blue Skies (ABC) | 2019    | 9               | 1                    |
| Louth (ABC)                   | 2019    | 59              | 7                    |
| Youth New Ross, Wexford       | 2021    | 20              | 3                    |
| Brill FRC, Waterford          | 2021    | 19              | 3                    |
| Tuam, Galway                  | 2022    | 11              | 3                    |
| Tullamore, Offaly             | 2023    | 0               | 1                    |
| <b>Total</b>                  |         | <b>419</b>      | <b>73</b>            |

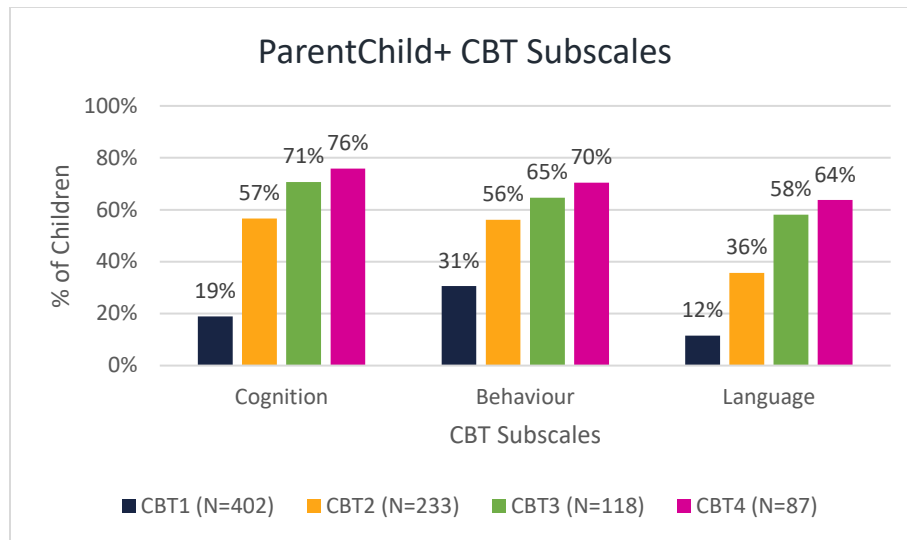
### ParentChild+ Programme Assessment- Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)

To monitor the developmental trajectory of the children and highlight the parent-child relationship, highlighting areas of learning and interaction that need to be addressed, Home Visitors complete two observational assessments (Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)) at the following points throughout the programme: CBT & PACT 1 after the 6th visit , CBT & PACT 2 after the 20 44th visit , CBT & PACT 3 after the 68th visit ,CBT & PACT 4 after the 92nd visit. In the following graphs, the percentages displayed are calculated based in the proportion of Home Visitors answering 'often' or 'always' in the CBT and PACT assessments. According to the coding scheme, children scoring 'often' (3) or 'always' (4) tend to meet their developmental milestones, and parents scoring at this level indicate positive parent-child relationships. Data from all national sites were collated and are reported in the graphs below.

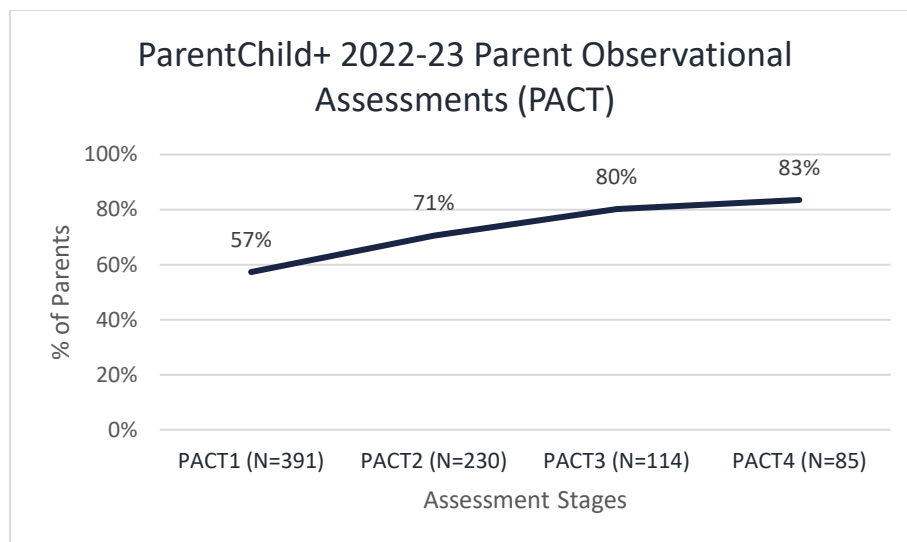
The percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones across the twelve ParentChild+ sites gradually increased throughout the programme, from 24% at the beginning of the programme to 52%, 65% and, finally, 71% on completion of the programme. The percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones after completing the full programme has decreased by 9% from 2021-22 (80%). This can be explained by looking to the individual sites for 2022-23. Three out of thirteen are scoring on average below 80% at CBT 4; Site 1 (59%), Site 2 (60%), and Site 3 (66%). Across these three sites, there are a high percentage of children presenting with severe levels of additional needs; Site 1 (27%), Site 2 (30%), and Site 3 (57%). Although improvements have been seen in these children throughout the programme children with additional needs require more time to meet developmental milestones.



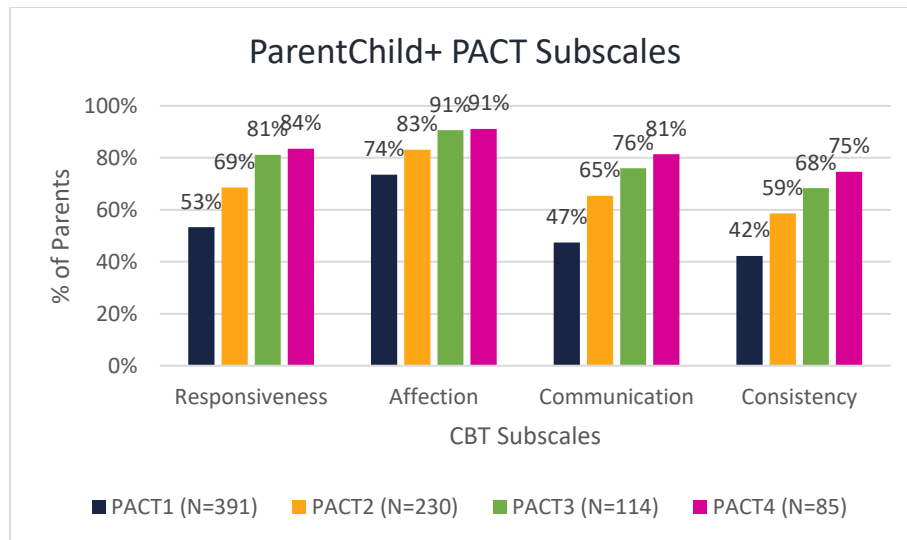
Children engaging in the programme demonstrated developmental increases across the three CBT subscales (cognition, behaviour and language) at each stage of the programme. As can be seen below the greatest overall increase was found in the percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones in the area of cognition (57%), followed by increases in language (52%) and behaviour (40%), the same pattern as the assessment scores in 2021-22.



There was also a significant increase in the percentage of parents across all ParentChild+ sites having high-quality interactions with their children from 57% at PACT 1 to 83% at PACT 4, slightly lower to the 91% of parents at PACT 4 in 2021-22.



The percentage of parents having interactions of good quality with their children showed improvements in all four areas of assessment (parents' responsiveness to their child, parent's affection toward their child, parent's communication with their child and parent's consistency with their child) at each stage of assessment. This was particularly evident in parents' positive communication (34%) and consistency with their children (32%). This was followed by increases in responsiveness (30%) and affection (18%). This followed a similar pattern as assessment scores in 2021-22, however, all domains demonstrated smaller increases in good quality interactions in 2022-23.



Comments from participants included:

*“This is very important to us as we don’t have any family here, and [home visitor] has become part of our family for the last year. Also, [my child] loves every single book and toy [home visitor] is bringing to him. The visits are our special moments when we bond with each other, spend quality time together, we learn new things every time and overall, the visits are something we always look forward to, no matter what.” [Parent]*

*“[I think what works well is] the child having uninterrupted time with parent and home visitor. I always notice a change in my child after the sessions especially after an arts and craft sessions or getting to use his imagination. I think the freedom for the child to interact without distraction from either of the adults is invaluable and something I try to aim for each day.” [Parent]*

### 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, international protection, homelessness/emergency accommodation.

- Mandatory training each year in September for all Home Visitors with weekly supervision supplemented by additional training in self-care and restorative practice.
- All Home Visitors have been supported to engage in CPD, with 858.5 hours completed nationally from a range of online and in-person courses offered both internally and externally.
- 38 Home Visitors are pursuing academic/professional qualifications:
  - Six Home Visitors enrolled in level five subject on Child Health and Wellbeing.

- 20 Home Visitors enrolled in level 6 subjects such as Curriculum and Pedagogical Practice for Early Childhood Home Visiting and Special Needs Assisting.
- 10 Home Visitors enrolled in level seven subjects such as Leadership, Governance and change Management in Home Visiting.
- One Home Visitor is pursuing a level eight in BSc Counselling & Psychotherapy.
- One Home Visitor is pursuing a level nine in Early Childhood Studies.
- Communities of Practices (CoPs)
  - 17 Coordinators attended three online CoP sessions and received up-to-date training in quality assurance, fidelity to the programme, leadership practices, general Data Protection Regulations, and self-care.
- Mentoring and Support
  - 17 Coordinators attended monthly online support sessions relating to managing and supporting staff.

### 3.4.2. Home from Home Programme

The Home from Home Transition Programme is an intensive weekly home visiting programme developed by our Home Visiting Team in Dublin's Inner City for families living in emergency/ homeless accommodation, which provides an integrated plan of intervention and support for families with children aged 16 months onwards. An adaptation of the ParentChild+ programme, its overall aim is to meet the needs of families living under the duress of homelessness, who would not be able to commit to a two-year programme and twice weekly visits. It has been delivered in Dublin's Inner City since 2019 (see [Section 4.4.5.](#)). The Home from Home National Home Visiting Training, Research and Support Centre is committed to scaling up Home from Home in a sustainable way. In 2022-23 we doubled the numbers involved and have successfully introduced the programme to an additional site in Wexford.

#### Programme Delivery

47 families across 5 communities in Dublin and Wexford received:

- 457 home visits from September 2022 – June 2023.
- 435 indoor visits, 5 outdoor visits, 14 video call visits and 3 phone call visits.

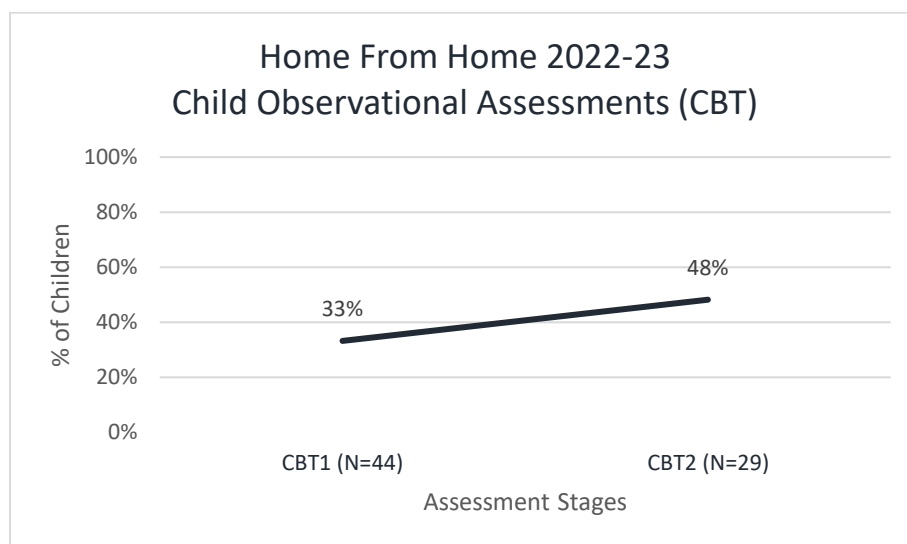
| Home from Home Area           | Started | No. of families | No. of Home Visitors |
|-------------------------------|---------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Dublin's Inner City (NCI)     | 2019    | 26              | 7                    |
| Dublin South City Partnership | 2021    | 6               | 1                    |
| Clondalkin – Blue Skies (ABC) | 2021    | 4               | 2                    |
| Ballyfermot Partnership (ABC) | 2022    | 3               | 1                    |
| Brill FRC, Wexford            | 2023    | 14              | 1                    |
| <b>Total</b>                  |         | <b>53</b>       | <b>12</b>            |

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

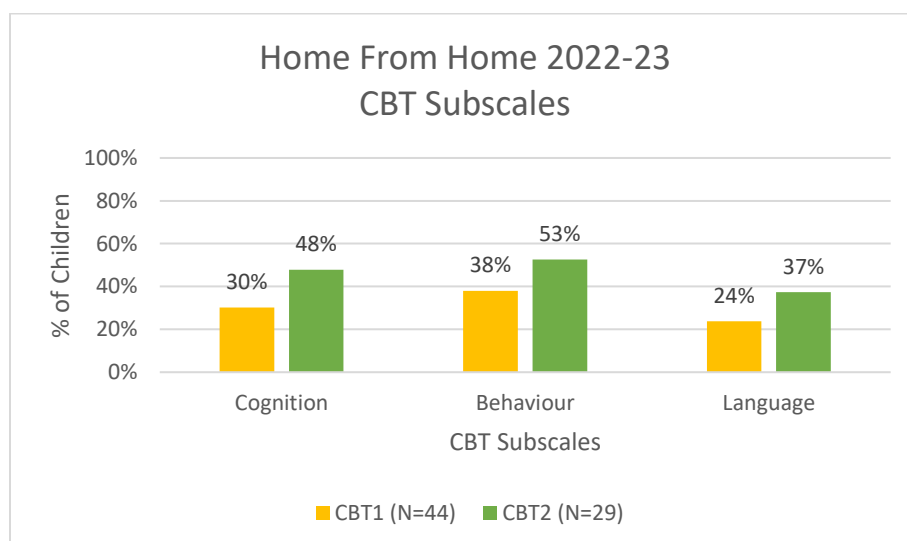
For the Home from Home programme Home Visitors complete a baseline CBT and PACT after the 2nd visit and a second CBT and PACT after the 12th visit. Due to the nature of the programme many families may be relocated to other accommodation and finish the programme at this stage. For any family that continues with the programme after the 12th visit, a final CBT and PACT assessment are completed after their final visit. (Please see [Section 3.4.1.](#) for further details on these assessments).



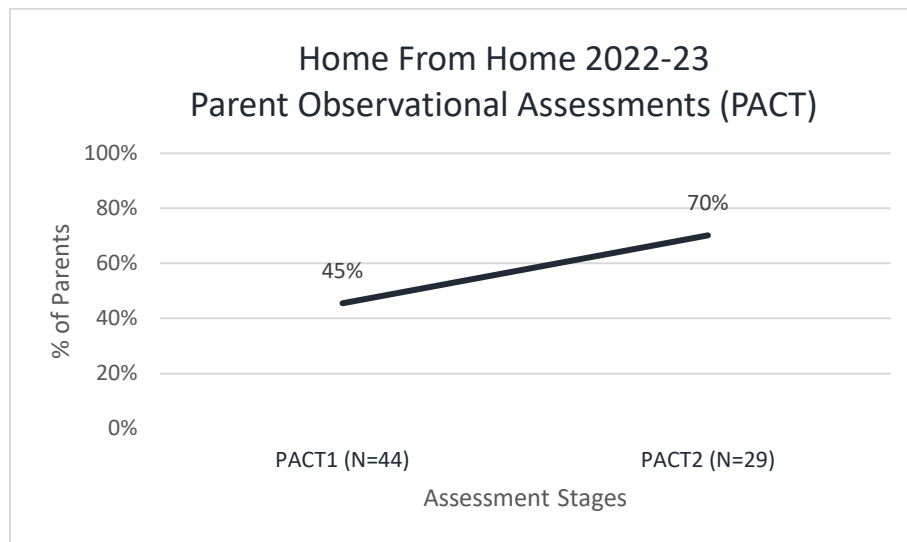
As can be seen in the graph below, 33% of the children in the 2022-23 Home from Home National cohort were reaching their developmental milestones on entering the programme. The average percentage score of children reaching their developmental milestones increased by 15% at CBT 2. Two families from Dublin's Inner City have progressed past the initial 12 visits and have completed the third stage of assessment. Due to the low numbers of CBT and PACT 3 completed, only data from CBT/PACT 1 and 2 will be reported on.



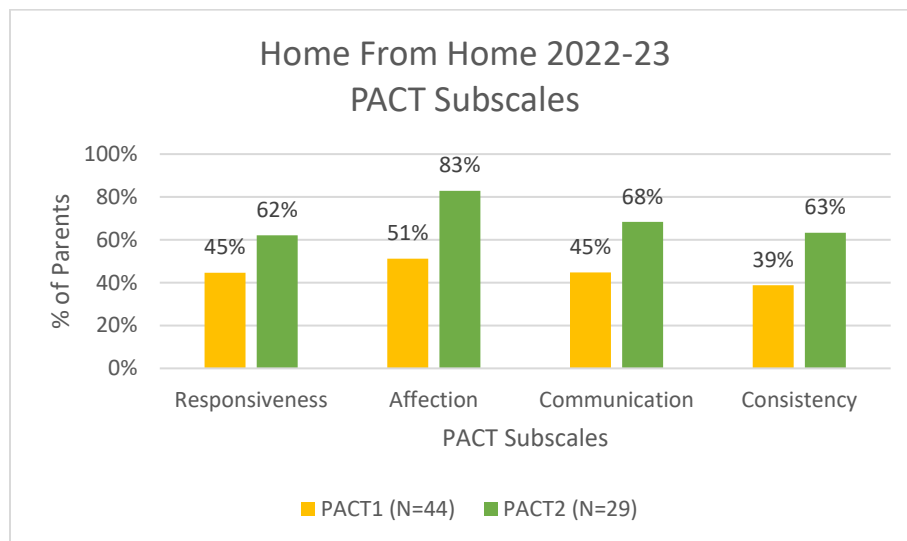
Children engaging in the programme demonstrated developmental increases across the three CBT subscales (cognition, behaviour and language) at each stage of the programme. As can be seen below the greatest overall increase was found in the percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones in cognition (18%), followed by increases in behaviour (15%) and language (13%).



There was also a significant increase in the percentage of parents across all Home From Home sites having high-quality interactions with their children from 45% at PACT 1 to 70% at PACT 2. There was not enough data collected to analyse PACT 3 or PACT 4 this year.



The percentage of parents having interactions of good quality with their children showed improvement in all four areas of assessment. This was particularly evident in parents' affection with their children, which increased by 32%. This was followed by increases in consistency (25%), communication (24%), and responsiveness (18%).



Comments from participants included:

*"[I] think all went well. Mam gained her confidence, [she was] very shy when we first started the programme. [The child's] social skills really improved and his confidence."* [Home Visitor]

*"[The child] is starting school in September and [they] can't concentrate on an activity for more than few minutes. [The parent was able to learn] how to work on [the] child's concentration [and is now] more confident to support child's concentration."* [Home Visitor]

### 3.4.3. Sláintecare Community Families

Commencing in 2019 as a collaboration with the local Community Mother Programmes, Tusla, HSE and the Katharine Howard Foundation, this project is a good example of a future-orientated policy-focused prevention and early intervention initiative, where practice and policy intersect in the collaborative strategic planning and transformation of an evidenced based early childhood home visiting programme.

Following a National Review of the Community Mothers Programme, Ireland's first evidenced based home visiting programme, in 2019, the Sláintecare Integration Fund and matched funding enabled the development of Community Families, an updated, evidence-based and integrated national home visiting programme which aims to improve outcomes for children and families in pregnancy and early childhood.

Community Families is a community home visiting programme, which puts parents first, empowering them through trusted relationships with a Home Visitor during pregnancy and their child's early years. It provides information and, support and builds friendships and connectivity in local communities.

#### Aims:

- To support the special bond between parents and their children and recognise that this is at the core of subsequent child and family outcomes from health and wellbeing to learning and succeeding in life.
- To improve children's lives by developing trusted relationships between experienced Home Visitors working in partnership with Parents. This is done through home visiting and promoting the development of supportive community networks.
- This professionally delivered Programme is not a 'one size fits all' approach; instead, it has the built-in flexibility to respond to all Families and their unique needs and circumstances. The Programme empowers Families to develop confidence as they grow and build their local peer support networks, accessing supports and services within their local community.

The Community Families National Oversight and Support Group (NOSG), co-chaired by Tusla and the HSE, was established in 2022 and has responsibility for the oversight, implementation and development of the Community Families Programme. Together, we are supporting the current 7 Community Mothers Programme sites to transition to the standardised Community Families model.

#### Programme Delivery

- Seven local organizations in Dublin (ELI), Limerick, Kerry, Longford, Westmeath, Tipperary, Laois and Offaly participated in the project.
- 971 families received home visiting with 2,398 involved in parent support groups across the seven sites.
- 30 Home Visitors upskilled and improved the quality of their service to families.
- 9 NOSG meetings were held with three consultation meetings with sites.
- A readiness assessment is being completed with the seven Community Mothers sites to support their transition to Community Families with a report due in September 2023. It will identify for the NOSG and the sites the steps and supports needed to implement the Community Families model as well as developing local and national implementation plans.
- A CRM system to support data collection across sites is being tested and is due to be fully operational by January 2024.

#### 3.4.4. My Place to Play

My Place to Play aims to enhance parent-child interactions and children's physical (tummy time), emotional (sense of safety, wellbeing and belonging), cognitive and language development for infants and toddlers living in homeless/emergency/overcrowded accommodation.

To support this programme, ELI acts as the lead agency on behalf of a multi-agency National Implementation Group. The group has comprised of Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) National and local areas, Tusla Partnership, Prevention and Family Support (PPFS) National, Tusla Homeless Liaison, the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) to develop it further and ensure local connections are utilised to reach families. The project is a leading example of the upscaling of a multi-agency, collaborative and responsive project from local to regional to national level. Initially the programme was designed for infants under 12 months of age. Based on the success and implementation of the infant programme, the need for a follow-on programme was identified. In 2021-22, in collaboration with Speech and Language Therapists, an extension of the programme for toddlers was developed and piloted. These packs focus on providing toddlers aged one to three years with a sense of well-being, belonging and self-identity. They aim to support toddlers' overall development including communication, social and physical development.

In 2022-2023, MPTP was identified by the DCEDIY as a resource to respond to the needs of families of young children fleeing the Ukrainian war and those living in International Protection crisis. Commissioned through CYPSC National and in continued collaboration with PPFS and Tusla, the Early Learning Initiative worked through local CYPSC networks and City and Childcare Committees to reach families.



*Child playing with her My Place to Play toddler pack*

#### Programme Delivery

- Five national organisations collaborate on the My Place to Play project (CYPSC, PPFS, IPAS, ABC and Tusla).
- 509 My Place to Play Infant Mats, were purchased for families living in emergency and homeless accommodation nationally this year:
  - 36 mats were delivered to families in Dublin's Inner City by ELI.
  - 473 mats were delivered across 45 organisations and delivered to families nationally.
  - Of these mats, 257 were provided to Ukrainian families.
- 1,016 My Place to Play Toddler Packs were purchased nationally this year.
  - 37 packs were delivered to families in Dublin's Inner City by ELI.
  - 979 packs were delivered across 44 organisations and delivered to families nationally.
- 215 professionals attended 10 online briefing sessions on the infant and toddler packs facilitated by a Speech and Language Therapist and MPTP Coordinator.

### Participant Feedback

Parents and practitioners are asked to complete an evaluation two weeks after the parent has received the My Place to Play mat. In total 72 parents and 22 practitioners completed the evaluation. These figures are significantly higher than those of 2021-22 (3 and 6 respectively).

Feedback was positive with 98% (n=64) of parents reported having the mat/pack makes it easier to play with their baby/toddler. Parents said that the mat did so by providing them with the space to play with their baby that was safe and comfortable. Parents that received the pack appreciated their toddler having their own toys to play with and that it served as a reminder to play with their child. Practitioners agreed with these sentiments, 100% (N=22) reporting that the mat and pack enabled parents to interact and play with their infants and toddlers, increased the awareness of the importance of play, and provided valuable learning opportunities. All parents and practitioners would recommend the mat and pack to other parents.

Practitioners were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the briefing sessions, 93% (n=128) found the sessions interesting and the content easy to understand. 93%(n=126) believe that the content will support the improvement of the quality of practice and a further 89% (n=121) felt that they are confident in making changes in their workplaces after the briefing sessions.

Comments from participants included:

*"It is really useful and the toys are really good. My son loves it and it is great if you are living in homeless accommodation as the rooms are small but you can still play with your child." [Parent]*

*"Parents welcomed the pack, space in the rooms is limited so the opportunity to hang up the bag out of the way was a positive to most present. I used the tummy time videos to support the presentation to the parents and as English levels were not consistent in the room a parent commented it gave her brain a time to rest. Another parent commented that the fact all the items in the pack were new was amazing as most of the items they receive onsite are second hand, parents engaged well and seemed to enjoy the presentation." [Practitioner]*

### 3.4.5. Home Visiting Alliance

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

Established in November 2020, the Home Visiting Alliance (HVA) is a collaboration of 5 Irish evidence-based early childhood home visiting programmes: Community Mothers, Infant Mental Health, Lifestart, ParentChild+ and Preparing for Life. A subgroup of the Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN), the HVA represents the collective national voice of early childhood home visiting from pre-birth or during pregnancy. While recognising that each programme has its own mechanisms and structures, the Alliance's focus is on promoting common messages about home visiting and addressing cross-programme issues in

a systematic coherent and collaborative way. It is also committed to supporting the development of a national standardised model for early childhood home visiting in Ireland as outlined in *First 5, A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families* (DCYA 2018).

The purpose of the Home Visiting Alliance is to:

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

### Programme Delivery

- Nine executive group meetings chaired by the Director of ELI with the ELI Administrator providing administrative assistance.
- The DCEDIY What Works Grant enabled us to develop feasibility study on the scaling up, expansion and replication of Home Visiting Programme in Ireland. This is completed with the report ready for publication in October 2023.
- 106 stakeholders, including representatives from Departments of Taoiseach and Children, HSE and Tusla, attended consultation events on 26th October and another on 24th May.
- Supported UNITES Project, MUI on the development of standardised approaches to home service delivery in Ireland.
- Looking to develop partnerships with Family Resource Centres and local Partnership networks.
- 283 Home Visitors attended The Wheel Training Links Programme webinars
  - 83 attended Neurodiversity and Pathways to Support (24th October)
  - 63 attended Nurturing Ourselves with Self-Care (20th January),
  - 86 attended An Introduction to Infant Mental Health (21st April)
  - 73 attended Connected Play Practices, Behaviour, Whole Body Learning & Inclusive Support (2nd June).
- HVA website, developed through What Works funding: **Home Visiting Alliance – Home Visiting Alliance (hva.ie), is now fully operational.**





### 3.5. Research Projects

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

This section outlines the key research conducted by ELI in 2022-23. If you would like any further details on the progress of any of the projects listed below you can follow our [ResearchGate page](#) or contact us, on [eli@ncirl.ie](mailto:eli@ncirl.ie).

#### 3.5.1. Community Action Research

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

In addition, children's learning continued to be measured for specific programmes through a range of child and parent focused measures including the 0-2 Parent and Child Observation tool ([0-2 Home Visiting Programme](#)), the ParentChild+ Measures ([Child Behaviour Traits – CBT](#), [Parent and Child Together – PACT](#), and [Home Learning Environment - HLE](#)), Assessing Children's Phonics, Writing, Sight Vocab and Social Skills ([Doodle Den](#)), and Assessing Children's Understanding, Knowledge and Skills in Coding ([Robotic Coding Club Programme](#)).

#### 3.5.2. Parenting365 Research Project

The Parenting365 research project aimed to conduct an exploration of the experiences of children with disabilities and their parents living in an area of socio-economic disadvantage in Dublin's Inner City and to understand the impact of the Parenting365 Programme on children with disabilities and their parents. The study also sought to directly engage the parents in informing the future development of the Parenting365 Programme. Nine parents completed a "Needs Assessment" with the researcher, including Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-2) and demographic information. Seven parents also completed a semi-structured interview after engaging in the Parenting365 Programme. The needs assessment suggests that communication and personal social development were particular deficits within this cohort, however all areas of development, as measured by the ASQ-3, may require additional support. The findings from the Parenting365 programme highlighted the positive impact of the programme for both the parent and child, supporting previous feedback captured by the ELI from parents who had previously completed the Parenting365 programme (ELI, 2022). Parents reported increased confidence in their ability to support their child and that a benefit of the programme was seeing their child thrive in social interactions. Additionally, particular benefits of the programme were stated as being the opportunities for social support amongst the parents and feelings of solidarity. A link to the full report can be found [here](#).

### **3.5.3. 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 90 baseline surveys and 40 post programme surveys. The results highlight the programme's ability to alter parental behaviour. Results showed statistically significant increases in cuddling, immunisation and use of safety equipment when parents had completed the programme. Parents' behaviour and their understanding of child development is a crucial part of early childhood interventions. The findings of this study have important implications for policy as the findings indicate that investments in early interventions can improve conditions for socioeconomically disadvantaged children, which in turn improves social disadvantage.

### **3.5.4. ParentChild+ Follow up study**

An external evaluation of ParentChild+ was conducted through a follow-up study of ParentChild+ graduates from the original implementation of ParentChild+ in the Dublin Docklands. Thirteen parents and child graduates and two teachers participated. The findings indicated the continued positive impact of the ParentChild+ programme for both children and mothers. Significantly, development of strong communication skills, socio-emotional and academic skills, and a love of learning were noted as being related to the experience of being a part of the ParentChild+. Parents stated that the ParentChild+ programme helped them to have "a little more patience and open mind about parenting" and that it was "great to have someone else coming and seeing... [the child's] ... progress". The parents mentioned the "warm and affectionate" relationships fostered by the Home Visitors and that they were "just so brilliant" and they "really enriched our lives". Additionally, parents also mentioned that they continued to employ the skills they learned with their "other children". These findings support the previous evaluations (2014-2017) of the ParentChild+ programme and the baseline study completed in 2011 (Share et al., 2011). A link to the full report can be found [here](#).

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

In response to COVID-19, ELI transitioned its Home Visiting programmes to virtual delivery. ELI began collecting data on the programmes as a mean to capture the family engagement during home visits, the quality of intervention, challenges facing families, and the learnings emerging. Over 5,000 reflections completed by Home Visitors have been collected which will be explored in 2023-24 to identify the factors that predict positive engagement with virtual delivery of visits.

### **3.5.6. Learnings from STEM Programme Delivery in a Disadvantaged Community**

STEM programmes with disadvantaged communities have been running since 2008 in ELI. In 2021-22 ELI began collaborating with NCI's School of Computing to explore the effect of these STEM programmes on children and families in Dublin's Inner City. In 2022-23 the team disseminated their findings on the effects transitioning STEM programmes to e-learning had on child and family engagement. Results demonstrate that creating fun and enjoyable eLearning activities for children to engage in STEM increases interest and confidence, with children's skills in coding (94%) and interest in STEM (66% in workshops and 94% in Virtual Coding Club) improving. Upskilling parents as coaches and co-participants built their capacity as educators of their children increased family interest, confidence and participation in STEM. This collaboration is due to continue in 2023-24 exploring a new hybrid model of STEM programme delivery.

### **3.5.7. Your Children, You Say: Families' Experiences of Meitheal in the Dublin Mid Leinster Area**

In Spring 2022, Tusla commissioned ELI to engage in a piece of research to capture the voice of parents who participated in Meitheal plans for their children in the Dublin Mid Leinster area. The research aimed to generate parent feedback that would influence the delivery of future training for Lead Practitioners of Meitheal in the Dublin Mid Leinster area. The study was composed of two parts; a focus group with parents whose children had participated in Meitheal plans and an online survey. 6 parents took part in the focus group and the survey received 23 responses. The findings will be disseminated by Tusla throughout 2023-24.

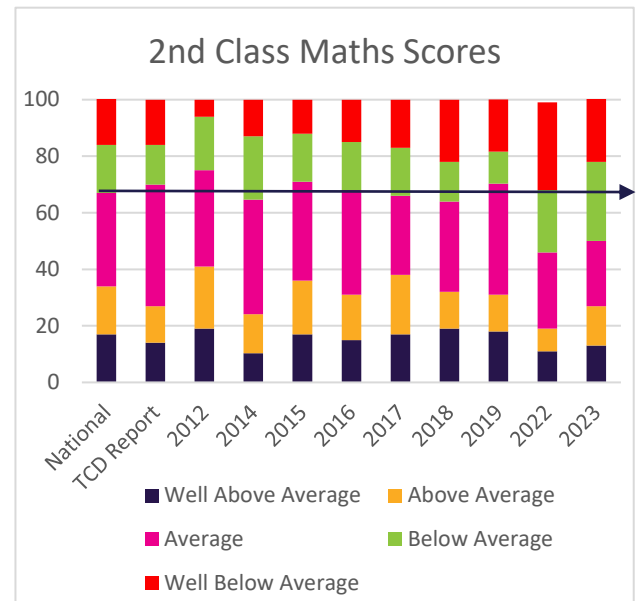
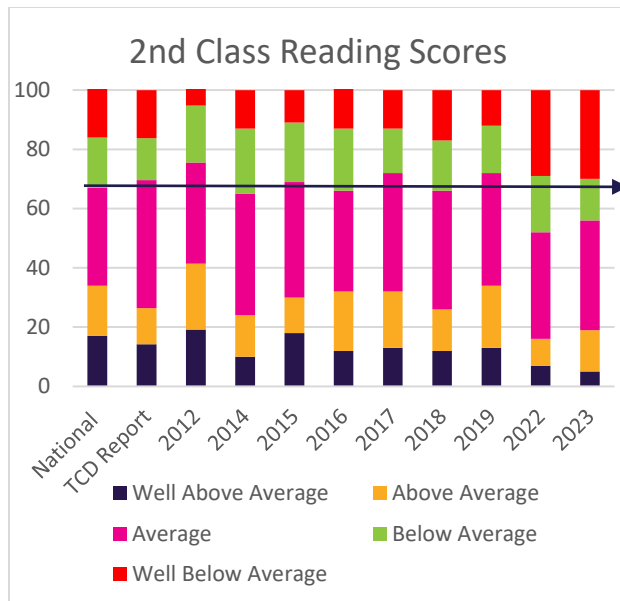
### **3.5.8. Childcare Services for Students**

Students in third-level education who are parents must consider their childcare options to attend college and engage with their studies. However, the cost, availability and flexibility of childcare in Ireland can be a significant barrier to many student parents attending college or finishing their studies. Research suggests that while students who are parents face additional barriers to accessing and continuing with further education, they are motivated by the positive impact that their education will have on their children (Wainright & Marandet, 2010). This year, ELI began work on a research project in partnership with the Students' Union in NCI and the Union of Students in Ireland, which aims to find out about student parents' experiences of childcare services, and to identify any barriers to childcare for this cohort. A national survey will be distributed to colleges across Ireland via our partner USI in 2023-24 and the results will be available in 2024.

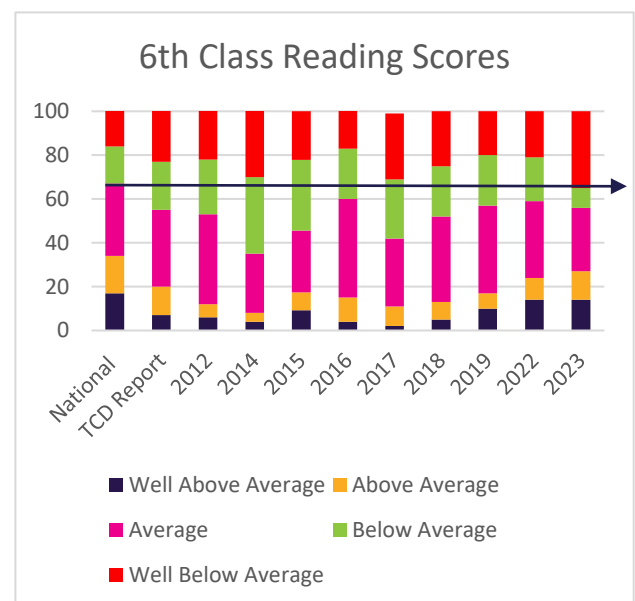
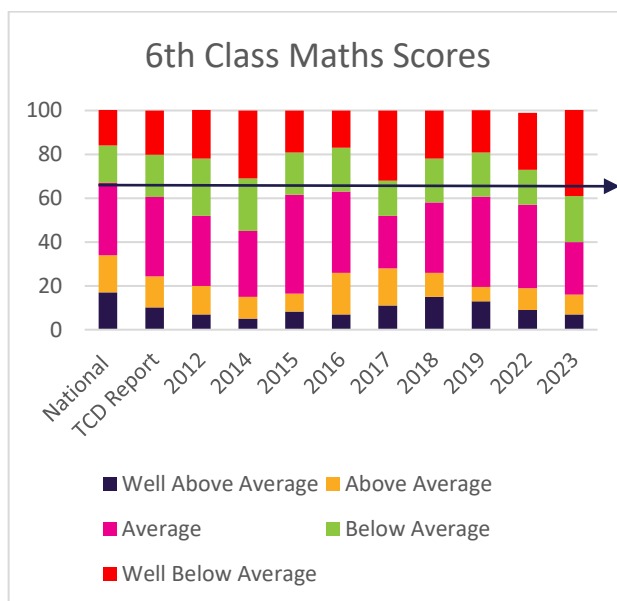
### **3.5.9. Standardised Test Results**

Standardised test results in English and Maths at seven years (second class) and 12 years (sixth class) were collected from the local primary schools who participate in the Early Learning Initiative's programmes since 2012. The aim is to monitor how children are faring in terms of their literacy and numeracy skills; thereby giving us an indication what, if any, impact DEIS, the Early Learning Initiative's and other programmes are having on children's educational attainment. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the adverse impact this had on schools this data was not collected in the years 2019-20 and 2020-21. This information collected is aggregated annually and compared with the national norms developed by the test developers based on a sample of more than 10,000 pupils during 2002-03, in addition to baseline data collected by the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College (Share et al., 2011). The figures below display the results of aggregated results of students attending primary schools in the ELI catchment area, with the arrows denoting the national average scores for comparison. In 2022-23 six primary schools, both North and South side, submitted their aggregated scores. This included one school who had not submitted their results in previous years.

As can be seen in the figures on the next page, there was a slight increase in both second-class student's reading and maths scores. The number of students scoring between average and well above average in reading increasing from 52% in 2022 to 56% in 2023. The number of students scoring between average and well above average in maths increase from 47% in 2022 to 49% in 2023.



The reading and maths scores of the sixth class cohort decreased in both second-class student's reading and maths scores. There was a slight decrease in reading scores with the number of students scoring between average and well above average increasing from 59% in 2022 to 56% in 2023. There was a decrease in sixth class maths scores, with the number of students scoring between average and well above average decreasing from 57% in 2022 to 40% in 2023.



These results are reflective of recent literature which has found that younger children have experienced the greatest effect on their learning after the pandemic (Juniper Education, 2022).

### **3.6. Innovation projects**

To ensure ELI are responsive to community needs, we prioritise innovation projects that will address long-term sustainability of programmes in a strategic manner. Across ELI, we endeavour to find meaningful solutions that build on community strengths, collaborate with partners, and harness the capacity of the ELI team to improve the outcomes for children, young people and families. This section outlines the key innovative projects addressing the ever-changing needs of our community.

#### **3.6.1. ABC Outcomes Framework**

In 2022, ELI commenced its implementation of the ABC Outcomes Framework developed by the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme to provide a more comprehensive approach to collecting and reporting on the collective impact of ABC Programmes. ELI is one of the 12 services implementing ABC Programmes across Ireland. This framework is being implemented incrementally, starting with a meeting between the Dublin's Inner City Assistant Director, the ELI Researcher and the ABC National Research and Data Specialist to discuss the implementation of this framework at an organisation level. This then led to internal trainings facilitated by ELI Researcher and ParentChild+ Senior Specialist, who trained as Parenting Support Champions to support staff with preparing for this framework. Two online general briefing sessions and one in-person site briefing took place in April 2023. Additional trainings on data collection have taken place throughout July and August 2023, with the intention of launching the ABC Outcomes Framework in September 2023.

#### **3.6.2. Restorative Practices Strategy**

For the last eight years, the Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland has been leading a community restorative practice project within Dublin's North East Inner City (NEIC). In 2021 a proposed Restorative Practices Strategy was commenced to review the current practices and delivery of RP in the community. The aim is to create a strategy which enables ELI to support the creation of happy, healthy restorative communities. It seeks to increase the skills and knowledge of children, young people and adults to empower them to use RP approaches in their day-to-day lives, ultimately building positive interpersonal relationships and resolve conflict in Dublin's Inner City. Throughout 2022, local stakeholders were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the proposed strategy through community-wide consultations. A final consultation is scheduled for August 2023. The strategy is due to be launched in early 2023-24. For more details on our Restorative Practices programmes please see sections [4.6.3.](#) and [4.7.2.](#)

#### **3.6.3. CRM Project**

In April 2022, ELI secured funding from the Fidelity Foundation to support the review and development of ELI's CRM system as part of ELI's 2021-22 Strategic Review. Phase one of this project started straight away by forming a working group, made up of staff from ELI and NCI's IT department. The working group developed a project implementation plan and appointed a project and research lead. Phase two of the project began in February 2023, when ELI commissioned AMOS Consulting to conduct an independent review of ELI's IT database requirements to evaluate current and future CRM needs. Throughout April and May, ELI staff participated in eight in-person workshops and discussed specific requirements for their programmes. A meeting was held between AMOS project manager and ELI's working group in June 2023, to review the findings from their independent analysis as part of phase three. In 2023-24, ELI will strategise on the next steps for building a system that meets its evolving needs.

### 3.7. 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 2022-23, 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 2022-23 and building on past successes.

#### 3.7.1. Government Partnerships

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

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

The **DCEDIY What Works Learning Together Fund** grant to the Home Visiting Alliance was a first step in the development of a national standardised model for early childhood home visiting in Ireland as outlined in First Five. It raised the visibility of the Home Visiting Alliance and early childhood home visiting in Ireland; and built the capacity of the existing home visiting programmes to support vulnerable children and parents to thrive.

**Sláintecare, Prevention is better than cure: The development of a standardised national model and dataset for the Community Families Programme** is an exciting collaboration with the **HSE, Tusla, Katharine Howard Foundation** and 7 Community Mothers sites across Ireland.

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

#### 3.7.2. North East Inner City (NEIC) Programme Implementation Board

The NEIC Programme Implementation Board led by an independent chair, initially Michael Stone and Michael Gavin, has been very supportive of ELI since its inception. We would like to thank Michael Stone for his dedication and leadership, in particular his commitment to children and families living in the area and wish him every success in the future. We look forward to building on his achievements with Michael GAVIN. 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 2022-23



for Restorative Practice, Doodle Den, Parenting Coordinator and Educational Guidance at second level. Additional funding was received for the English As A Second Language programme, Talking Heads.

### **3.7.3. Corporate Partners**

Without the substantial, long-term financial and voluntary support of our corporate partners, much of the ELI's work would not be possible. We applaud their visionary insights and genuine commitment to making a real, measurable and positive difference to the lives and learning successes of children and young people across Ireland. We are continually seeking additional corporate partners and would welcome the opportunity to talk to interested companies. Please contact Lána Cummins (by phone: 086 4672204 or e-mail: [лана.сummins@ncirl.ie](mailto:лана.сummins@ncirl.ie)) for more information on how your organisation could get involved with ELI.

### **3.7.4. Other Communities across Ireland, EU and globally**

ELI, through the National Centre, 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.

### **3.7.5 Influence and Advocacy**

Central to ELI's impact is influencing collective efforts that improve the life chances of children, young people and their families. Advocating on their behalf through networking and interagency collaboration ensures ELI achieves this goal. We are members of the Prevention & Early Intervention Network (PEIN), which is a network of evidence-based practice, advocacy and research organisations that share a commitment to improving outcomes for children, young people, and their communities and are represented through all of the ABC Learning Communities. In 2022, we also became members of the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) alongside our ongoing participation in networks established through The Wheel. We chair the Home Visiting Alliance, which represents the collective national voice of early childhood home visiting. These networks allow us to work collaboratively with others in the field to harness a wealth of expertise and resources and work towards common goals to positively influence policy and practice and advocate for the needs of families and children across the country.

### **3.7.6. Research Partnership**

A focus on research and innovation in response to quality assurance and everchanging contexts with a priority on enhancing research partnerships, both formal and informal, and knowledge management systems is key to ELI's strategic research ambitions. Engaging with other research institutions through knowledge dissemination, brokerage and synthesis will be at the forefront of ELI's ambition to advance policy and services for children and families moving forward. If you are interested in collaborating on a research project with ELI, please contact ELI National Assistant Director Lána Cummins, [лана.сummins@ncirl.ie](mailto:лана.сummins@ncirl.ie)

### **3.7.7 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.

### **3.7.8. Colleagues in the National College of Ireland**

NCI staff, from various Departments, work very closely with us to ensure that ELI delivers our programmes to a high standard and best practice is adhered to. Through their interactions with ELI's partners at national and local level, they demonstrate NCI's long-standing commitment to widening participation in higher education and ensuring that children in the area will progress successfully to third level. NCI's 2022-27 Strategy recognises ELI as an integral part of the NCI landscape with ELI's Five-Year Strategy 2020-25 now incorporated into NCI's Strategy. Together, we are achieving NCI's strategic goal to be recognised worldwide for excellence in access, innovation and research in education for children, young people and families living in social disadvantage.

### **3.7.9. 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 Brendan McGinty (present) and Fr. Leonard Moloney SJ (former) Chairpersons 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.

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; Mary Doyle, Chairperson of ELI National Centre Steering Group and the other members of the ELI Advisory Committee, ABC Steering Group, National Centre Steering Group and Development Committee has been invaluable in ensuring that ELI operates effectively in the best interests of children and families.

We would like to take this opportunity to say goodbye to Frank Ryan as outgoing Chair of the ELI Advisory Committee and ABC Steering Group. Frank's unwavering commitment to ensuring all children, young people and their parents can achieve their educational, career and life goals will live on through the work of ELI and will be felt through the fabric of communities in Dublin's Inner City and across Ireland. We wish Frank all the best in his next adventure.

We would also to welcome Mary Doyle as incoming Chair of the ELI Advisory Committee and ABC Steering Group. Mary has been chairing the ELI National Centre Steering Group where her expertise has guided the steady growth of home visiting and family engagement programmes around the country. We look forward to working more with Mary over the coming years.

### 3.8. Communication

Communication is key to ELI's engagement with all its partners and its ability to influence practice, policy and theory. During 2022-23, we communicated our work to multiple audiences through a mix of social media, conferences/webinars and papers along with traditional print and media coverage. Networking enabled us to expand our learning support networks and develop relationships with other similar organisations, who are committed to improving outcomes for children. It also enhanced our ability to reach new and potential corporate partners who expressed interest in our work during the year.

#### 3.8.1. Social Media

ELI's social media presence aims to build connections, sustain relationships with stakeholders and share information, achievements and learning. Our social media platforms perform an essential role to provide updates and promote access to our full range of activities and programmes for children, young people, parents and families across the community. Furthermore, social media enables us to connect with a larger professional community and share our work and exchange insights locally, nationally and internationally. An example of social media's impact is our successful CARN Conference, please see the link to this section for more information, where we ran a pre-event campaign and shared highlights of the event itself.

Over the year ELI continued to reinforce our message around family well-being and self-care for parents and signposted to our extensive suite of parent and child groups, parenting courses, Parent Child + activities, STEM Family Learning and Coding projects, and Zoom Ahead with Books Virtual Book Club.

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

#### Programme Figures

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

| Social Media Platform | Total followers end June 2022 | Total followers end June 2023 | Increase in 2022-23 | % Increase in 2022-23 |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Facebook              | 3,003                         | 3,297                         | 294                 | 9%                    |
| Instagram             | 900                           | 1,109                         | 209                 | 20%                   |
| Twitter               | 1,281                         | 1,407                         | 126                 | 9%                    |
| LinkedIn              | 485                           | 692                           | 207                 | 35%                   |
| Totals                | 5,669                         | 6,505                         | 836                 | 13%                   |

#### Highlights of Content Posted:

- 1,580 reach and 531 engagements for **Marie Boyne's article in the Irish Times** post on Facebook in July 2022.
- 4,105 reach and 470 engagements for post **Recruiting families for the next Parenting 365 programme** on Facebook in September 2022.
- 4,028 reach and 270 engagements for the **CARN Conference 2023** posts at NCI on Twitter in October 2022.

- 2,511 reach with 430 engagements for **Rummikub Schools Winners** post on Facebook in February 2023.
- 2,060 reach and 159 engagements for **Home Visiting Alliance Feasibility Study Consultation** post on Twitter in April 2023.
- 4,815 reach and 438 engagements for **Home Visitor of the Year** post on Facebook in June 2023.

#### Themed Content:

- 1,388 average reach and 181 average engagement per post for **Discover University** (7 posts).
- 571 average reach and 85 average engagement per post for **Zoom Ahead with Books Virtual Book Club** (19 posts).
- 1,523 average reach and 173 average engagement per post for **Parent Child +** updates and celebrations (18 posts).
- 1,900 average reach and 173 average engagement for **Sensory World Book Day** (22 posts).
- 790 average reach and 42 average engagement for **ELI Research Insights** (15 posts).
- 760 average reach and 41 average engagement for **Home Visiting Alliance webinars** (33 posts).
- 1,837 average reach and 92 average engagement for **CARN Conference 2022** (9 posts).

#### 3.8.2. Presentations

- Darmody, K., Booth, J., O'Toole, F., Bleach, J., Stynes, P., Pathak, P. (2022, June 20). *A STEM family eLearning framework to increase family engagement in disadvantaged communities*. IADIS 16th Multi Conference on Computer Science and Information Systems, Lisbon, Portugal.
- Cummins, L., Byrne, M. (2022, August 23-26) *My Place Play: Creating a safe play space for infants living in emergency accommodation*. EECERA, Glasgow, Scotland.
- Cummins, L. (2022, September 14) *My Place to Play - interagency collaboration in creating safe spaces to play for infants and toddlers living in international protection and emergency accommodation*. Children's Rights Alliance, End Child Poverty Week, Dublin, Ireland.
- Wheatley, E., Moloney, M., Dowling, J., Bowes, J. (2022, September 20) *The Effective Use of Community-led Restorative Approaches in North-East Inner-City Dublin*. UK/Ireland Housing and Community Safety Conference, Dublin, Ireland.
- Wheatley, E. (2022, September 30) *Restorative Practice and Creating a Restorative Community — Learning from the NEIC*. Louth Local Development Social Inclusion Week 2022.
- Darmody, K., Mihalka, R. (2022, October 29) *Parents' Voices Through the Pandemic – How a Community Action Research Project Shaped a Parent-Child Engagement Programme*. CARN, Dublin Ireland.
- Wheatley, E. (2022, October 29) *A Restorative Journey — Through Community Action Research*. CARN, Dublin, Ireland.
- Cummins, L., Byrne, M. (2022, October 29) *My Place to Play: Creating a safe play space for infants, the story so far*. CARN, Dublin, Ireland.
- O'Neill, J., Goulding, S., Alcalá, A. (2022, October 29) *Parenting 365: A family-centered support pilot programme for parents with children with developmental delay and additional needs*. CARN, Dublin, Ireland.
- Kavanagh, A. (2022, October 29) *Use it or Lose it: Exploring new strategies for English as an Additional Language (EAL) Teaching and Learning in Secondary DEIS Schools*. CARN, Dublin, Ireland.
- Byrne, M. (2022, October 18) *Home Visiting: A right for families experiencing homelessness*. PEIN Importance of House and Home Webinar, online.
- O'Neill, J., O'Riordan, B. (2022, November 24), *Early years literacy and numeracy supports in an area-based context: PC+, Early Numeracy and ZAWB*. NALA Family Learning Conference, Dublin, Ireland.

- Cummins, L. (2023, February 25) *Social class dynamics in parent experiences of children's disability services*. Sociology Association of Ireland Postgrad Conference. University College Dublin.
- Darmody, K. (2023, March 15) *A Virtual Educational Robotics Coding Club Framework to Improve K-6 Students Emotional Engagement in STEM*. VII IEEE World Engineering Education Conference, online.
- Alcala, A., Darmody, K., Booth, J., Bleach, J., Pathak, P., Stynes, P. *A Virtual Educational Robotics Coding Club Framework to Improve K-6 Students Emotional Engagement in STEM*. (2023, June). NCI Research Day, Dublin, Ireland.
- Byrne, M., Bleach, J. (2023, June 15) *Early Childhood Home Visiting – a collaborative person-centered community approach*. (2023, June). NCI Research Day, Dublin, Ireland.

### 3.8.3. Publications

- K. Darmody, J. Booth, J. Bleach, P. Pathak and P. Stynes, "Work in Progress: A Virtual Educational Robotics Coding Club Framework to Improve K-6 Students Emotional Engagement in STEM," 2023 IEEE World Engineering Education Conference (EDUNINE), Bogota, Colombia, 2023, pp. 1-4.

### 3.8.4. Networking

Learning networks are a significant element of our ethos and our community action research approach. In 2022-23, members of the ELI team attended 371 interagency networking events. Of these, 82 were related to the ABC Programme, 142 were Dublin's Inner City related and 147 involved the National Centre. Key criteria for networking are the individual's and organisation's commitment to improving outcomes for children along with their ability to work in partnership with others. Priority is given to networks that are focused on early childhood development, educational disadvantages and supports for parents. Learning more about or having an input into Irish and European policy, especially when it concerns children's learning and development, is highly valued.

#### Key networks in 2022-2023 included:

- Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC).
- PPFS Child and Family Networks at local and national level.
- Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN).
- Home Visiting Alliance.
- Area Based Childhood Managers Forum.
- National My Place to Play Implementation Group.
- YPAR Meitheal; 0-5; 5-12; Homeless; Hard to Reach and International Steering Groups.
- North Inner-City Community Coalition and subgroups.
- Charities Institute Ireland, The Wheel and Children's Rights Alliance.
- Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) and Network for Educational Action Research Ireland (NEARI).
- World Maternal Health Campaign Working Group and Infant Mental Health Network.
- YPAR Roma Working Group.
- Inner-City Organisations Network (ICON).
- Community Safety Partnership.
- Dublin City Childcare Committee.
- Homeless organisations e.g. Focus Ireland, Cross Care.
- Community Families Oversight and Support group.
- Parent Support Champions Project.
- Parent Strategy Group.

### 3.8.5. Collaborative Action Research Network Conference 2022.

National College of Ireland (NCI) held the highly anticipated 2022 Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) Conference from the 28th- 30th of October. The conference theme of **Changing Lives through Action Research** reflects the mission of NCI and is designed to:

- Include and value all voices and perspectives.
- Encourage a broad range of researchers and practitioners to share their insights into how action research can be used for the greater good.
- Celebrate the joy, challenges, achievements and disappointments of action research.

Early Learning Initiative (ELI) worked alongside the Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning (CELL) to support the organisation of this event. A dedicated team from both departments joined together and collaborated with the international CARN committee. The conference successfully welcomed 140+ colleagues from all over the world to our campus to discuss how we, collectively and individually, change lives through action research.

ELI delivered six impactful presentations and a pre-conference workshop, addressing key social issues in Ireland and highlighting the valuable contributions of our research projects in addressing these challenges. These topics included supporting families at risk or experiencing homelessness, addressing educational gaps and providing resources for parents of children with additional needs and examining the impact of Covid-19 on classroom settings. For a list of the presentations, please refer to section [3.8.2.](#)



*Assistant Director Lána Cummins presenting at CARN 2022*



## 4. Dublin's Inner City Programmes

### 4.1. Introductory Letter

Since 2006, ELI has partnered with our local Dublin's Inner City community to improve the educational aspirations and outcomes of children and young people. There is a strong portfolio of Home Visiting and Family/Community engagement programmes along with robust implementation structures. This section of the End of Year Report gives the 2022-23 highlights, along with a brief overview of ELI's Dublin's Inner City and summaries of all its programmes, including the ABC and NEIC programmes. More details are available on the website: [www.ncirl.ie/eli](http://www.ncirl.ie/eli). If you would like more information, please contact Brigina O'Riordan by e-mail [brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie](mailto:brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie) or phone: 086 086 7965572.

#### **First full year of In-person Implementation since March 2020**

2022-2023 saw the full return of face-to-face delivery of all programmes post pandemic. In December 2022, we hosted the first NCI Challenge event since December 2019. 93% of home visits across our home visiting programmes took place in person. We continued small elements of virtual engagement that had developed during the pandemic e.g. virtual book club and online tuition support, where needed. Family engagement increased overall with 5,528 families participating in an ELI programme in 2022-23 compared with 4,071 in 2021-22.

#### **Innovation: Talking Heads and Trauma Sensitive Sessions**

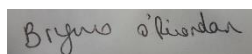
Two new innovative programmes were introduced this year: Talking Heads and Trauma Sensitive Sessions. Talking Heads, provides young people who do not have English as their first language, a space to practice everyday conversation. Corporate volunteers support this programme by giving their time to converse with young people. In 2023-24, we plan to extend this programme to upper primary school children, responding to the needs identified by ABC Consortium members. Similarly, the Trauma Sensitive Sessions pilot took place in one primary school this year responding to a need identified within the community. This programme supports children who have experienced trauma to regulate their emotions. It also supports teachers with techniques to help children in their classrooms. In 2023-24, we hope to expand this programme to other primary schools, if funding allows.

#### **Dublin's Inner-City Centre of Excellence and Best Practice Demonstration Site**

Dublin's Inner-City hub continue to be seen as a Centre of Excellence from which other communities can learn. Over the course of 2022-23, Dublin's Inner City as a department of the ELI has worked in partnership with ELI National to roll out piloted and evaluated programmes. This ensures that the children and families in Dublin's Inner City remain a priority and continue to receive the attention they deserve.

#### **Thank You**

As always, our fantastic partners across Dublin's Inner City came together this year and supported children and young people to thrive, despite the many challenges facing them. This report highlights the enormous impact they have made on the lives of families living in the area. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved with our Programmes. We look forward to working with you all again in 2023-24.



Brigina O'Riordan

Assistant Director - Dublin's Inner City, Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland



## 4.2. Overview

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

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

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

- Home Visiting and Parent Support (N=1,113 families) - positive home environment through playful learning interactions.
- Literacies (N=3,468 children) – improving social, emotional, language, coding and thinking skills.
- Educational Guidance (N=612 young people) - accessing education and career opportunities.
- Capacity Building, Training and Mentoring (N=495 professionals) – building professionals' skills to collectively improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

### Objectives:

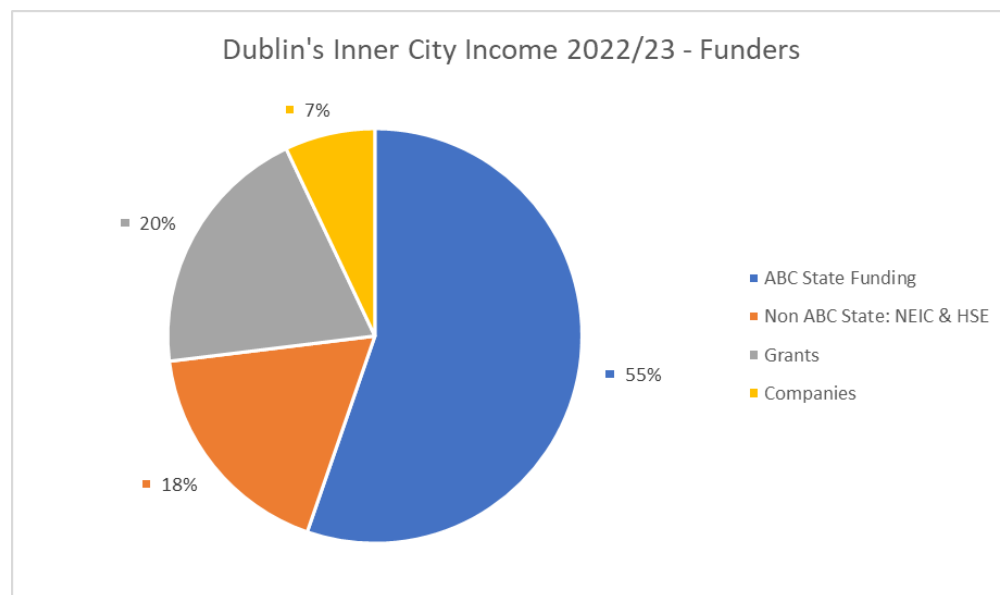
- Enable children and young people to develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions they will need to achieve their educational, career and life goals.
- Increase parental involvement and skills in supporting their children's development and education.
- Ensure smooth transitions, continuity and progression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

### 4.3. Finance and Governance

This section accounts for ELI's Dublin's Inner City 2022-23 income and expenditure along with its governance structures. Financed by a mix of statutory and voluntary funding, including Tusla, HSE and the NEIC, it has tightly managed income and expenditure to ensure that programme and partner outcomes and commitments have been fully achieved.

#### Income

The income for the Dublin's Inner City was €1.4m (same as 2022-23). The following graph illustrates the breakdown in income with 55% from ABC Programme, up from 51% in 2022-23, 18% from other State, primarily NEIC and HSE, up from 14% in 2022-23; 20% from grants, down from 21% in 2022-23, 7% from corporate funding, down from 14% in 2022-23.



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

If you are interested in partnering with ELI in Dublin's Inner City, please contact Brigina O'Riordan, ELI Dublin's Inner City Director (by phone: 086 7965572 or by email: [brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie](mailto:brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie))

#### Expenditure 2022-23

The combined spend for Dublin's Inner City Programmes (including the ABC funding) for the 12 months to June 2023 was €1.6m (same as 2021-22) with expenditure on the ABC Programmes amounting to €883k (down from €970k in 2021-22) and €732k (up from €661K in 2021-22) through the NEIC, HSE, corporate donations and grants.

|                                    | Income -<br>2022-23 | Expenditure<br>2022-23 | Surplus/Deficit  | Projected<br>Expenditure<br>2023-24 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                                    | €                   | €                      | €                | €                                   |
| Area Based Childhood (ABC)         | 796,100             | 882,683                | (86,583)         | 796,100                             |
| Corporate Donations, Grants & NEIC | 643,492             | 732,487                | (88,995)         | 703,900                             |
| <b>Total Dublin's Inner City</b>   | <b>1,439,592</b>    | <b>1,615,170</b>       | <b>(175,578)</b> | <b>1,500,000</b>                    |

| <b>Programmes</b>                        | <b>Actual Costs<br/>2022/23</b> | <b>Projected Costs<br/>2023/24</b> |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ABC 0-2 Home Visiting                    | 180,523                         | 180,000                            |
| ABC Community Families                   | 14,539                          | 10,000                             |
| ABC ParentChild+                         | 335,387                         | 300,000                            |
| ParentChild+                             | 135,685                         | 133,000                            |
| Stretch Graduate Home Visiting           | 111,491                         | 100,000                            |
| <b>Home Visiting Programmes</b>          | <b>777,625</b>                  | <b>723,000</b>                     |
| ABC 0-3 Parent Support Groups            | 77,684                          | 70,000                             |
| Parent Support Groups                    | 10,947                          | 10,000                             |
| Parenting 365                            | 78,938                          | 70,000                             |
| ABC Restorative Practice Parenting       | 67,579                          | 50,000                             |
| NEIC Parenting Coordinator               | 71,448                          | 80,000                             |
| <b>Parent Support Groups</b>             | <b>306,596</b>                  | <b>280,000</b>                     |
| ABC Early NumeracyYears                  | 54,583                          | 60,000                             |
| ABC Zoom Ahead with Books                | 41,697                          | 36,100                             |
| ABC Doodle Den Programme                 | 125,230                         | 100,000                            |
| NEIC Doodle Den                          | 53,895                          | 51,000                             |
| NEIC Childhood Restored                  | 11,844                          | -                                  |
| Stretch Challenges                       | 21,977                          | 21,900                             |
| Robotic Coding Clubs                     | 39,902                          | 54,000                             |
| Literacies Second Level                  | 24,055                          | 26,000                             |
| <b>Literacies &amp; STEM</b>             | <b>373,183</b>                  | <b>349,000</b>                     |
| NEIC Educational Guidance                | 97,667                          | 95,000                             |
| NEIC Brighter Futures                    | 60,099                          | 53,000                             |
| <b>Educational &amp; Career Guidance</b> | <b>157,766</b>                  | <b>148,000</b>                     |
| <b>Total Costs</b>                       | <b>1,615,170</b>                | <b>1,500,000</b>                   |

**Notes:**

- The costs above represent the direct costs incurred. They do not include services provided by NCI, such as accounting, payroll, HR, marketing. It is estimated that this would account for 20% additional cost or €323,034.
- Spending exceeding income in 2022-23 was due to restricted funding awarded in 2021-22 to cover programmes costs in 2022-23 along with the timing of some payments.
- The overspend is covered by restricted funding received in 2022-23, which was retained in reserve for contracted programme costs delivered in 2023-24.
- The ABC overspend, which is covered by philanthropic funding for Dublin's Inner City, reflects actual programme delivery costs rather than the Tusla grant. This will be adjusted in the 2023 Q2 financial reporting to Tusla.
- ABC funding from January to June 2024 is subject to its inclusion in the Government's 2024 Budget and the projected expenditure will be amended to reflect the 2024 ABC budget agreed with Tusla.
- Dublin's Inner City Projected Expenditure 2023-24 is based on NCI's Strategic Plan, costs in previous years, pledged funding, outstanding grant applications as well as proposed programme expansion for 2022-24. It will be amended in December 2024 to reflect funding received and additional pledges/grants.

**Governance**

The ABC steering group provides oversight and direction for ELI's Dublin Inner City Programmes (DIC), in particular the Area Based Childhood (ABC) grant. We thank steering group members listed below for their advice, guidance and support over the past year and look forward to working with them in 2022-23.

| ABC Steering Group as of June 2022 is set out below:   |  |
|--|--|
| Chairperson – Frank Ryan, Chairperson ELI Advisory Committee<br>Donnchadh Ó Madagáin, NCI Finance Director<br>Dan O'Connor, Chair of ELI's Development Committee<br>Niall Heneghan, Principal<br>John Peelo, Tusla Northside Representative<br>Dr Josephine Bleach, ELI Director | Lorraine Doherty, Tusla Southside Representative<br>Denise McDonald, Community Representative<br>Cathy Steenson, Early Years Representative<br>Denise Hevey, Early Years Representative<br>Alison McCormack, Community Representative<br>Dara Terry, Voluntary Sector Representative<br>Catriona Flood, ELI Assistant Director |

#### 4.4. Home Visiting and Parent Support

This section examines Dublin's Inner City Home Visiting and Parent Support Programmes, which aim to improve children's overall development and school readiness by supporting parents/guardians to provide a positive home environment through playful learning interactions. These programmes developed in collaboration with local parents and services are the ABC 0-2 Home Visiting Programme; ABC 0-3 Community Parent Support Groups; ParentChild+ (formerly Parent Child Home Programme); Home from Home Transition Programme and Restorative Parenting.

##### Objectives:

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

| Home Visiting Programmes                    | Children   | Parents    |
|---|------------|------------|
| ABC 0-2 Home Visiting Programme (0-2 years) | 130        | 195        |
| ABC ParentChild+ (18-36 months)             | 143        | 207        |
| Home From Home                              | 27         | 41         |
| Stretch Graduate Programme                  | 40         | 40         |
| <b>Total - Home Visiting</b>                | <b>340</b> | <b>483</b> |

| ABC Parent Support Programmes                    | Children   | Parents      |
|--|------------|--------------|
| ABC Parenting Group Support Sessions (0-3 years) | 544        | 544          |
| ABC 0-3 Summer Programme (0-3 years)             | 140        | 140          |
| Restorative Parenting (0-11 years)               | 0          | 98           |
| Parenting365                                     | 73         | 91           |
| NEIC Parenting Programme                         | 0          | 192          |
| <b>Total - Parent Support</b>                    | <b>757</b> | <b>1,065</b> |

#### 4.4.1. ABC 0-2 Home Visiting

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

The ABC 0-2 Home Visiting team are involved in the Sláintecare Community Mothers project, an Irish-developed home visiting programme which supports parents in caring for their babies and young children while also encouraging them to look after their own health and well-being. Further information on this project can be found in [Section 3.4.3.](#)

#### Programme Delivery

- 128 families took part over the year.
- 1,236 programme visits in 2022-23 supported parents' wellbeing and children's development:
- 1,083 in home visits, 90 outdoor visits, and 63 video calls.
- A Christmas event was held in NCI where activities were provided for children to explore in addition to a chance to meet Santa and get their photo taken, 80 children attended.
- 106 referrals were received. The team continued to work in partnership with the families' PHNs, and Family Support Practitioners to provide continuity of care and share the one key message of integrated support.
- The team focused on building relationships with Social Workers and Homeless Hubs to ensure that the most vulnerable families aren't overlooked.



*0-2 home visiting programme celebrating St. Patrick's day with songs, rhymes and activities.*

#### Child and Parent Observation Tool

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

length of programme varies across individual families participating in the 0-2 Programme, the number of observations reported on each year may change.

The below table presents the observations of the parents and children engaging in 2022-23 and the percentage of those scoring often or always at each of the observation stages. These illustrate promising developments in parents' knowledge and confidence as they progressed through the programme, increasing by 23% and 28% respectively. It is also reassuring to observe Home Visitors reporting an increase in social support and a decrease in isolation at observation five.

|  | Obs 1 (N=90) | Obs 2 (N=58) | Obs 3 (N=23) | Obs 4 (N=5) |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>Parent Observations by Home Visitor</b> |              |              |              |             |
| <b>Social support</b>                      | 24%          | 28%          | 43%          | 40%         |
| <b>Isolated</b>                            | 33%          | 36%          | 13%          | 0%          |
| <b>Health</b>                              | 41%          | 58%          | 57%          | 60%         |
| <b>Warmth</b>                              | 94%          | 98%          | 100%         | 100%        |
| <b>Responsiveness</b>                      | 83%          | 93%          | 91%          | 100%        |
| <b>Knowledge</b>                           | 37%          | 50%          | 65%          | 60%         |
| <b>Confidence</b>                          | 52%          | 62%          | 74%          | 80%         |
| <b>Child Observations by Home Visitor</b>  |              |              |              |             |
| <b>Responds to parent appropriately</b>    | 87%          | 97%          | 87%          | 100%        |
| <b>Developing as expected</b>              | 87%          | 86%          | 91%          | 100%        |
| <b>Healthy</b>                             | 96%          | 93%          | 87%          | 100%        |
| <b>Appropriate diet</b>                    | 86%          | 88%          | 87%          | 100%        |

### Participant Feedback

All parents (N=69) found the programme useful/beneficial and 99% (n=68) would recommend the programme to a friend. All parents reported learning new approaches and ideas from their Home Visitor and 99% (n=68) feel confident using these. In reporting specifically on what they learnt from engaging in the programme parents noted practical tips around playing and interacting with their baby including tummy time and sensory play, tips on supporting their child's development, and tips on caring for their baby including sleep and nutrition.

Comments from participants included:

*"XXX was an amazing home visitor. We really bonded with her, and our baby loved her. She gave us so much tips as we were new parents and always complimented us every time and in every way she can. I hope we can continue the relationship/ bond that we have formed with her and our family. Thank you, ELI. This is a great initiative. Keep it up!" [Parent]*

*"My daughter absolutely loves books and it's a huge thanks to this programme. I've seen how much she has come on in concentration and language." [Parent]*



#### 4.4.2. ABC 0-3 Community Parent Support Programme

The ABC 0-3 Parent Support Programme, now in its ninth 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. In 2022-23 all Groups returned to in-person delivery.

##### Programme Delivery

- Approximately 684 families engaged in groups in 2022-23.
  - Read, Rattle and Roll, Infant Massage courses, Baby and Toddler Group.
- 28 families engaged in the five Infant Massage courses. Each course ran for five consecutive weeks.
- 32 families engaged across three Read, Rattle and Roll courses. Each course ran for six consecutive weeks.
- Storytelling in Mandarin has been a success, and it now runs two days per week. 64 families engaged with their local libraries throughout the year.
- An Outdoor Folk Group was developed in collaboration with a programme parent and piloted across nine sessions with 43 families.
- Five one-off themed storytelling sessions were delivered with an average of 35 families per session marking different celebratory dates throughout the year such as World Down Syndrome Day and International Children's Day.
  - Families received a book on World Autism Awareness Day.
- Eight summer programme events with 140 families were delivered in person.



*Storytelling in Mandarin group at a local library*

##### Facilitator Observations

At the end of each session, group facilitators complete an observational tool to document the learning occurring across the various group sessions being delivered by ELI group facilitators. The more commonly supported area of development across the groups are children's social skills (97%) followed by communication skills and fine motor skills (94%) and speech and language skills and gross motors skills (90%).

### Participant Feedback

Evaluation feedback indicated a high level of satisfaction across all groups, as all participants (N=50) reported feeling glad that they attended, and reported feeling supported by the facilitator. All participants also reported very positive benefits to their own well-being and to their child's development and well-being. There was evidence of learning across the groups with majority of participants (92% n=46) reporting that they learned new approaches/ideas through participating in the group.

Comments from participants included:

*"Facilitators are great and interact so well with the children." [Parent who attended Storytelling group and Parent & Toddler Group]*

*"It is great for not only the babies to engage and interact with other babies but for the parents and coordinators of the group to share their own experiences of motherhood." [Parent attending Read, Rattle and Roll]*

*"I'm so grateful to have these classes, they helped me a lot, I not only do the exercises in the class now but also at home on the other days." [Parent attending Groups Fitness]*

### 4.4.3. Parenting 365 Programme

The Community Foundation Toy Show Appeal funded Parenting365 Programme supports parents and families of children with additional needs. Addressing the many challenges face by these children, it involves 6 weeks of developmentally targeted group play sessions in a safe and inclusive environment, in which parents' interaction and engagement with their children is supported by a trained play facilitator. Parents receive take-home resources to extend their children's learning and development. A weekly parent support group via Zoom enables them to meet with other parents of children with additional needs and have access to support from professionals such as occupational and play therapists. Research is a principal component of this programme and further details about the Parenting365 research project can be found in [Section 3.5.2.](#)

#### Programme delivery

- 64 families, with a total of 73 children engaged in a six week in person programme of parent and toddler play groups across three terms.
- 38 parents engaged in a six-week online parenting programme across three terms. The online programme also included three guest speakers (paediatric occupational therapist, ASIAM autism advocate, and trainer and music therapist).
- Engagement from fathers was high on this programme with 20 fathers participating.
- Four summer play events were held in NCI for the 2021-22 participating families, with an average of 11 families attending each session.
- A reunion event for Term 1 was held in NCI with seven families in attendance.



*Child expressing themselves through painting.*

### Participant feedback

Satisfaction rates are high with 95% of parents (n=20) reporting that the programme was beneficial to them and their child. On starting the programme parents set goals for themselves and their children. For their goals, parents identified areas such as gaining more understanding of their child's needs; receiving direction to help their child develop and become more independent; developing more coping tools; meeting other parents and sharing knowledge with one another. On completing the programme 23% of parents reported they had achieved the goal they had set for themselves and 45% were close to achieving their goal. In relation to goals for their child, the majority of parents reported wanting to see improvements in their child's communication and social development. On completing the programme 10% of parents reported their child had achieved the goal they had set for them and 39% were close to achieving it.

Comments from parents/guardians included:

*"For the first time I didn't feel alone and learnt a lot about different needs. It's been amazing talking to the staff and hearing their experiences." [Parent]*

*"The programme has helped me to understand my child's sensory needs and why she likes certain style of play. Helped in ways to play with her and more ideas." [Parent]*

*"Child has felt more comfortable with other kids. Each week he has progressed in group play. He has gained better skills to help cope due to my learning in group." [Parent]*

#### 4.4.4. ABC ParentChild+ Programme

Originally from the US, the ParentChild+ programme is an innovative, home-based literacy and parenting programme that strengthens families and prepares children to succeed academically. For over 14 years, we have been delivering ParentChild+ to vulnerable families with children aged 18 months - 3 years in Dublin's Inner City. Beginning with 15 families in 2007, the numbers have grown to 168 in 2021. The National ParentChild+ Training, Research and Support Centre, established in January 2020, supports implementation. More details on ParentChild+ National can be found in [Section 3.4.1.](#) of this report.

#### Programme Delivery

- 138 Families participated in ParentChild+ Dublin's Inner City and Dublin 8 this year, engaging in 3,915 in home visits, 169 video call visits, 6 phone call visits and 15 outdoor visits. The number of completed visits are lower than pre-pandemic years as there are a larger number of high need families on the programme.
  - 28 families completed the programme and graduated.
  - 25 families left the programme before completion.
  - 82% retention rate which was the same in 2021-22.
  - 75 male and 61 female children with the gender of two children not specified by the parents. 130 female adults and eight males participated in the programme.
  - 52% Irish, 14% Chinese, 9% Eastern European, 4% African, 10% Asian, 4% Western European, and 2% South American.
- 24 ParentChild+ home visitors, four Programme Coordinators delivered the programme to families in 2022-23.
- 124 referrals received from the ELI 0-2 Home Visiting Programme, Family Support Workers, Public Health Nurses, Local schools, Social Workers and other Non-profit organisations and charities.
- Nine ParentChild+ themed social media posts were posted on the ELI social media channels.

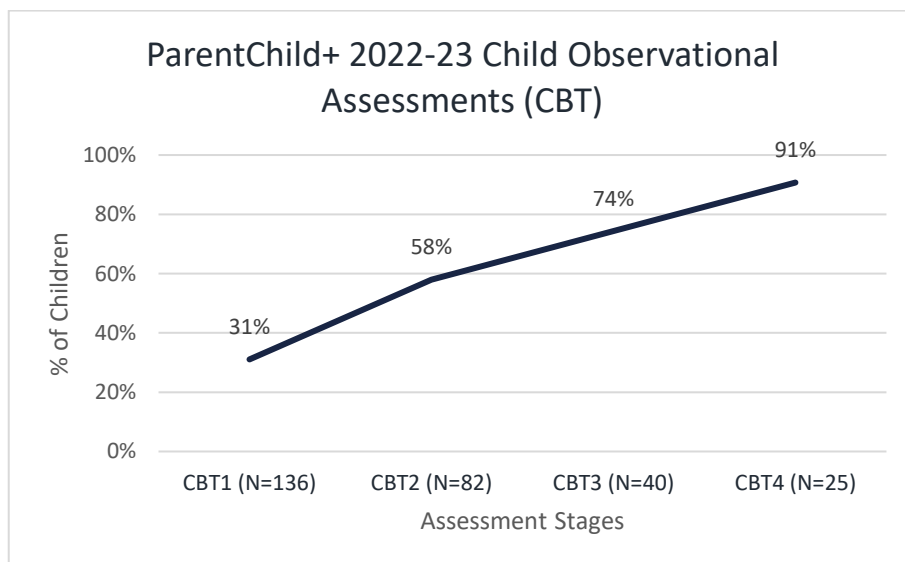


*ParentChild+ family at their Graduation Day*

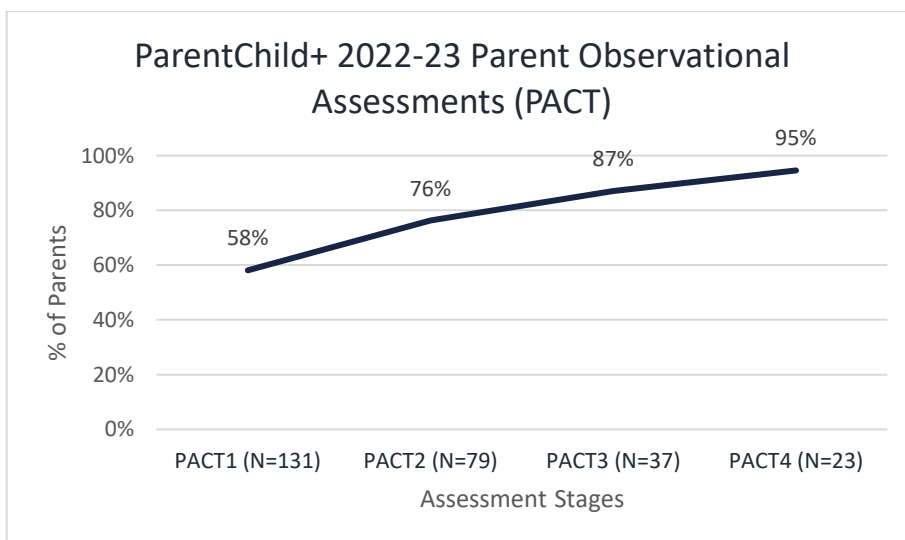
#### Programme Assessment- Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)

Throughout the programme Home Visitors complete two observational assessments (CBT and PACT). For more information on the assessments please see [Section 3.4.1.](#)

As can be seen in the figure on the next page, the percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones in Dublin's Inner City has gradually increased throughout the programme, from 31% at the beginning of the programme to 58%, 74% and, finally, 91% on completion of the programme. This 60% increase is higher than the improvement on that of the 2021-22 cohort (44%) and, also, the 2022-23 increase across all ParentChild+ sites nationally (47%, see [Section 3.4.1.](#)) Children engaging in the programme demonstrated developmental increases across the three CBT subscales (cognition, behaviour and language) at each stage of the programme.



Overall, there was a positive increase in the percentage of parents having high-quality interactions with their children from 58% at PACT 1 to 95% at PACT 4. Similar to the CBT assessment, a higher increase was seen this year to the 2021-22 cohort. This could be due to a return to normalcy post COVID-19, as the previous year consisted of transitioning from social distancing to in-person interactions. The percentage of parents having interactions of good quality with their children showed improvement in all four areas of assessment (parents' responsiveness to their child, parent's affection toward their child, parent's communication with their child and parent's consistency with their child).



### Parent & Child Engagement

Both children and parents showed positive engagement across their visits in 2022-23. The percentage of children Home Visitors reported as fully engaged for their visits was 73%, this is the same level of engagement as was seen in 2021-22. Twenty-five percent of children were reported as somewhat engaged with the visits and just 2% were not engaged. Eighty-four percent of the parents were reported as fully engaged in their visits in 2022-23, in comparison to 89% in 2021-22. Twenty percent of parents were somewhat engaged while just 1% were not engaged with the visits.

### Learning & Feedback

Satisfaction rates remained high with most parents reporting they found this programme to be useful (96%, n=81). Most parents reported feeling confident using the strategies learned for reading and playing with their child (99%, n=84). All parents reported learning new approaches and ideas from participating in the programme (N=84). Most parents reported their children benefited in the areas of attention span and social skills (86% n=63), as well as reported that their children improved in their oral and language skills (85% n=61). Furthermore, every parent would recommend the programme to another parent (N=84), and 99% of parents (n=83) felt supported by their home visitor.

Comments from parents included:

*"[Our home visitor] was a great help to both us and [my child] has come on amazing without even starting her [speech] therapy. Amazing support during pandemic dealing with [my child] being anxious and shy and refusing to talk. It really helped us both being more confident on video calls as [my child] was extremely shy due to lockdown and [our home visitor] really gave amazing advice and guided us through a very difficult time. She had great patience and understanding to help us both." [Parent]*

*"I learned new ways of communicating with my child when she is difficult to speak to. I have learned how to compromise more with my child. We got great support. Our home visitor went above and beyond in every way." [Parent]*

#### 4.4.5. 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 sixteen months onwards. In 2022-23, we were delighted to return to full in person delivery and resume our partnership with emergency accommodation services to support families in Dublin's Inner City and Dublin 8.

### Programme Delivery

- 27 families participated in the Home from Home Programme in 2022-23, 83% increase from 2021-22.
- Seven emergency accommodation services referred families from B&Bs, Homeless Family Hubs, Sonas Women's, and Children's Refuge. The team is working on building relationships with IPAS centers to support the families in the International Protection ('asylum') process.
- The team also put their efforts into recruiting families from the Roma community and onboarded a Romanian Home Visitor to support these families.

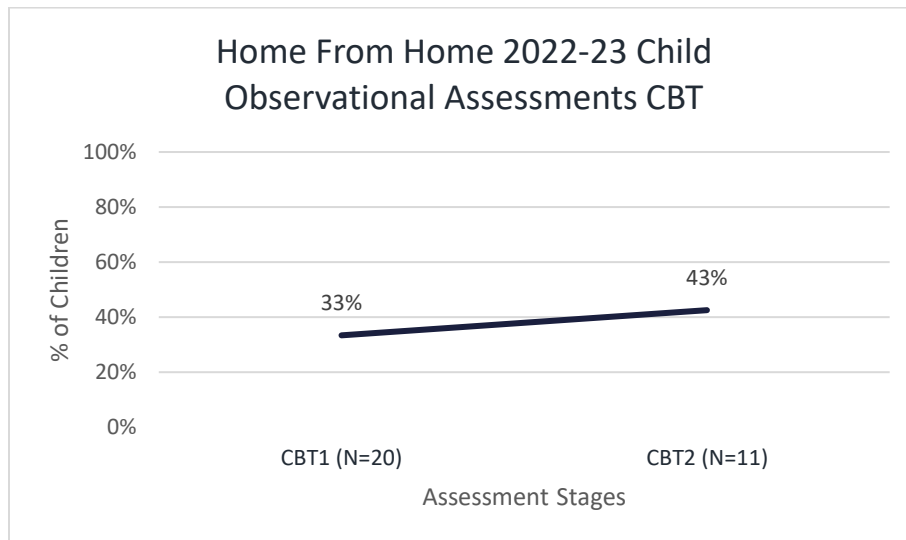


- 211 visits took place, including home visits (158), video call visits (49), phone calls (2) and outdoor visits (2).
- 10 Home Visitors delivered the programme to families in 2022-23.
- 12 interagency meetings took place this year.
- ELI was represented on the YPAR Children in the Homeless Sector.

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

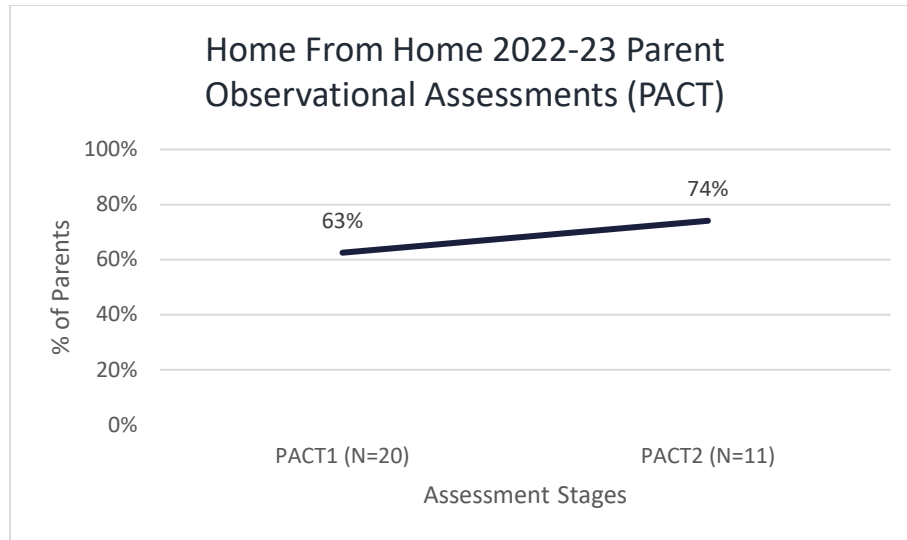
Throughout the programme Home Visitors complete two observational assessments (CBT and PACT). For more information on the assessments please see [Section 3.4.2](#).

As can be seen in the graph below 33% of the children in the 2022-23 Home from Home cohort were reaching their developmental milestones on entering the programme, and this increased by 10% at CBT two. Children engaging in the programme demonstrated developmental increases across the three CBT subscales (cognition, behaviour and language) at the first two stages of the programme.



The 2022-23 cohort of parents experienced a positive improvement in their interactions with their children from the first to the second assessment with an increase of increase of 11%. The percentage of parents having interactions of good quality with their children showed improvement in all four areas of assessment (parents' responsiveness to their child, parent's affection toward their child, parent's communication with their child and parent's consistency with their child) in the first two stages.





### Parent and Child Engagement

Parents were fully engaged for 78% of the visits, and children were fully engaged for 54% of the visits. Both levels of engagement were less than that of the ParentChild+ cohort (84% and 73% respectively), however, the percentage of parents and children fully engaging with the visits have both increased from 2021-22 (63% and 52% respectively).

### Participant Feedback

Eight of the parents provided feedback through exit evaluations and end of year evaluations. All parents indicated that they learned new approaches and ideas while participating and improved their interactions with their child. All parents also reported that their child has improved their social skills and their attention span, and most reported that their child has improved in the areas of literacy skills (N=6) and numeracy skills (N=5).

Comments from parents included:

*"Knowing that [Home Visitor] was there to support without any kind of judgement was great, I never felt embarrassed to ask a question. I also felt that having the video calls every week had a bit of structure in the week." [Parent]*

*"Our main aim for enrolling our daughter in this program was mainly to get her contact with someone who was English speaking native. As Spanish speakers at home and after the pandemic we needed our daughter to interact with someone else and in English so she could start crèche with some knowledge of the language and also to interact with people outside our small family" [Parent]*

#### 4.4.6. ABC Restorative Parenting Programme

The ABC 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

- 25 parents engaged in three Restorative Parenting courses, delivered in person at a local primary school and a family resource center.
- 30 parents engaged across five workshops focused on supporting challenging behaviour, setting boundaries to support relationships, and self-care in parenting.
- Chill, Play and Learn workshops were piloted in NCI with 27 parents and their children across five sessions. The aim of the workshop is to explore self-regulation strategies and engage in sensory activities.
- 10 parents engaged in 22 one to one parent support sessions.
- 12 social media posts to support parents were developed and shared.
- Restorative Parenting coordinator facilitated a webinar for parents of children with additional who are preparing for transition to primary school.
- Trauma-Sensitive Sensory Sessions were piloted with 19 children aged between 4-5 and three teachers from a local primary school.
  - Three groups took part in a 6-week programme over the year, which aimed to offer children a safe space to explore, express and regulate themselves through art and sensory-based activities.
  - Teachers received information and resources which support being trauma-informed/sensitive.



*Child painting in their Trauma Sensitive Sensory Session*

##### Participant Feedback

Parents (92%, n=23) found the Restorative Parenting Programme helpful for them, and to be a valuable learning opportunity for their children. On completing the programme 93% (n=25) of parents agreed that they are confident in using the approaches they have learned. Parents who attended the additional support webinar reported that it was helpful for them (100%, N=5). Along with this 80% of parents agreed that it helped them in feeling more confident supporting their child's transition into primary school (n=3).

Comments from participants included:

*“Understanding that we are not alone facing challenges. Developing personal coping methods and just being able to vent a bit.” [Parent from the RP Parenting course]*

*“I am better able to respond kindly to challenging behaviours. Breathing practice and meditating more has brought clarity.” [Parent from the RP Parenting course]*

*“Children who attended the sessions appear more able to regulate their emotions. They seem more happier in themselves and more confident expressing their needs.” [Teacher from the Pilot Trauma-Sensitive Play Sessions]*

#### 4.4.7. Stretch Graduate Programme

In recognising the challenging situation many parents were facing during COVID-19, ELI reached out to previous graduates of the ParentChild+ programme - checking in to see how they and their family were doing in addition to offering them some support through ELI. This support continued throughout 2020-21 with the aim to ensure that parents whose children we have supported through their early year's education will have the confidence, understanding, skills, and knowledge to continue to support their children's educations in this new everchanging situation in which home learning is more critical than ever.

This initiative was developed into the Stretch Graduate Programme, which now focuses on supporting families with children aged between four and six years old that have graduated PC+, Parenting365 or whom have been referred from schools and services from the Dublin inner city. Its aim is to improve children's holistic development by empowering their parents with confidence, skills and knowledge that can support their children's education and wellbeing. The educational resources are diverse, inclusive and carefully sourced according to Aistear (The National Curriculum Framework in Ireland for early education).

#### Programme Delivery

- 74 families and 10 Home Visitors engaged in the Stretch Graduate Home Visiting Programme.
  - Of these families, 40 engaged with home visits and 34 received termly check-in calls.
  - 315 visits were conducted through in-person (n=217), phone calls (n=78) and video calls (n=20).
  - Five referrals were made to other ELI programmes.
  - 167 activity packs were provided to families.
- 22 families attended a STEM & Sensory Play event in NCI, funded by the ESB Energy for Generations Fund.



*Parent and child bonding over the Early Literacy Activity*

### Home Visitor Reflection

Based on the Home Visitors' reflections on their visits, it was observed that parents and children were doing well on majority of their visits, 61% and 82% respectively. Notably, there was a 21% increase in the visits where children were doing well in comparison to 2021-22, 61%. However, the percentage of visits where parents were observed to be doing well remained consistent. Parents were doing moderately well on 17% of the visits and children were doing moderately well on 4% of the visits. Home Visitors reported parents not doing well on 21% of the visits and children on 11% of the visits. Families were referred to other ELI programmes after completing their 44 visits. The programme that received the most referrals was Parenting 365, with 17 referrals. Other referrals included Zoom Ahead with Books, Parenting Support workshops and STEM Play and Learn.

### Participant Feedback

Satisfaction rates were high with all parents reporting that they found this programme to be useful (N=40) and most found the resources useful (98%, n=39). All respondents reported that they felt supported by their Home Visitor and would recommend the programme to a friend. Parents reported the programme benefiting their child in areas such as speech, language, literacy and social skills. Furthermore, all parents reported learning new approaches and ideas in which they could improve their interactions with their child.

Comments from participants included:

*"We loved the programme, we loved all the items that Home Visitor had brought to us, we are going to take them back home and use them as my daughter loved them. Thank you for everything, I wish your programme all the best. Will miss you all." [Parent]*

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

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

#### 4.4.8. NEIC Parenting Programme

The NEIC Parenting Programme aims to identify and enhance the coordination of parenting programmes and referral pathways across all age groups in the NEIC. This is done in collaboration with the NEIC Parenting Strategy Steering Group, Parent Support Champions, parents and providers of parenting programmes. In 2022-23 a Parenting Forum was established to involve parents in the design, delivery and evaluation of parenting supports and programmes.

In 2023-24, we will be commencing the implementation of the HSE Healthy Communities Parenting Courses in the NEIC. Our NEIC Parenting Support Programme Coordinator will deliver the Triple P Parenting Programme courses and workshops.

##### Programme Delivery:

- 33 NEIC Parenting courses were held with 192 parents in attendance.
- 72 parents engaged across 24 tabletop discussions individual/small groups initial meetings and relationship building to establish the parenting forum.
- 172 parents were referred to a service, course or to other support services.
- 3 meetings took place for the Parenting Forum, with an average of 5 parents in attendance.
- 68 professionals from 62 organisations were engaged in the Parent Strategy Meetings to explore how can we use existing resources effectively to support parents.
  - Needs assessment questionnaire.
  - Skills audit.
  - Listening to issues arising – difficulty engaging parents, culture around parenting supports, perception can be seen as parents are failing. Need to change perceptions and rebrand parenting support.
- A second iteration of the Parents Needs Assessment Questionnaire was distributed to parents in the community. Data collection is ongoing, and the findings will be included in next year's report.
- Programme Coordinator collaborated with ELI Groups Coordinator to support a local service set up their own parent support group and play group for children aged 3-6 years.
- Programme Coordinator has attended ongoing training on delivery of Triple P Programme courses and workshops.

Comment from parents included:

*"I am a little stressed dealing with my son's condition. Processing information & strategies & managing therapies. I feel out of my depth."*

*"We all attend our parents' group. We meet once a week, we learned to be proud rather than feeling ashamed. "*

*"[Table Top Discussions] provides places where we can learn skills & access information."*

## 4.5. Literacies & STEM

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

### Objectives

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

| Literacies & STEM Programmes          | Children     | Parents      |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Early Numeracy Project (0-8 years)    | 1,215        | 1,823        |
| Zoom Ahead with Books (4-6 yrs)       | 1,023        | 1,535        |
| Virtual Book Club                     | 61           | 92           |
| Doodle Den (Senior Infants)           | 100          | 150          |
| STEM Play & Learn                     | 24           | 36           |
| NCI Challenges                        | 677          | 1,016        |
| Family STEM Learning Events (6-9 yrs) | 78           | 70           |
| e-Learning Programme                  | 0            | 0            |
| Robotic Coding Club (afterschools)    | 112          | 23           |
| Tuition Support (15-18 years)         | 49           | 0            |
| Language Cafe Events                  | 78           | 0            |
| English Speaking Sessions             | 51           | 0            |
| <b>Totals</b>                         | <b>3,468</b> | <b>4,745</b> |

### 4.5.1. ABC 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 29 organisations and 1,215 children in 2022-2023. The programme revolves around the three community Early Numeracy Weeks. This year's themes were Symbols of the environment (Term 1), Numbers (Term 2) and Money (Term 3). Working group meetings and onsite mentoring support practitioners to reflect on and improve the quality of the programme and their practice using the Aistear Sólta Practice Guide as a resource.

### Programme Delivery

- 1,215 children and 1,822 parents engaged overall.
- 14 early years services, seven schools, three afterschool's, five libraries and engaged and received numeracy cards and activity packs to be used at home and in the school/service.
- Three Working Group meetings were held in-person in NCI with an average of five practitioners attending each meeting.



*Extending children's learning*

### Participant feedback

On completion of each numeracy week, both staff and parents provided feedback through an online or paper evaluation. Across the three terms 288 parents and 132 staff members completed evaluations. This year we experienced a substantial increase in feedback compared to 2021-22, with an additional 153 parent evaluations and 53 staff evaluations received.

Parents' reports of satisfaction were positive with 94% (n=272) stating that they would recommend their experience to a friend and 93% reporting that both them and their child enjoyed the activities completed in the programme (n=267). The numeracy cards given to parents were utilized by most (82%, n=237). These cards were seen by parents to be attributed largely to their child's learning, with 96% believing that they helped their child understand (n=270) and learn (n=272) about the numeracy theme. Along with this, 93% of parents agree that their child improved their numeracy skills during the programme (n=269). Most parents also agreed that the most enjoyable part for them was being able to talk and play with their child more than usual (92%, n=266).

These takeaways of the child's experience were mirrored in the staff evaluations, staff felt that the programme was both an enjoyable experience (95%, n=125) and a valuable learning opportunity (98%, n=130) for the children and parents involved. Furthermore, staff reported that the most important aspects of the programme for children's learning were the stories, songs and rhymes (82%, n=108) and the numeracy activity cards (64%, n=84).



Comments from participants included:

*“Every activity helps, my daughter was really happy with the activities, she felt independency and responsibility.” [Parent]*

*“The activities done in the school and the activity cards both worked well in developing numeracy skills in my child.” [Parent]*

*“The children love the songs, and they learn so much through them”. [Staff]*

*“We sourced some of our own local signs and it gave a more community-based learning”. [Staff]*

#### 4.5.2. ABC Zoom Ahead with Books

The ABC 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 first classes.

##### Programme Delivery

- 1,023 children and their families in 13 primary schools and one preschool participated in the programme.
  - 9,060 books were read over the three weeks, i.e. each child, on average reading nine books.
  - Translations were available in four languages – Ukrainian, Mandarin, Polish, and Romanian.
  - All children received a pack including resources to support reading, weekly handouts, colouring pencils and copybook to include drawings.
  - Schools were encouraged to take library visits, where families were given the opportunity to apply for a library card.
  - Exhibition events took place in the schools/local libraries and children received a framed picture of their artwork to bring home.
- 61 families participated in a Virtual Book Club which was developed in 2020-21 to reach and support families during the COVID -19 restrictions and school closures, using ELI social media.
  - 194 books and activity packs were posted directly to family homes.
- Seven corporate volunteers created story-time videos to complement the books and packs.
  - Families were invited to attend an exhibition event NCI, where children's artwork was displayed digitally across the room, 22 families were in attendance and children received a programme certificate and a book.



*Brother and sister pointing out their artwork at the exhibition*

### Participant Feedback

In total, 153 book buddy and 43 teacher evaluation forms were returned. This is a positive increase in returns compared to the total 11 and 5 collected in 2021-22 respectively.

Feedback among both programmes was positive with 90% (n=139) of parents agreeing that it was an enjoyable experience for both them and their children. 90% (n=39) of teachers also agreed that the programme was an enjoyable experience for the children involved. As well as this, 80% of teachers agreed that the programme increased the children's enthusiasm for reading (n=34). Majority of parents (90%, n=120) and teachers (86%, n=37) found the programme to be a valuable learning opportunity for the children involved. 60% (n=81) of parents found that their child's reading and language skills improved during the programme. In addition, parents reported that after taking part in the programme they are more aware of how they can support their child's learning (58%, n=78).

All parents that attended the Virtual Book Club exhibition reported that it was both a valuable learning opportunity and an enjoyable experience for their children.

Comments from participants included:

*"Seeing how excited it made the children when they received their post and when they saw the book it was something we could do as a family and then they would try reading it in their own words to each other and me. Also, the youngest loved doing the activities sheet she called it her homework."*  
[Parent]

*"The increased parental involvement was so enjoyable for the children. Also, it prepared them a bit for starting primary school when they would be doing homework together."* [Teacher]

*"I really liked been able to do it with my mam and dad that was fun when we drew together."*  
[Child]

### 4.5.3. 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

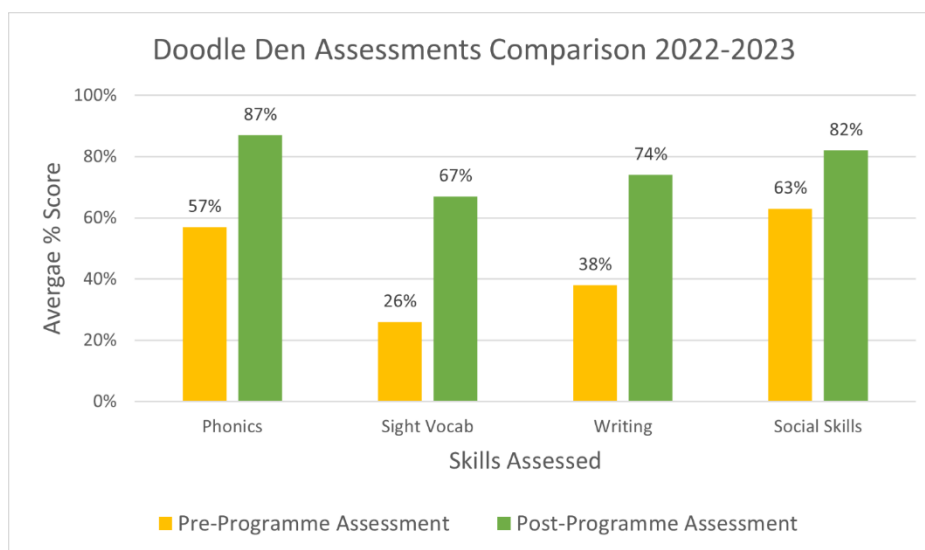
- 100 children enrolled in the programme across the four ABC (N=56) and three NEIC sites (N=44).
- Four schools (n=50) entered data on the literacy need of the children attending Doodle Den.
  - 42% of children had a high level of literacy need, 30% medium and 28% a low level.
- All seven schools reported on the numbers of children with a Special Education Need (SEN) and English as an Additional Language.
  - The percentage of children with SEN increased from 2021-22 (3%) to 17%.
  - 40% reported having EAL. A decrease from 46% in 2021-22.
- Seven parent events were held in Charleville Mall Library and Central Library (Ilac).
- Four sites visited the MUD Island Community Garden and one site held a separate outing event with the organisation- Fighting Words.
- 63 children attended June Graduation in NCI.



*Children in Doodle Den celebrating at their end of year Graduation event.*

#### Participant Learning

Assessments were completed with the children at the beginning of the Doodle Den programme and again as they were completing the programme in June 2023. These assessments examined the child's phonic skills, writing skills, sight vocabulary, and social skills. This year all data on children's skills were complete, in comparison to last year when one school did not complete assessments on children's social skills as it was their first year running Doodle Den and the service ran into some logistical challenges. As can be seen in the graph below, the average scores across all assessment areas increased. The greatest increase can be seen in children's sight vocabulary scores which increased by 41%, followed by scores in writing (36% increase), phonics (30% increase) and finally, a 19% increase in social skills.



The pre-programme assessment averages for phonic skills and writing skills were significantly lower than last year, with pre-programme assessments for phonics skills in 2021-2022 averaging 73% compared to 57% in 2022-2023 and writing skills averaging 50% in 2021-2022 and 38% in 2022-2023. However, as the graph shows both post-programme assessments for these skills increased significantly this year, with an average increase of 30% in phonics skills and 36% in writing skills.

### Participant Feedback

Satisfaction rates from the programme were high with all parents (N=27) and all children (N=21) reporting that it was an enjoyable experience for the children. All parents also reported the programme helped their child, particularly with their child's reading ability (89%, n=24), writing (81%, n=22), listening (78%, n=21) and making friends (67%, n=18).

All staff reported the programme benefitted the children's listening, reading, writing, making new friends, behaviour, and using the library. 75% (n=3) of staff also noted increased parental involvement. 79% of children stated that Doodle Den has helped with their reading *a lot*, 5% (n=1) did not know if it helped and the remainder did not respond to this question. 63% (n=12) reported it has helped with their writing, 10% (n=2) did not know, 5% (n=1) reported it did not help and the remainder did not respond to this question.

Comments from participants included:

*"My child's ability to socialise with other children is much better." [Parent]*

*"The learning, activities + Friendships [and] the doodle den teachers involved were brilliant." [Parent]*

*"School staff & principal were so welcoming & grateful & acknowledging our good work. Loved working with the children. Found home visitor very professional & dedicated & huge support once she joined." [Facilitator]*

#### 4.5.4. 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, numbers, problem-solving), Rummikub (numbers, pattern, sorting) and the Table Quiz (general knowledge, literacy).

#### Programme Delivery

- NCI Challenges consisted of three events: Table Quiz, Rummikub and Monopoly, with a total of 677 children involved across 11 local primary schools.
  - For the Table Quiz event children were divided into quiz teams of six children each.
  - Children were entered as individuals for Rummikub and Monopoly. Four to five children played on each board and a parent/volunteer acted as the referee/banker.
- Three corporate volunteers from Central Bank and KPMG attended class practices for the Rummikub and Monopoly competition in some schools.



*Children playing a game of Monopoly*

#### Programme Feedback

Feedback was very positive, with 97% (n=151) of children reported enjoying taking part in the challenges and 94% (n=31) of parents agreeing that it was an enjoyable experience for their children. All parents and 94% (n=26) of staff reported that the challenges were a valuable learning opportunity for the children involved.

Comments from participants included:

*"The whole event was brilliantly organised for both parents and the children. Staff made everyone very welcome. Interaction by staff with children was excellent."* [Parent]

*"It was a great learning experience for the children. It's great to see them playing board games. The event was fun and great for them to go to the NCI."* [Teacher]

*"I like how it's a game and maths at the same time."* [Child]



#### 4.5.5. STEM Family Learning

COVID-19 and closure of schools and services highlighted the need for more direct parental engagement and home-based programmes to support children's learning. A variety of home-based learning activities were trialed in 2020-21 as part of the development of the STEM Family Learning Programme.

In 2021-22, a summer home visiting programme and a series of STEM events were developed to ensure that the parents whose children we have supported through their early year's education will have the confidence, understanding, skills and knowledge to continue to support their children's education. These programmes continued in 2022-23, offering families a range of diverse STEM learning activities.

#### Programme Delivery

- 24 families participated in STEM Play & Learn; a six-week summer Home Visiting Programme, engaging in 111 in-house visits.
- Eight families participated in a four-week STEM Lego Programme in their local primary school.
- Three in-person STEM events were held separately in 2022-23:
  - One event was held on engineering week in NCI with 18 families.
  - Two events were held at Doodle Den graduations in NCI with 30 families and two volunteers from KPMG in attendance at each event.



*Students participating at a STEM event in NCI*

#### Participant Learning and Feedback

Parents reported an improvement in their child's fine motor skills (93%, n=14), social and emotional skills (93%, n=13), numeracy skills (87%, n=12), language skills (75%, n=12), and focus and concentration (80%, n=12). Parents reported a positive impact on the frequency of home learning activities. These were reading to the child (64%, n=9), solving a puzzle (53%, n=8), and painting or drawing (53%, n=8).

93% of parents reported confidence in their ability to support their child's learning in STEM post-programme (n=13). Feedback was very positive with 87% of parents (n=13) and 93% Children (n=14) reporting that they enjoyed the programme. 100% (N=14) of the parents would recommend it to a friend. All children 100% (N=14) indicated that they liked taking part in the programme. 93% of parents (n=13) reported on their child's learning throughout the programme and are confident in helping the children to learn STEM at home.

#### 4.5.6. Robotic Coding Club

The Robotic Coding Club is a collaboration with NCI's School of Computing. Participants learn about robotics, programming and electronics with an mbot, which is a robot that offers opportunity to begin exploring their engineering skills by building them and provides infinite possibilities for students to learn STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).

##### Programme Delivery

- 112 children and their parents participated in the Robotic Coding Club across seven groups in total.
- One group ran over the summer and sessions were held in NCI, the other six groups ran across three schools and 2 afterschool services throughout the rest of the year.
  - Three KPMG volunteers supported the afterschool groups and two attended their final event.
  - One after-school group was unable to complete the full programme due to lack of availability from the service.
  - Two of the schools held their own Coding Challenges on site with 34 children and 10 parents in attendance.
  - A Coding Challenge event was held in June in NCI with 18 children, five afterschool staff and goodie bags donated by a funder- RBC.



*Robotic Coding Club participants with Completion Certificates*

##### Participant Learning and Feedback

Students completed pre- and post-programmes evaluations to determine the impact the programme had on their attitudes and learning disposition towards STEM, in addition to their aspiration to work towards post-secondary education. Aspirations to attend third level education were high, with 86% (n=56) of students reporting post-programme that they would like to progress to third level education. The students also reported a growing level of confidence in their skills throughout the programme, with confidence in computer skills growing by 78% (n=52) across the programme and confidence in coding skills by 81% (n=50). Students also completed pre- and post-lesson assessments to explore the development of their understanding, knowledge and skills. Across the eight weeks of Robotic Coding Club an average of 77% (n=51) of students acknowledged an improvement in their understanding of the learning outcomes after each session. Furthermore, 90% (n=64) of students enjoyed attending coding club and 59% (n=43) expressed their interest in participating in coding club again.

All parents would recommend the programme to other parents and believe that STEM skills are important for their child's future education and career (N=33). Most parents, 90% (n=30) reported an increased desire to help their child to learn about STEM and reported their child's skills in STEM improved on the programme.



Comments from participants included:

*"My child has enjoyed this club so much. He would love to keep it up. We would love to be involved in future clubs. It's been by far the most enjoyable activity he's done this summer. Thank you so much to all involved." [Parent]*

*"My child said that it was fun and loved to learn something new, she mentioned how nice the tutors were." [Parent]*

*"It was really interesting and educational for my kid. I didn't even know if she would be interested or have these skills...thanks to coding club I found out." [Parent]*

*"Everything was good and all the staff were helpful." [Child]*

#### 4.5.7. Language & Tuition Support

ELI's Language and Tuition Support programmes aim to provide second level students with extra opportunities for learning in a safe and positive environment. In 2021-22, ELI developed the Talking Heads programme to support secondary level students with English as an Additional Language. These English-Speaking Sessions continued in 2022-23 with a local secondary school.

##### Programme Delivery

- 178 young people participated in language and tuition support sessions, delivered both virtually and face-to-face.
- 49 students enrolled in tuition support for Maths and Irish across nine groups. 34 students engaged in Maths Leaving Certificate tuition across five groups (three Ordinary Level and two Higher Level). Students had the option to sign up for an online or in-person group, both ran for 27 weeks in total with an average of four students attending a group each week.
- 16 students engaged in Maths Junior Certificate tuition across two groups (one Ordinary Level and one Higher Level). Students also had the option to sign up for an online or in-person group, both ran for 27 weeks in total with an average of eight students attending a group each week.
- 12 students enrolled in Leaving Certificate Irish Tuition Support, which catered to Ordinary Level and Higher Level students. Two groups started in March and ran for six weeks. Ordinary Level was facilitated in-person with one hour long weekly oral sessions with eight students. Higher Level was facilitated online through Zoom with 30-minute oral sessions with four students at a time.
- Irish Tuition Support for Junior Certificate students did not run this year.
- Three online Language Cafés were held in NCI with a total of 85 students in attendance, 45 in Spanish, 35 in French and five in Irish.
- 51 students enrolled in Talking Heads and engaged in weekly English-Speaking sessions, running over 14 weeks with an average of 21 students attending each week.
- 14 volunteers from our Corporate Volunteering programme supported the Language Café events and the Talking Heads sessions.



*Students receiving a certificate of completion for the Talking Heads programme*

### Participant feedback

The feedback across the support sessions (N=85) was positive, 85% (n=71) of students reported that they would like to take part in more sessions. Also, 65% (n=55) of students report they are more interested in their targeted language. Similarly, volunteers reported high levels of satisfaction. All volunteers reported that they were happy they volunteered and that they would volunteer again (N=11). In addition to enjoyment, the support programmes provided a valuable learning opportunity with 64% of children reporting that they are more confident in their targeted subject after completing the programme (n=57). As well as this, 79% of Talking Heads and language Café students agree that speaking with a volunteer helped them improve their targeted language (n=65).

Comments from participants included:

*"Forcing me out of my comfort zone heled with my formation of sentences and give me a good idea of how my oral will go."*

*"I found the content helpful in improving my Spanish skills and it increased my confidence."  
[Student from Spanish Language Café]*

*"I think is good for me and its helped me a lot and teach how to speak in english with other people." [Student from Talking Heads]*

## 4.6. Educational Guidance

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

### Objectives:

- Raise children's and young people's educational and career expectations.
- Support young people and their parents to successfully navigate the education system and access interesting career opportunities.
- Widen participation in higher education within Dublin's Inner City.

| <b>Educational and Career Guidance</b>         | <b>Young People</b> | <b>Parents</b> |
|--|---------------------|----------------|
| Educational Guidance (5th/6th class)           | 236                 | 0              |
| Educational Guidance Exhibition (secondary)    | 87                  | 5              |
| A Day in the Life Events                       | 107                 | 0              |
| Discover University (14-17 years)              | 38                  | 17             |
| Restorative Practice Children and Young People | 144                 | 0              |
| <b>Totals</b>                                  | <b>612</b>          | <b>22</b>      |

### 4.6.1. Educational Guidance Programme

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

#### Programme Delivery

- 322 students from nine schools engaged in across both Primary and Secondary level programmes.
- 132 students from five primary schools attended an in-person tour of Dublin Port.
- All schools were invited to attend a virtual workplace tour of the Dublin Fire Brigade. A video recording of the tour was shared with teachers to show in class for those that couldn't attend the live tour.
- 5 parents attended an online information seminar about third level options.
- 43 career projects were submitted by 121 students.
- Four judging sessions were held in-person in NCI with 20 volunteer judges from Citco, Glenveagh, Central Bank, Deloitte, and Maples giving project feedback and announcing the winning project at each session.



*Students showcasing their Educational Guidance project*

### Participant feedback

This year's participating students' responses to a post-programme survey (N=155) indicated that the key learning outcomes of this programme were achieved. The majority of students reported their knowledge of the wide variety of career paths and jobs improved upon the completion of the programme (72%, n=111). Along with this, the majority of students learned about the level of education that is needed to achieve their educational and career goals (75%, n=116). Additionally, 66% (n=103) of students reported that they hoped to continue into third level education. This learning was also reflected in the teacher post-programme evaluation (N=11), reporting students increased students' aspirations for the future (91%, n=10) after completing the programme. As well as this, teachers also agreed that the students were more aware of how their educational choices impact their future (82%, n=8). All corporate volunteers (N=14) reported being happy that they volunteered, would volunteer again, and would recommend the experience to a colleague.

Comments from participants included:

*"The programme had a wonderful social element to it, the students got to know each other better." [Staff member]*

*Student quote learned all the different skills you need are really cool." [Student]*

*"Good to get to meet all the students-it was a nice, relaxed atmosphere so the students felt at ease." [Volunteer]*

*"The level of involvement of engagement with the kids. The kids take the lead talking about what they are interested in." [Volunteer]*

### 4.6.2. A Day in the Life

*A Day in the Life* is a careers event for secondary school students to have the opportunity to meet and chat with corporate volunteers and people from diverse careers. Through the event, students get the opportunity to meet and chat with different professionals over the course of an hour, all from different educational and career backgrounds and working in different job sectors.

### Programme delivery

- *A Day in the Life* events were held in November 2022 over three sessions.
- 76 secondary school students attended the events from two local schools.
- 17 Corporate Volunteers from Citco, Glenveagh, Central Bank, Deloitte, Google, McCann Fitzgerald, McGarrell Reilly and Northern Trust as well as four volunteers working across other community organisations with ELI, HSE, Belvedere Youth Club, and the Garda Síochána all participated in the event.
- The events were held in NCI and students were assigned to chat to a different corporate volunteer for 10-12 minutes about their job, what a day in the life looks like for them and their education and career journey.
- An additional *A Day in the Life* event was held in June 2023 as part of Discover University with 59 students participating.



*Students participating in A Day in the Life event in NCI*

### Participant Feedback

Students were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the event through a post-programme evaluation, 59 students took part. This is a significant increase in comparison to the data collected in 2021-22, 16 in total.

Students' responses to a post-programme survey (N=56) convey that the programme provided an enjoyable learning experience. Most students (69%, n=41) reported knowing more about different careers than after the event and (59%, n=35) also described feeling more confident when talking to someone about their career in the future. A further 43% (n=25) of students have a better idea of what career they would like to pursue in the future. These positive responses to learning objectives were also mirrored in responses to the teacher post-programme survey (N=3). Each teacher reported that the students both had the opportunity to meaningfully engage with professionals and that after the event students are more knowledgeable about their career options. All volunteers (N=13) reported that they would volunteer again and would recommend their experience to a colleague.

Comments from participants included:

*"I learned a lot about how people go through life, get jobs and even swap careers. I also found out the intricacies of different jobs and found it really interesting."* [Student]

*"The set up and variety of jobs on display was really useful for the students to get them thinking about careers they are interested in."* [Staff]

*"Having clear set questions gave students the confidence to ask and engage. Small groups also allowed for every student to pitch in."* [Volunteer]



#### 4.6.3. NEIC Brighter Futures Restorative Practices

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. ELI delivers Opening the Door and Relationship Keepers Programmes along with other restorative-focussed activities to 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

- 144 young people (aged 9-20 years) participated in restorative-focused activities facilitated in-person, through primary and secondary schools, youth services, corporate organisations and National College of Ireland.
- 66 young people from Larkin Community School and O'Connell Secondary School trained as 'relationship keepers' to create a sense of connection and belonging within their school community.
  - Two groups from Larkin (Group 1 TY and Group 2 were fifth and sixth years). Group 1 trained in Summer 2022 and Group 2 continued their training in Fall 2022 and received refresher training.
  - Two groups from O'Connell's (1st years) -piloted the 'Relate' programme- Restorative Education Leading Adolescents Towards Empathy.
- 36 young people participating in Discover University (DU) engaged in Restorative Practice training at the beginning to prepare them for their DU experience, to support them in building relationships and on their overall experience.
- 12 young people began their Opening the Door between Corporates and Community initiative alongside three youth leaders. This programme did not fully get off the ground this year and is a priority for 2023-24.
- Eight young people received Mentoring and Support Interactions.
- 22 young people and four teachers from two local secondary schools engaged in Student Listening Circles, to discuss their experiences as students in the NEIC and topics related to drug intimidation, inclusion, belonging, LGBTQI+, race, and polarization.



*Listening Circle with Students and Local Community Professionals*

### Participant Feedback

Of those participating in Relationship Keepers training, 100% (N=13) agreed or strongly agreed that the training was useful and that the skills learned will support them as a Relationship Keeper, and following training 100% (N=12) felt confident leading in restorative circles. All participants felt they were able to participate in discussions and felt listened to. Following their training majority of participants reported feeling confident being a Relationship Keeper (85%, n=11).

Comments included:

*"The workshop taught me how to communicate better and see things from a different point of view." [Student]*

*"The most useful things about this workshop are getting to build trust and better communication with people." [Student]*

### 4.6.4. Discover University

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

#### Programme Delivery

- Nine NCI students and five NCI staff were recruited as team leaders and project leaders to mentor and guide young people through the programme.
- 41 volunteers from nine local corporate organisations supported ADITL shared career and education experiences, participated as dragons for Dragons Den giving feedback on projects and judged the final projects.
- Students on the programme participated in talks with NCI Library and Clubs and Socs, events such as A Day in the Life and Restorative practice workshops, drama workshop, attended tours of Hub Spot, a careers workshop with L.I.F.E powered by Bohemian FC and had a sports day in Trinity College Dublin funded by Dublin City Council.
- 36 students attended a graduation ceremony and presented their projects. This event also featured an award ceremony where students received a certificate for their participation. 17 parents attended along with other family members.
- Lord Mayor Daithí de Róiste attended the graduation ceremony as a guest speaker.



*Lord Mayor at Discover University ELI NCI*



### Participant Feedback

A student post-programme survey (N=24) indicates that most students found the programme to be an enjoyable experience (96%, n=23) and would recommend it to a friend (88%, n=21). This is consistent with the feedback received from parents (N=17), who unanimously agreed that the programme was an enjoyable experience for their child. Students also reported that they now have a better understanding of third level education (79%, n=19) and are more excited to continue into third level education (92%, n=22). Students showed strong development in their ability to work in groups and with different types of people (92%, n=22). In addition, 75% (n=18) of students experienced an improvement in their communication skills because of their engagement in the programme. Furthermore, majority of the student's parents (94%, n=17) agreed that the student's social and personal skills and critical skills improved.

The responses from team leaders (N=8) were extremely positive, with all team leaders agreeing that they would recommend the experience to a friend. All agreed that it developed leadership and communication skills and reported improvements in their facilitation skills and ability to work with young people. Project leaders (N=3) were also very positive about their experience and would recommend their experience to a colleague. Lastly, all corporate volunteers (N=29) would recommend their experience to a colleague and would volunteer again.

Comments from participants included:

*"I liked the project well and the idea of creating a business for project is quite unique." [Student]*

*"I liked how the set-up of the programme provided a basic scaffold or framework rather than a rigid plan, and within that, there was a lot of room for things to evolve and change. I think this is valuable for responding to students' strengths, interests and needs." [Project Leader]*

*"Wonderful experience very good support, fantastic preparation and impressive students."  
[Volunteer]*

## 4.7. Capacity Building, Training and Mentoring

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

### Objectives:

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

| Capacity- Building - Training and Mentoring     | Professionals |
|---|---------------|
| Early Years Professionals                       | 204           |
| Restorative Practice Getting Started            | 44            |
| Restorative Practice CPD                        | 127           |
| Restorative Practice Training of Trainers       | 12            |
| Restorative Practice Summer Course for Teachers | 10            |
| ELI Interns                                     | 8             |
| <b>Totals</b>                                   | <b>405</b>    |

### 4.7.1. Early Years Professionals & RP Self-Care

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

- 40 early years educators attending four Early Numeracy Working Group meetings – reflective space and peer learning opportunity.
- 47 participants attended 14 Pre-Numeracy Workshops – shared planning for the upcoming numeracy week.
- 275 numeracy mentoring support meetings were provided to schools and early childhood education care services throughout the year through in-person, phone and zoom calls.
- Home Visitors and Group Facilitators completed 312 hours of CPD training.
- 26 Home Visitors enrolled a QQI Level 6 Certificate in Curriculum and Pedagogical Practice for Early Childhood Home Visiting.
- 90 Early Years Professionals including ELI Home Visitors, ABC nationwide coordinators engaged in 12 in-person and online self-care sessions.

### Participant Feedback

Feedback from post-training surveys indicated that 98%% (n=50) of participants found their relevant training sessions useful, and 90% (n=46) benefited from the training through learning new skills or knowledge that they can use to improve their own practice.

Comments from professionals included:

*“This self-care session was so interesting and gave me the right language to use as to help my families and children express and recognise their inside feelings and how their mind and emotions effects the body.”*

*“It is very important the Self-care Session for a daily basis because we learned to see things in different ways, in order to help others!! We definitely need also to look after our minds and make that pause to find the right ways/mechanism to help others!”*

### 4.7.2. NEIC Restorative Practices

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. ELI is due to launch its Restorative Practices Strategy plan in 2023-24 (see [Section 3.6.2.](#) for details).

#### Programme Delivery

- 70 different organisations participated in restorative practice programmes.
- 210 professionals, educators and other stakeholders attended RP training, workshops and events both online and in-person.
- 44 participants engaged with the Getting Started with Restorative Practices training across four courses.
- 17 participants engaged with the Moving Forward with Restorative Practices training.
- 10 teachers and principals participated in the Drumcondra Education Summer Course, Restorative Practices for Classrooms and School Communities, in August 2022, which had returned to in-person delivery.
- 127 professionals engaged in **Continued Professional Development**, including:
  - 49 professionals from two primary and post-primary schools and 19 professionals from two community organisations attended individualised CPD training, these sessions were delivered both online and in person.
  - Nine professionals supporting the Discover University programme engaged in introductory RP workshops.
  - RP coordinator facilitated four online introductory level workshops to 50 professionals as part of the Yellow Flag programme funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. These will resume in 2023-24.

- 12 professionals continued to engage training/facilitation activities, ongoing mentoring and support, and course facilitation, both online and in-person. 15 support sessions were delivered during 2022-23.
- 152 mentoring and support visits took place in total — 41 face-to-face, and the remainder using video conferencing platforms, video calls or phone calls.
- Participants on the summer course were invited to attend follow-up mentoring and support sessions throughout the year. Four attended in November online.
- 20 community members and professionals attended an in-person RP Strategy Consultation in June 2023.
- 10 monthly community of practice meetings took place in-person, with an average of eight attendees per month, from 51 organisations.



*International Restorative Practices and Restorative Justice Week Community Event*

### Participant Feedback

Majority of participants (97%, n=34) agreed or strongly agreed that the knowledge and skills learned are transferable to their role, and 91% (n=31) reported they are likely or confident in implementing the skills learned into their practice. Both these figures were higher than those of 2021-22 (85% and 73% respectively).

Pre-programme, the majority of participants rated their level of knowledge on Restorative Practices (78%, n=54) as poor, or fair and on completion of their training majority rated (94%, n=34) as good, very good, or excellent. With the most common motivation (68%, n=47) for doing the training to improve their ability to deal with conflict, there was an 18% increase in participants rating their ability at handling conflict as moderately, or very high from 57% at preprogramme to 75% on completion of their training.

Comments from participants included:

*"I am more comfortable and more confident in the approaches needed to repair harm or to restore relationships. I also understand now the importance of maintaining relationships and the steps/time needed to do so. I feel that I can bring these lessons to my team and organisation." [Participant]*

*"In my organisation, I foresee Restorative Practices bringing clearer communication, and bringing understanding and empathy to situations." [Participant]*

*"The opening and closing circles are a great strategy for building relationships. And the 6 questions on the cards will be in my wallet indefinitely!" [Participant]*

### 4.7.3. 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.



*ELI interns Célim and Éabha supported Discover University as Team Leaders*

### Programme Delivery

- Eight successful applicants, four for the General ELI Internship and four for the Research Internship- studying Data Analytics (1), Psychology (6) and Computing (1).
- Four General Interns assisted in various tasks across multiple programme areas including the delivery of Coding clubs, Language Café events, Doodle Den and social media analytics.
- This year was the first of the research interns and they were a very valuable resource for the ELI team. Four Research interns worked on a varied range of tasks throughout the internship, including; monitoring and evaluation of programme delivery; data analysis; conducting literature reviews; assisting with report writing; supporting with the design and delivery of research projects; and data collection including attending ELI events.

### Participant Feedback:

Four interns completed an end of year evaluation. All agreed that the internship was rewarding and provided them with meaningful work that helped their career development. Comments from the interns include:

Comments from the interns included:

*“One of the best things about the internship was the diversity of the work. Working as an ELI research intern I had the opportunity to attend community events, conferences, focus groups, research meetings and work on research papers, ethical approvals, posters, reports, and data analysis. Each day in the internship was different and it gives me a great opportunity to learn numerous skills”*

*“The internship offers great flexibility therefore I was able to [navigate] working and being a full-time student with ease.”*

## 4.8. Corporate Volunteer Programme

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

### Programme Delivery

In 2022-23, 165 (155 corporate; 10 other) volunteers contributed to a range of ELI's programmes. We were delighted to see a full return to in-person volunteering across programmes this year. Storytelling for the virtual book club was the only online volunteering that took place. The return to face-to-face engagement was widely welcomed by children and young people, staff and services, as well as by volunteers. It was fantastic to have a diverse mix of professionals from the working world visit schools, participate in classroom practices, support Doodle Den and attend student events and exhibitions at NCI. While online volunteering worked well during the pandemic, there is energy and excitement in the room which is hard to replicate online.

There was positive engagement between ELI and our key corporate partners during the year, who were keen for their staff to engage in ELI programmes. There were some challenges with volunteers being able to commit to regular weekly volunteering due to variable work schedules. Sign-up for one-off events and workshops was more popular for this reason.

It should also be acknowledged the number of volunteers (corporate and otherwise) who contribute to ELI's work through our four voluntary committees – ELI Advisory Committee, ELI Development Committee, ELI Research Committee and National Centre Steering Group.

### Participant Feedback

Feedback from our corporate volunteers was positive across all programmes with 97% (n=62) reporting being happy that they volunteered and 100% (N=64) would volunteer again. Furthermore, 100% (N=64) felt well supported by ELI staff and 97% (n=62) would recommend the experience to a colleague.

Feedback from our key contacts in corporate partner organisations was positive, with all (N=3) agreeing their staff were well supported for their volunteering roles and would recommend volunteering w/ ELI to other members of their team.

Comments from volunteers included:

*"Having clear set questions gave students the confidence to ask and engage. Small groups also allowed for every student to pitch in"*

*"Good to get to meet all the students-it was a nice, relaxed atmosphere so the students felt at ease"*

*"Wonderful experience very good support, fantastic preparation and impressive students"*

| <i><b>Programme</b></i>                               | <i><b>Number of Volunteers</b></i> | <i><b>Lead Corporate Partner</b></i>   |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| <i><b>Mentoring and Support</b></i>                   |                                    |  |
| Development Committee                                 | 4                                  | Citco, Deloitte, McGarrell-Reilly, State Street  |
| ELI Advisory Committee                                | 1                                  | McGarrell Reilly   |
| Volunteering Link People in Companies                 | 27                                 | Arthur Cox, basis.point, BNP Paribas, Central Bank, Citco, Deloitte, FMS, GAM, Glenveagh, Google, HubSpot, Kennedy Wilson, KPMG, Land Development Agency, Maples, Mason, Hayes and Curran, McCann FitzGerald, McGarrell-Reilly, Morgan Stanley, Northern Trust, Philip Lee, RBC, State Street, Virtu Financial |
| Skills Sharing  | 10                                 | Deloitte   |
| <i><b>Afterschool and Community Programmes</b></i>    |                                    |  |
| Storytelling (Zoom Ahead with Books)                  | 7                                  | Central Bank, Deloitte, Glenveagh, KPMG, State Street  |
| Doodle Den Afterschool Programme                      | 9                                  | KPMG   |
| <i><b>Primary Level Programmes</b></i>                |                                    |  |
| Educational Guidance                                  | 13                                 | Central Bank, Citco, Deloitte, Glenveagh, Maples, State Street   |
| NCI Challenges  | 3                                  | KPMG, Central Bank   |
| Coding Clubs  | 3                                  | KPMG   |
| <i><b>Second Level Programmes</b></i>                 |                                    |  |
| Discover University                                   | 41                                 | Arthur Cox, BNP Paribas, Central Bank, Citco, Deloitte, Land Development Agency, Maples, Morgan Stanley, State Street  |
| A Day in the Life Careers Events                      | 17                                 | Central Bank, Citco, Deloitte, Glenveagh, Google, McCann FitzGerald, McGarrell Reilly, Northern Trust  |
| Language Cafés  | 8                                  | Central Bank, Citco, Deloitte, GAM, Maples State Street  |
| Talking Heads EAL Support                             | 6                                  | Basis.point, Central Bank, Citco, Deloitte,  |
| Educational Guidance                                  | 6                                  | Central Bank, Citco, Deloitte, Glenveagh, Maples, State Street   |
| A Day in the Life, Language Café, Discover University | 10                                 | Volunteers from other companies/organisations  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>165</b>                         |  |



## 5. Looking Forward 2022-23

Accessing inclusive quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives, sustainable development; and a peaceful and prosperous world (UN SDGs). Described as ambitious and innovative, ELI will continue in 2023-24 to provide pioneering inclusive and diverse programmes in Dublin's Inner City and across Ireland. Our multi-layered flexible plans ensure that critical support is provided to vulnerable children and families across Ireland during these uncertain times.

Vision, Mission and Ethos permeates all aspects of ELI. We remain committed to the NCI's mission of changing lives through education and partnering with others to ensure that at-risk children across Ireland have the social, language, literacy, and numeracy skills they need for success in education, employment, and life. Community Action Research (research defined, undertaken, analysed and evidenced by members of the community) continues to be at the core of our programme development, knowledge management and planning processes. Ownership, responsibility, integrity, and commitment remain core principles with creativity, innovation, and experimentation at the heart of everything we do.

### 5.1. Strategic Innovation

In February 2023, ELI's 2020-25 Strategy was incorporated into NCI's 2022-27 Strategic Plan. A key objective is to continue to provide transformative 'cradle to college' education services through ELI, both locally to Dublin's Inner City and nationally.

Balancing forward thinking innovative strategic planning with prudent day-to-day operations in Dublin's Inner City and across Ireland will continue in 2023-24 with ELI and their partners prioritising support for at-risk children and their families to successfully navigate and thrive through these challenging times.

Dublin's Inner City, a sustainable proven model, will continue to deliver universal plus, wrap around, holistic integrated support for children, parents, and families through high-quality Home Visiting, Parent Support, Literacies and Educational Guidance Programmes. Fidelity to ELI's original vision and NCI's Governing Body's commitment to its local community remains key along.

More work is required to define the National Centre's identity, structures, and processes. Its key priority is to deliver on ELI's mission to bring home visiting and family engagement programmes to every community in Ireland, thereby ensuring that the 12,400 children born into poverty each year get the support they need to thrive in education, career and life. Securing sustainable multi-annual funding for the National Centre is critical to its future as is supporting local organisations to source their own funding to deliver ELI programmes.

2023-24 is a significant year for ELI with work continuing on the development of National Model of Home Visiting as part of the First 5 | A Government Strategy for Babies & Young Children. This model will outline the Government's vision for home visiting and will shape both the strategy and the work of ELI at both local and national level for the foreseeable future.

Expanding ELI's data management, evaluation, and research activities is part of NCI's Institutional Strategy. NCI's Research Strategy is almost completed and will integrate the ELI action research strategy into the overall college research strategy. Key strategic actions and priorities are included on the next page.

1. Strengthen ELI's research capacities, processes and structures in collaboration with our NCI colleagues.
2. Share our learning through improved research communications and partnerships.
3. Expand our research into the effectiveness and impact of prevention and early intervention through parent child home visiting and family engagement.

## **5.2. Risk Assessment & Contingency Planning**

NCI's Governing Body along with the executive and management teams meet regularly to discuss risk and contingency plans. ELI is addressed at these meetings and is included in NCI's general risk register. Regular risk reviews and contingency planning continue with the issues arising addressed at ELI Advisory Committees and Steering Groups.

## **5.3. Operational Priorities**

Delivering high quality universal plus parent child support services remains a priority as is our aim of extending these programmes beyond Dublin's Inner City to local community organisations across Ireland. Long-term sustainable partnerships with key agencies such as Tusla and HSE at both national and local level is key to this work.

Direct programme delivery of Dublin's Inner-City innovative portfolio of Home Visiting and Family/Community engagement programmes is critical. Oversight of its activities to ensure delivery on its original mission and evolution to address emerging needs is a key task of the ABC Steering Group.

Established in January 2020, the National Centre has developed over the past three years. While supporting other organisations to deliver ELI's Home Visiting and Family Engagement programmes is core to its work, it also leads out ELI's research activities with its Assistant Director sitting on NCI's Research Committee. Led by the National Steering Group, work will continue on defining its national ambition, identity and focus as well as building the capacities and structures required to scale up our programmes across the country.

At present, a hybrid approach is being taken to all ELI activities with face-to-face and indoor delivery guided by Government, HSE and NCI Guidelines, risk of infections and fear of contagion. Retaining virtual delivery will enable us to adapt as required.

Increased complexity with the growth of Dublin's Inner City and the development of the National Centre has been challenging. Continuing to upskill our dedicated staff, volunteers and partners to negotiate change at ELI and societal level while delivering high quality responsive trauma-informed programmes remains pivotal to improved outcomes for at-risk children and families.

## **5.4. Changing Lives Through Partnership**

ELI's network of partners bring a unique added value to the work. Together we do so much more to support at-risk children and families across Ireland. We would like to thank our wonderful partners for their sustained support.

With another challenging year ahead in 2023-24, we are confident that, with support from our fantastic partners, we can continue to provide critical supports during a historical and life-changing era and help thousands of children achieve their long-term educational, career and life dreams.



**Early Learning Initiative**  
National College of Ireland