



Empowering vulnerable communities across Ireland by using education to level the playing field for children and families

End-of-Year REPORT 2024-25

CHY 9928

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An Reim Leanaí, Meánaí
agus Comheasais
Department of Children,
Disability and Equality

TUSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

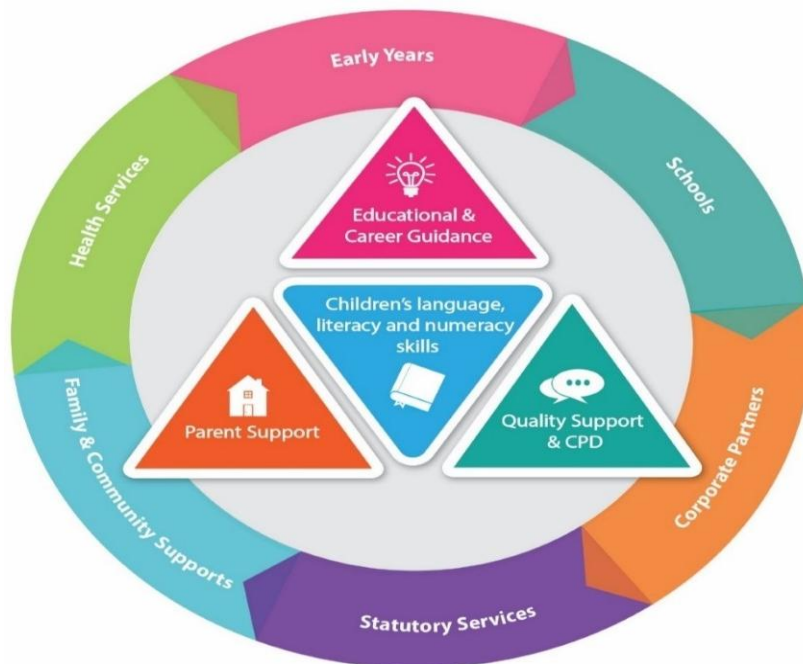


VISION

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.



To support our work, please contact Josephine Bleach, ELI Director (by phone: 086 8153600 or email: josephine.bleach@ncirl.ie) or Scan the QR code to donate today.

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1 Introductory Letter

The Early Learning Initiative (ELI), National College of Ireland (NCI), with the support of our loyal partners, levels the educational playing field for thousands of at-risk children. In 2024-25, 23,659 people across Ireland, up from 19,860 in 2023-24, engaged with satisfaction rates and learning indicators remaining high. This End-of-Year Report summarises our achievements with more information on our website: www.ncirl.ie/eli. I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone involved and to note some key priorities this year.

20 Years of changing lives through education

In 2006, a group of socially minded business leaders saw the need to address the generational, long-term problems of social deprivation, poverty, poor educational attainment and mass unemployment in Dublin's Docklands. Empowering parents to support their children, before they enter school, was and remains central. Starting with 400 participants we have grown to 23,659 participants across Ireland, a great example of Irish philanthropic, supported by Government, strategic investments in pioneering projects transforming lives.

Emerging National Early Childhood Home Visiting Model

Addressing child poverty (SDG 1) requires giving the 10,812 babies born into poverty each year in Ireland the support they need to flourish. 2024/25 saw major developments in home visiting nationally with the publication of research, which highlighted the enormous benefits, including Government-exchequer savings and increased earnings due to long-term cost-benefit returns equivalent to a 1:1.6 ratio (Doyle, 2024); the establishment of the Children's Fund, set up to honour the memory of the children who died in Mother and Baby Homes, and a new National Home Visiting Programme in Tusla. Much work has been done over the past year on increasing the availability and accessibility of evidence-based home visiting services nationwide. We are very proud to contribute to the development of the new model and data framework for home visiting in line with Irish Government's *First 5 A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028*.

Changing societal and political environment

These tumultuous times create major challenges. ELI's 'cautious expansion' approach, quality governance and community action research helps us continuously adapt to emerging critical needs and serious gaps in essential child and family disability, mental health, educational and other services. Our appointment as the lead agency for ABC Grangegorman D7 and National Community Families in 2024/25 increases our reach significantly, both nationally and in Dublin's Inner City. We are also dealing with heightened violence and intolerance along with an increase in accommodation for homeless, migrant and refugee families in Dublin's Inner City. In this report, you will read how through our incredible partnerships (SDG 17) we are reducing inequalities (SDG 10) and creating sustainable communities (SDG 11).

Thank You

As we look towards the future, thank you for your ongoing support and partnership. Together we are changing lives and communities across Ireland. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with our amazing partners in 2025-26 as we navigate an evolving uncertain yet hopeful landscape. If you want to know more about how you can become involved in ELI, please come talk to us.



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

1.1 2024-25 Key Indicators of Impact



23,659
Participants Engaged



15,817

Home Visits Completed



10,706

Parents Engaged



92%

Indicators of Satisfaction
(n=2,015) participants were satisfied
with their engagement



89%

Indicators of Learning
(n=1,883) participants learned new
knowledge or skills



34

Philanthropic and
Corporate Partners
Supporting ELI



321

Interagency
Meetings



222

Volunteers
Engaged



1.2 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

NCI has put sustainability at the very heart of its 5-Year Institutional Strategy with ELI actively contributing to NCI's delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the scale and scope of the global goals is unprecedented, partnership is key to their delivery. It is only through collaboration can we uphold our basic responsibilities to people and planet but also set the stage for long-term success through ELI's prevention and early intervention programmes that consider a quality education the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development. Recognising that the challenges are multifaceted, this following table illustrates our SDG priorities and deliverables.

SDG	PRIORITY	DELIVERABLES
1 NO POVERTY 	Building resilience and empowering people living in poverty and vulnerable situations	Ambition to provide Home Visiting to 12,400 babies born into poverty each year in Ireland Lead agency of Area Based Childhood Programme, which aims to address child poverty
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	Promoting well-being and healthy lives for children and parents	Making learning fun and something to be shared Building capacity for early warning, risk reduction and management of early childhood and parental health risks Incorporating Infant Mental Health, Restorative & Trauma Informed Practice, Critical Incident Management
4 QUALITY EDUCATION 	Ensuring equal access to all levels of education, in particular children in vulnerable situations	Children developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being Proficiency in literacy, numeracy, information and communications technology (ICT) skills Completing higher and further education
5 GENDER EQUALITY 	Empower and promote gender equality for all	Empowering fathers as parents – equal responsibility for their children's health, wellbeing and education Empowering women and girls to achieve in education and career

SDG	PRIORITY	DELIVERABLES
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	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	Providing inclusive universal plus prevention and early intervention supports for children and families with a particular focus on disadvantaged and marginalized populations
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	Creating inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable communities	<p>Opening NCI up to the community as a safe welcoming place, where 'good things happen'</p> <p>Supporting the development of Dublin's Inner City as a peaceful, inclusive, safe, restorative and resilient community.</p>
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 	Ensure public access to information and promote peaceful, responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making	Empower and support local children and families to engage in their local community. Provide safe inclusive participatory networks through our Restorative Practice, Parenting Support and Home Visiting Programmes
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	Engage in effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships	Cross-sectoral partnerships with statutory, corporate, voluntary and community organisations are integral to the achievement of ELI's strategic prevention and early intervention innovations.

1.3 Thank You



We would like to acknowledge the generosity of all our donors, who range from Government to business to Trusts/Foundations to individuals. Your investment in children's futures is greatly valued and continues to make a huge difference in their lives and, in turn, the lives of the community. 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 ELI's Assistant Directors, Lana Cummins (by phone 086 4672204 or by email: lane.cummins@ncirl.ie); Catriona Flood (by phone: 086 0296894 or by email: catriona.flood@ncirl.ie); Brigina O'Riordan (by phone: 086 7965572 or by email: brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie)

1.4 2024-25 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 ELI, as part of its mission to address educational underachievement in marginalised communities. ELI has grown from 400 participants (children, parents and professionals) to 23,659 in 2024-25, up from 19,860 in 2023-24 and moved beyond its initial Dublin Docklands catchment area to supporting other communities across Ireland.

The National Centre ([Chapter 4](#)), supports communities across Ireland to deliver high quality Home Visiting and Parent Engagement Programmes, in collaboration with the National Home Visiting Programme and Irish Government's First 5 Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families .

National Centre	Families	Professionals
ParentChild+ (18-36 months)	309	80
Home from Home	68	21
Community Families Home Visiting (0-3 years)	501	28
Community Families Groups	1294	0
My Place to Play	2,783	207
Home Visiting Alliance	0	533
Total	4,955	869

Dublin's Inner City ([Chapter 5](#)) 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	Families	Professionals
Educational Guidance	466	34
Literacies & STEM	3,684	342
Home Visiting & Parent Support Groups	1,473	55
Total	5,623*	431

**1,006 of this figure also included in National Centre table above.*

ELI is a partnership ([Chapter 4.3](#)) between families and professionals from statutory, corporate, voluntary and community organisations. Twenty years of sustained cross sectoral collaboration has paid dividends due to the commitment, passion and resolve of our wonderful partners. In 2024-25, ELI teamed with

- ✓ 1,926 professionals from community, statutory and voluntary organisations
- ✓ 33 corporate organisations and foundations along with 222 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, Research Ireland and the North East Inner City (NEIC) Initiative.

2 Finance, Governance, Strategy and Communications

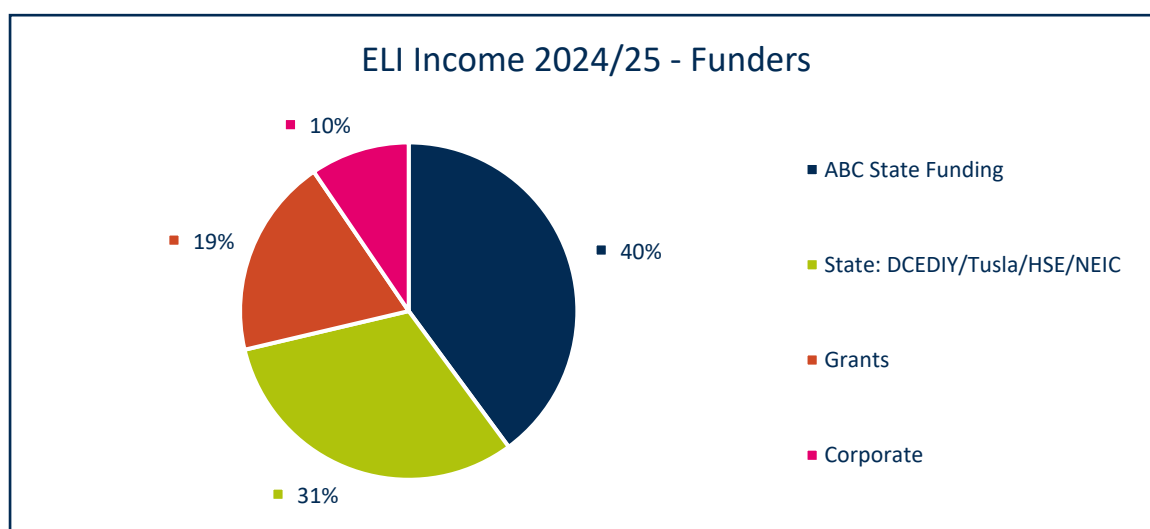
National College of Ireland is committed to good governance and has in place systems and processes to achieve our Early Learning Initiative's (ELI) objectives in an ethical, effective, efficient, accountable and transparent manner. This section accounts for ELI's 2024/25 income and expenditure along with its governance structures, strategy and communications.

2.1 Finance

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

2.1.1 Income 2024-25

ELI raised a total income of €3.3m in 2024-25, up from €2.45m in 2023-24; €2.3m (71% up from 59% in 2023-24) came from statutory funding (ABC, Tusla, NEIC, DCEDIY and HSE) with the remaining €1m coming from our corporate partners, grants, trusts, foundations, and individuals. This reflects our successful state applications to be the lead agency for ABC Grangegorman and the Community Families programmes. Philanthropic grants, corporate and individual funding were on par with the previous year.



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 Michael Hartwell (Partner, Deloitte), Declan Quilligan (Managing Director, Citco Fund Services), Joe O'Reilly (Executive Chairman, Chartered Land) 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. We would particularly like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of Sandra Foley (Managing Director, State Street), a long-term member of the Development Committee, who has agreed to sit on the ELI Advisory Committee and chair our Docklands and East Inner City ABC Steering Group.

Did you know that by five years old, 90% of the human brain has already grown? Support vulnerable children's early brain development and subsequent educational achievement by donating what you can to [Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland | Online Fundraising \(idonate.ie\)](https://www.idonate.ie)

If you are interested in partnering with ELI, please contact Josephine Bleach, ELI Director (by phone: 086 8153600 or email: josephine.bleach@ncirl.ie).

2.1.2 Expenditure 2024-25

The combined spend for ELI for the 12 months to June 2025 was €3.3m (up from the previous year of €2.65m). The spend for the National Centre was €1m (up from €962k in 2023/24) with Dublin's Inner City (including ABC and NEIC funding) €2.3m (up from €1.7m in 2022/23). More details of the breakdown in income and expenditure can be found in the relevant National Centre and Dublin's Inner City Sections.

	Income 2024/25	Expenditure 2024/25	Surplus/ Deficit	Projected Expenditure 2025/26
	€	€	€	€
ABC - Docklands & East Inner City	894,156	831,239	62,917	865,812
ABC - Grangegorman	433,822	471,898	(38,076)	867,644
NEIC, DCC & Philanthropic Funding	754,231	953,613	(199,382)	800,000
Dublin's Inner-City Totals	2,061,209	2,256,750	(174,541)	2,533,456
National Centre Total	1,236,316	1,081,314	155,002	1,000,000
Total – Direct delivery costs	3,318,525	3,338,064	(19,539)	3,533,456
NCI central overheads and services (in-kind)		667,613		706,691
Total Costs	3,318,525	4,005,677	19,539	4,240,147

Notes:

- Direct costs are those coded to the ELI accounts.
- Indirect costs are not coded to ELI accounts and consist of overheads and services provided by NCI, such as accounting, payroll, HR, IT, facilities and marketing. It is estimated that these costs account for 20% additional cost or €667, 613.
- The National Centre underspend was due to restricted funding received in 2024/25, which is retained in reserve to cover contracted 2025/26 programme costs.
- Spending exceeded income for Dublin's Inner City. This was due to the timing of payments, increased activities and related delivery costs, both pay and non-pay. It will be covered by restricted funding received in 2023/24, which was retained in reserve to cover contracted 2024/25 programme costs.
- The ABC Docklands and East Inner-City underspend was due to the retention of funds to cover costs due in Q3/4, 2025
- The ABC Grangegorman overspend will be covered with budget adjustments to the ABC grant for the remainder of 2025.
- ABC funding from January to June 2026 is subject to its inclusion in the Government's 2026 Budget and the projected expenditure will be amended to reflect the 2026 ABC budget agreed with Tusla and the WRC Section 56 wage agreements.
- ELI National Centre and Dublin's Inner City Projected Expenditure 2025/26 is based on NCI's Strategic Plan, costs in previous years, pledged funding and outstanding grant applications. It will be amended in December 2025 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, Chairperson of NCI's Governing Body; Gina Quin, President of NCI; and other members of NCI's Governing Body and Executive Board has been critical to the success of ELI in improving outcomes for children and young people. Membership of NCI's Governing Body and ELI Committees are listed below with more information on NCI and ELI Governance is available on our website: www.ncirl.ie.

NCI Governing Body as of June 2025	
Chairperson - Mr. Brendan McGinty	Tony O'Malley
Michael Brady	Dr Kevin Hargaden*
Barbara Cotter	Michelle Moore
Brigid McManus	Tre Robert NCISU President
Prof Patrick Clancy	Mr Kieran Kelly
Dr Anu Sahni Sheila Nunan*	Kevin Callinan
Maureen Brogan	Dr Donnchadh Ó Madagáin - Secretary and
Gina Quin – College President	Registered Officer

*Members of Governing Body who sit on the ELI Advisory Committee, which in turn reports to Governing Body.

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 Mary Doyle, Chairperson of the ELI Advisory Committee; Michael Hartwell Chairperson of the ELI Development Committee; Tony White, Chairperson of ELI National Steering Group; Sandra Foley, Chairperson of the Dublin Docklands and East Inner City ABC Steering Group; Eadaoin Kelly, Chairperson of Grangegorman ABC Steering Committee 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 2024/25.

ELI Advisory Committee as of June 2025 is set out below:	
Chairperson – Mary Doyle	Dan O'Connor,
Gina Quin, President NCI	Tom O Connor
Sheila Nunan*, NCI Governing Body	Brian Hatton
Dr Kevin Hargaden*, NCI Governing Body	Joe O'Reilly
Mike Hartwell, Chair of ELI's Development Committee	Denise Hall
Tony White, Chair of ELI's National Steering Group	Deirdre McCarthy
Eadaoin Kelly, Chair of Grangegorman ABC Steering Committee (Joined May 2025)	Michael O'Riordain
	Sandra Foley, Chair of Dublin Docklands and East Inner City ABC Programme (joined January 2025)

Docklands and East Inner City ABC Steering Group as of June 2025 is set out below:	
Chairperson – Sandra Foley Josephine Bleach, ELII Director Donnchadh Ó Madagáin, NCI Finance Director Geraldine Duff, Joanne O'Shea (resigned January 2024) Tom O'Brien Emma Nugent	Lorraine Doherty (Resigned March 2025) Denise Hevey, Denise McDonald Imelda Doyle Elaine Dunphy Jean Delaney (Joined October 2024)
ELI Development Group as of June 2025 is set out below:	
Chairperson: Michael Hartwell Sandra Foley (Resigned September 2024) Declan Quilligan Susan Dargan	Dr Deirdre Giblin, NCI Director of Development and External Engagement Dr Josephine Bleach, ELI Director Catriona Flood, ELI Assistant Director Brigina O'Riordan, ELI Assistant Director
ELI National Steering Group as of June 2025 is set out below:	
Chairperson - Tony White Margaret Kernan Prof Jimmy Hill, NCI Vice President (Resigned December 2025) Dr Josephine Bleach, ELI Director Anne Fitzpatrick Catriona Flood, ELI Assistant Director	Lisa Fox Christine McCann Dr Breda McTaggart, Dean of School of Business and Social Studies (Joined March 2025) Michelle Moore, National Home Visiting Manager
Grangegorman ABC Steering Group as of June 2025 is set out below:	
Chairperson - Eadaoin Kelly Katie Holohan Paul Ring Laura Glancy	Conor Casby Kathleen McCann Mary McPhillips Josephine Bleach, ELI Director

2.3 Strategic Planning

When ELI was established in 2006, our focus was ensuring that vulnerable children living in the Dublin Docklands received a quality education (SDG 4). Since then, ELI has expanded exponentially across Ireland, and our work has become much more nuanced, complex and multifaceted. Prioritizing children's health and wellbeing (SDG 3), ELI is continuously developing to address emerging critical needs and serious gaps in essential child and family disability, mental health, educational and other services.

Incorporated into NCI's 2022-27 Strategic Plan, ELI is now at a time of transition and future consolidation. The intention is to maintain our previous twin-track 'cautious expansion' approach of ensuring that ELI has the resources to support any new activities, while continuing to maintain our existing commitments and the quality of governance, provision, and research. Described as ambitious and innovative in both the Irish and international context, ELI will continue to progress our pioneering inclusive and diverse programmes that

- Provide safe spaces, where good things happen for children, families and community
- Sustain and evolving our Dublin's Inner-City Hub on page 62.
- Advance as a National Centre in Parent Child Home Visiting and Family Engagement on page 41.
- Deliver on our commitments in NCI's 2022-27 strategic plan

Safe Spaces to gather, talk, learn and play

Being part of the NCI, a vibrant third-level institution is essential to realizing our vision. Since 2006, we have welcomed local children, parents, families and services into NCI. Our new Play Lab and Sanctuary Space in our Mayor Square campus along with the office, meeting room and classroom spaces in Spencer Dock campus continues this tradition. Supplementing these spaces will be the dedicated child and family facilities in the National Centre for Research and Reconciliation on Sean McDermott St, which is now at the design stage. This will increase the space available especially for our Community Families groups and home visiting for families living in temporary or overcrowded accommodation and for children with additional needs and disabilities.



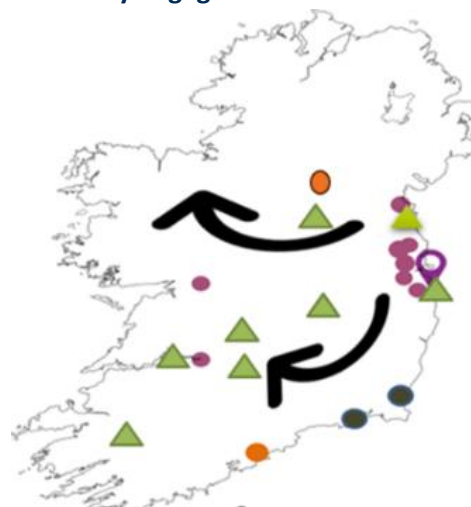
Sustain and evolve our Dublin's Inner-City Hub

ELI's Dublin's Inner-City programmes are a testament to NCI's Governing Body's commitment to its local community. Since 2006, our catchment area has grown from four parishes in the Docklands (North Wall, East Wall, Ringsend and City Quay) to where with the transfer of ABC Grangegorman from TUD to NCI, ELI is now delivering the Area Based Childhood Programme (ABC)Tusla - Child and Family Agency across Dublin's Inner City (Post codes: 1,3,7 northside and 2,4,8 southside) and is the collective voice for children and families living in areas where poverty is most deeply entrenched. Retaining and expanding existing funding streams is important to sustain the work.



Advance as a National Centre in Parent Child Home Visiting and Family Engagement

ELI's National Centre continues to develop. 2024/25 was a significant year with our appointment as the lead agency for Community Families nationally; the establishment and engagement with the National Home Visiting Programme in Tusla and ongoing development of National Model of Home Visiting as part of the First 5 | A Government Strategy For Babies & Young Children. These initiatives, along with the DCEDIY What Works Building Evidence Project, are shaping ELI strategic thinking. Research is core to the National Centre with a focus on fostering a vibrant, successful, and interactive research community that generates ideas and discoveries, creates new fields of knowledge, and makes a difference to the development of our local, national, and global communities. Securing sustainable multi-annual funding for the National Centre is critical to its future and ongoing development.



Delivering on our commitments in NCI's strategic plan

A key objective of NCI's strategic Plan 2022-27 is to continue to provide accessible transformative 'cradle to college' education services through our ELI, both locally and nationally. The table below outlines ELI's commitments in NCI's Strategic Plan.

Priorities	Objective	ELI Actions
1. Students <i>(for ELI, these are the children, parents and professionals who engage in our programmes)</i> Foster a distinctive NCI graduate and a well- balanced graduate body that aligns to our mission in terms of distinctive and flexible modes of learning (access) and internationalisation	Be a recognised leader in sustainability, with our commitments evident across our physical infrastructure, programmes, research & graduate attributes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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' 2. 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 3. Incorporate SDGs into all ELI activities 4. In collaboration with NCI colleagues, 1) Develop links with relevant international partners to share learning and research; 2) Engage in Erasmus and other relevant EU programmes

Priorities	Objective	ELI Actions
2. Staff Support and train all of our staff to be agile and responsive in meeting the needs of students, employers and other key education partners.	Utilise sustainable practices to recruit, support & retain staff who excel in their roles Align staff performance with NCI strategic objectives & sustainable practices.	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.
3. Teaching Develop and maintain successful programmes, distinctive in our design, delivery and assessment and aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.	Future-Proof NCI's portfolio of programmes & ensure alignment with sustainability strategy. Sustainable optimisation of digital & physical campus.	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
4. Research Invest in a step change in research and innovation capability, in a manner that is closely connected to our distinctive offering.	Expand research infrastructure commensurate with sustainable research strategy ambitions & achievements. Exploit sustainable research partnership opportunities & networks.	Implement NCI's research strategy with a focus on disseminating learning through social media, papers and conferences, securing research partnerships and funding.
1. Access Guided by our mission, vision and values, NCI will continue and develop its focus on delivering accessible higher education.	Reinforce NCI's distinctiveness in the sector as leader in sustainable access & lifelong learning. Integrate NCI & ELI to maximise impact & enhance our collective & sustainable distinctiveness.	Scale up a sustainable model 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.
2. Positioning We will build on our foundation of distinctive education provision in our chosen fields and will become increasingly recognised as a valued, distinctive provider.	Amend our HEA funding status & position a Sustainable NCI for success in achieving Delegated Authority from QQI. Enhance the employability, sustainability attributes & work-readiness of NCI Graduates & to deepen vertical relationships with employers across a range of NCI activities.	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

2.4 Partnerships

Partnerships are central to ELI's approach. Together we enable children, their families and communities, to acquire the skills and self-confidence needed to benefit fully from the educational system. All our partners understand the challenges faced by local communities across Ireland 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 2024-25, 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 across Ireland achieve their educational, career and life ambitions. We look forward to working with you again in 2025-26 and building on past successes.

2.4.1 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 *Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028* (DCYA 2023) 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, Disability and Equality (DCDE); Tusla and local partners address key educational and social issues for children and families in the Dublin Docklands and East Inner City. With the transfer of ABC Grangegorman from TUD to NCI, ELI enables the collective voice for children and families living in areas where poverty is most deeply entrenched across Dublin's Inner City (Post code: 1,3,7 northside and 2,4,8 southside). More information on is available on page 58.



Celebrating the ABC Programme 10-year Anniversary 5th June 2025

In 2024-25, through the Children's Fund, set up to honour the memory of the children who died in Mother and Baby Homes, the **National Home Visiting Programme** was established in Tusla with the objective of increased availability and accessibility of evidence-based home visiting services nationwide. Over the past year we have been working closely with the National Home Visiting Manager and Data Officer on the development of a national model and data framework for home visiting. This initiative will shape ELI's priorities at national level for the foreseeable future.

The DCDE What Works Learning Together and Building Evidence Funds feasibility and data framework studies feed into the work of the [Home Visiting Alliance](#) and the National Home Visiting Programme. They have raised the visibility of early childhood home visiting in Ireland; built our capacity nationally to support vulnerable children and parents to thrive and fed into the work of the National Home Visiting Programme Office. More information is available on page 27.

Community Families Programme is an exciting collaboration between ELI and the HSE, Tusla, Katharine Howard Foundation and local sites across Ireland. Following the launch of the programme launch on 2nd October 2024, ELI was appointed the lead agency for Community Families nationally. More information is available on page 51.

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 DCDE, 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. More information is available on [page 58](#).

2.4.2 North East Inner City (NEIC) Programme Implementation Board

The NEIC Programme Implementation Board led by an independent chair, Jim Gavin, has been very supportive of ELI since its inception. We would like to thank Jim Gavin, Olivia Brody and the NEIC Programme Office for their ongoing support to ELI.

NCI Director for Development and External Engagement and ELI Assistant Director with responsibility for Dublin's Inner City home visiting programmes sit on Subgroup 2: Education and Training and Subgroup 3: Improving Family Wellbeing respectively. ELI was delighted that NEIC funding was continued in 2024-25 for [Restorative Practice](#), [Doodle Den](#), [Parenting Programme](#) and [Educational Guidance](#) at second level. Additional funding was received for [Parenting 365](#).

2.4.3 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 Brigina O'Riordan (by phone: 086 7965572 or email: brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie) for more information on how your organisation could get involved with ELI.

2.4.4 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.

2.4.5 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. We are also 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. We are also members of the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), a leading international learning community throughout Europe and Central Asia. 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.

2.4.6 Research Partnerships

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 our colleagues in NCI and other research institutions through knowledge dissemination, brokerage and synthesis is 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 Research Lead Kate Darmody at kate.darmody@ncirl.ie. More information on [ELI's Research](#) is available on page 30.

2.4.7 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 Groups, Consortia and various Working Groups actively informs the development of all our programmes. Together we are changing children's lives. More information is available on [page 66](#).

2.4.8 Colleagues in the National College of Ireland

NCI staff, from various Departments, work very closely with us to ensure that ELI delivers our programmes and research 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. Together, we are achieving NCI's strategic goal to be recognised worldwide for excellence in sustainability, access, innovation and research in education for children, young people and families living in social disadvantage. More information is available on [ELI's UN SDGs](#) and [Strategic Planning](#).

2.4.9 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 Chairperson of NCI's Governing Body; Gina Quin, President of NCI; and other members of NCI's Governing Body and Executive Board has been critical to the success of ELI in improving outcomes for children and young people. ELI is a discreet centre within NCI with its own dedicated staff and Advisory Committees.

The leadership and expertise shown by Mary Doyle, Chairperson of the ELI Advisory Committee; Mike Hartwell, Chairperson of the ELI Development Steering Group; Tony White, Chairperson of ELI National Steering Group; Sandra Foley, Chairperson of the Dublin Docklands and East Inner City ABC Steering Group; Eadaoin Kelly, Chairperson of Grangegorman ABC Steering Committee and the other members of the ELI Advisory Committee and Steering Groups has been invaluable in ensuring that ELI operates ethically and effectively in the best interests of children and families. More information is available on [page 15](#).

2.5 Communication

Communication is key to ELI's engagement with all its partners and its ability to influence practice, policy and theory. During 2024-25, 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.

2.5.1 Social Media

ELI's social media presence builds connections, shares achievements, and informs stakeholders about our programs for children, families, and the community. Our social media platforms provide essential updates and promote access to our full range of activities and programmes for children, young people, parents and families across the community. In addition, social media platforms connect us with broader professional community enabling skill-sharing and insights exchange locally, nationally and internationally. An example of social medias' impact is our participation in the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Conference where representatives from ELI presented, "Early Numeracy and STEM Play & Learn for an Inclusive and Sustainable Future." Throughout the presentation, ELI emphasized the importance of parental involvement and our work in preventing summer learning loss. Furthermore, this research and implementation align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Over the year ELI continued to reinforce our message around parental involvement and inclusivity and signposted to our extensive suite of parent and child groups, parenting courses, ParentChild+ activities, STEM Family Learning and Coding projects.

Other content included suggested activities, news and updates from all programme areas including Community Families Home Visiting and Groups, ParentChild+, Doodle Den, Zoom Ahead with Books, Early Numeracy, Stretch Graduate, STEM Learn and Play, My Place to Play, Restorative Practices, Talking Heads, Tuition Support and Discover University.

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

Social Media Platform	Total Followers end June 2024	Total Followers end June 2025	Increase in 2024/25	% Increase in 2024/25
Facebook	3,518	3,635	117	3
Instagram	1,312	1,537	225	17
Twitter (X)	1,483	1,441	-42	-3
LinkedIn	827	1016	189	23
Totals	7,140	7,629	489	7

2.5.2 Networking

Networking is a vital tool to fulfil our mission of working in partnership with Government and local communities to support educational journeys and achievements, as well as being fundamental to our community action research approach. In 2024-25, members of the ELI team attended 321 interagency networking events or meetings. Of these, 72 were related to the ABC Programme, 154 were Dublin's Inner-City related and 95 involved the National Centre. Key criteria for networking are the individual's and organisation's commitment to improving outcomes for children and their ability to work in partnership with others. Priority is given to networks that are focused on early childhood development, educational disadvantages and support 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 2024-25 included:

- Home Visiting Alliance
- National Home Visiting Programme
- Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN)
- Children's Rights Alliance
- Charity Institute
- The Wheel
- Infant Mental Health Network
- International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS)
- School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin
- Young People at Risk (YPAR) Steering Group and Working Groups:
 - o Roma Working Group
 - o 0-5 Working Group
 - o 5-12 Working Group
 - o Hard to Reach Working Group
 - o Children in Emergency Accommodation Working Group
- Community and Voluntary Sector organisations
- Parent Strategy Group
- Community Families Oversight and Support Group
- Homeless organisations e.g. Depaul, Focus Ireland, Crosscare
- Local Community Safety Partnership
- Children and Young Persons Services Committees (CYPSC)
- DCU STEAM Network
- Growing up in Ireland Policy & Research Advisory Group
- National Centre for Research and Remembrance

3 Research & Innovation

Research, evaluation and innovation are central components of ELI's commitment to evidence-based practice and strategic sustainability. Considered essential to understand the evolving needs of the community, they enable the creation of meaningful solutions that build on community strengths and improve outcomes for at-risk children, young people and families.

Growth and Expansion of ELI's Research & Innovation Activities

2024-25 has been a significant year for ELI in terms of growth and development as we became the lead agency for ABC Grangegorman in January 2025 and the national host site for the Community Families programme in March 2025. Research plays a pivotal role within these areas, and our research team has expanded accordingly to support this ongoing growth and commitment. This expansion will enable us to develop our research and apply evidence-based practices with greater impact.

NCI's Research Strategy & Partnerships

ELI's "living labs" community action research approach is incorporated in NCI's Research Strategy 2023-27 and is important in addressing NCI's key sustainability goals. Key strategic priorities for 2024-25 were strengthening ELI's research infrastructure and outputs in collaboration with our NCI colleagues. Inter-departmental college partnerships are generating impactful research including the Research Ireland Funded STEM research in understanding parental attitudes and engagement with STEM. This research is enabling us to advance and refine our STEM programmes and the collaboration will continue to develop a social network analysis with families that engage deeply with STEM.

Advancing Early Childhood Home Visiting Research

ELI's ambition to provide Home Visiting to the 10,812 babies born into poverty each year is grounded in its commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty. To support this ambition ELI is actively advancing research in the field of Early Childhood Home Visiting. In 2024-25 the State of the Moment Report was published to help better understand the impact of and connection between ParentChild+ and Stretch Graduate on families. Additionally, two key pieces of research commenced - Athena Swan Participatory Research and the ParentChild+ External Evaluation - exploring various impacts and the efficacy of our Home Visiting programmes locally and nationally. ELI has been collaborating with national and statutory partners to develop and improve research and processes on a national scale through the Home Visiting Alliance, the ABC Outcomes Framework and the National Home Visiting Office.

Thank you

Thank you to all our research partners and participants. Your collaboration and commitment are vital in driving forward original, meaningful research that informs and strengthens our programmes. Together, we are deepening our understanding of the challenges faced by the most vulnerable children and parents and developing more effective, evidence-based strategies to support them.



Kate Darmody

ELI Research Lead

3.2 Community Action Research

Encompassing research and praxis aimed at promoting educational equity, facilitating empowerment, building resilience and sustainability in our community, ELI's grassroots CAR initiatives and capacity building efforts empower individuals, nurture inclusive education, and build resilient families and communities.

ELI's Community Action Research (CAR) approach collects the voices of participants, including children, young people, parents, other family members, staff and corporate volunteers, across all programmes through a variety of methods such as evaluation forms (paper based and online), focus groups etc. Each year evaluations are reviewed, and common indicators are identified. These include indicators of participation; programme satisfaction; participant learning and parental involvement. In addition, children's learning continues to be measured for specific programmes through a range of child and parent focused measures including the Community Families Measures, 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).

In February 2025, ELI held an internal CAR Day focused on programme messaging with staff reflecting on and delivering an "elevator pitch" style presentation for their programmes.



ELI's Community Action Research Process

3.3 Research and Innovation Projects

The following are the research and innovation projects that our research team along with their colleagues in ELI and NCI worked on in 2024-25. Building on our community action research evaluations, they take a more in-depth approach to improving our understanding of emerging challenges in practice, policy and theory. If you would like any further details on the progress listed below, you can check out our [website](#), or our [Research Gate page](#) or contact Research team.

3.3.1 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 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, with the Outcomes Framework being implemented in two of our ABC Dublin Docklands programmes in 2024-25: ParentChild+ in Dublin's Inner City and the ABC-funded Doodle Den sites. Additionally, ELI has overseen the implementation of the ABC Outcomes Framework in the ABC Grangegorman programmes since January 2025.

3.3.2 Gender in STEM

In 2024-25, ELI continued our collaboration with NCI School of Psychology to explore gender balance in STEM. As part of this research project, new evaluations were used in the Robotic Coding Club with both children and parents exploring concepts like belonging in STEM, gender stereotypes and self-efficacy. This research project aims to bring intersectional, gendered analysis to STEM programmes for children as there is a dearth of literature in this area. These evaluations were piloted with one school in 2023-24 and data collection continued in 2024-25 with analysis planned for 2025-26.

3.3.3 Home Visiting Alliance DCEDIY What Works Building Evidence Project

To support the implementation of the First Five Strategy and the national model of Home Visiting, a collaborative exploration of Common Data Definitions, Knowledge, Frameworks and Practices across Early Childhood Home Visiting Programme commenced in 2024. This project built the capacity of the five member organisations of the HVA to share knowledge and experience about how they each work with data and evaluation at both programme and policy level with the future goal of developing an agreed common, national outcomes framework. The work included, identifying and incorporating what is currently working well for each programme and highlighting what needed improving or changing. The establishment of a new National Home Visiting Programme in Tusla, publication of the Home Visiting review and National Vision for the Future (McGilloway et al, 2024) and the Economic Case for Home Visiting Cost with its average Benefit-to-Cost Ratio (BCR) of 1.6:1 (Doyle, 2024) in October 2024 mid-point during the process informed the discussions and findings. The newly appointed Home Visiting Manager and Data Quality Officer participated in the project and contributed to the report, which is due to be published in October 2025 on [Home Visiting Alliance – Home Visiting Alliance](#). The report outlines the findings from the HVA members' survey, subsequent HVA discussions and stakeholder consultation sessions. It also outlines a range of future decisions on data policies and protocols that will need to be agreed by the National Governance and Advisory Groups, National Home Visiting Programme, HVA and lead individual programme agencies as well as recommendations for the future.

3.3.4 NEIC Parenting Programme Needs Assessment

Since 2022 ELI has been inviting parents in the NEIC to complete a Needs Assessment survey to identify parents' main issues, concerns and gaps in provision. A detailed survey was distributed in 2021-22 (66 responses) and 2023/24 (20 responses). Following a consultation with the Parent Strategy Group in which three key questions were developed and surveyed in the group (32 responses):

1. What are the main issues of concern for you as a parent or your family?

2. How do these issues impact you parenting your children?
3. What would be helpful to you in this situation?

A new iteration of the Needs Assessment was distributed in 2024-25 using these three questions (11 responses) and will be distributed again in 2025-26.

The most prevalent issue of concern over the various survey iterations was children's additional needs and the specific challenges and lack of support that are available for their children (21%, n=27). Lack of supports and amenities also featured strongly in the responses over the years (12%, n=15) as did concerns for child's wellbeing and mental health (10%, n=13) and safety concern in the NEIC (9%, n=12).

For those that had the opportunity to make suggestions as to what would be helpful in these situations additional resources were consistently referenced by parents as an area that would be helpful for families. In addition, the need for greater speed and easier access to information and advice was identified. Furthermore, parents would like greater consideration for the wide range of needs that are prevalent among children such as a safer community including "proper" community policing and safe spaces and activities for children and young people.

3.3.5 ParentChild+ External Evaluation

In 2024-25 ELI received funding from Rethink Ireland to conduct an external evaluation of the ParentChild+ programmes to critically evaluate whether ParentChild+ is having an impact on children's development and identify what factors contribute to the outcomes, and critically evaluate the scaling of ParentChild+, examining if replication is working to the same extent and what factors contribute to the outcomes. In late 2024 Sarah Murphy and Dr Jane Pilinger won the tender for the evaluation and work on the project commenced in January 2025. Numerous consultations were held in May and June 2025. Three sites were evaluated in depth, including supervision observation and in-depth interviews with the manager and coordinator. These included Dublin's inner-city, another Dublin site and a rural site. Further focus groups were held with Coordinators (n=8), Managers (n=4) Home Visitors (n=21), and parents (n=11), to which all sites were invited. Preliminary analyses are currently being conducted, with the draft report due in October 2025 and the final report and completion of the evaluation in November 2025.

3.3.6 NEIC External Evaluation

In 2021, the NEIC launched a parenting initiative to enhance the coordination of programmes and support for parents in the NEIC. It was envisaged that this initiative would also enhance the referral pathways for parents of children of all age groups in the NEIC. When the initial proposal was submitted for the role of the NEIC Parenting Support Coordinator, it was noted that this person needed to be in position for at least 3 years for the initiative's aims and objectives to be achieved and the model be in a position such that it can be sustained by Tusla or another statutory organisation. The NEIC Parenting Programme is approaching the end of its fourth year of implementation. The aim is to conduct an evaluation of the NEIC Parenting Supports, including the Coordination Programme and produce a report that assesses what's available, what's working well, what else is needed and make recommendations for the future, in line with the Young Ireland, First Five, Supporting Parents: A National Model of Parenting Support Services, Equal Start, NEIC 2024-27 Strategic Plan and National Vision for Home Visiting. The project is currently in the recruitment stage and will commence in October 2025.

3.3.7 ParentChild+ and Stretch Graduate State of the Moment Review

To help better understand the impact of and connection between ParentChild+ and Stretch Graduate on families ELI carried out a research project that pulled together a substantial amount of qualitative and quantitative data gathered over the last 17 years. While ELI has had an indisputably positive effect

on the families it has served, what emerged from the most recent data is that the prevalent needs of families have evolved significantly over the last few years. Case studies bring to life the rapid increase in diverse nationalities, migrants and asylum seekers who have additional language challenges, difficulty securing housing, and finding work and an unfamiliar system to get to grips with. More importantly, the community is seeing a rapidly growing number of children with developmental delays and additional needs. The report is available here: [State of The Moment Report 2025.pdf](#)

3.3.8 Parenting365

The Parenting365 programme is a targeted programme for parents of children aged 1-6 years who are presenting with a developmental delay or who have been diagnosed with an additional need. A research project was conducted in the early stages of the programme development to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of children with additional needs, and their families, and to evaluate the Parenting365 programme. In collaboration with the NCI School of Psychology, ELI is analyzing the qualitative data generated from this research with the goal of publishing the findings later in 2025.

3.3.9 Research Ireland Parental Attitudes and Awareness of STEM and Digital Technologies

Over the past 10 years, NCI, with support from Research Ireland (Formerly Science Foundation Ireland, SFI), has enabled over 2,000 children and 3,000 parents annually to access STEM education, develop key digital skills and build positive STEM identities. Recognising the critical role parents play in early STEM learning and the speed at which technology is changing due to advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI). This participatory research aimed to better understand parents' perceptions, with the goal of tailoring future programme design to support increased parental and children's engagement, skills and knowledge in these areas.

Three pilot interviews were held and 10 further in-depth interviews with parents from Dublin's North Inner City to find out about their thoughts and feelings towards STEM and digital technology, including AI in their own lives and families and in their children's education. In addition, a wider cohort of parents were surveyed on the same topics.

The interviews revealed that many parents feel fear when they hear the term STEM, and for some, this is associated with challenges with mathematics in school. Initial analysis reveals parental acknowledgement of both the benefits and costs to using digital technology. Despite reporting using it every day, they feel they are not good at using digital technology. In contrast to the interviews, survey results indicate that familiarity with STEM subjects is widespread in Ireland more generally, with only 8% of survey respondents finding them challenging and about 5% of survey respondents unable to answer their children's STEM-related questions. A significant majority (85%) value early STEM education for children's future, and 89% disagree with stereotypes that STEM is solely for boys or gifted children. Further analysis will continue throughout 2025, and STEM curriculums are being revised based on our findings for the 2025-2026 school year.

During the next phase of this work, we will develop a social network analysis with families that engage deeply with STEM programming at ELI, creating a series of case studies to understand the motivations and factors that have contributed to their participation. There has been much learning on the challenge of including parents in research projects and ensuring that their voices are heard and inform the process.



Nikki Ryan, ELI Researcher

3.3.10 Research Ireland STEM Family Learning and Robotic Coding Projects



As part of the Research Ireland (Formerly Science Foundation Ireland, SFI) STEM Family Learning Project, ELI has been collaborating with the School of Computing for a number of years to translate practice into theoretical frameworks and disseminate the learnings from the virtual Robotic Coding Clubs, Family e-Learning and Stem Play and Learn Home Visiting Summer Programme. Findings indicate an increase in children's STEM skills and knowledge, and improvements in positive attitudes and confidence in STEM for children and parents. There have been ten national and international publications and conference presentations on this project to date, including on the participatory research on parental attitudes towards STEM, A STEM Family e-Learning Framework and STEM Play & Learn – a summer family learning programme. Details on all publications can be found on the [NCI website](#).

Julie Booth, Senior Coordinator, attending the Frontiers in Education Conference, Washington D.C. to present on ELI's STEM Family Learning Programmes

3.3.11 Liffey Partnership Community Families Implementation Plan

In order to mitigate against significant milestone delays in babies and young children in the area, which is exacerbated by intergenerational trauma and poverty, Liffey Partnership, awarded ELI the contract to develop a strategic and operational plan, for an early intervention and prevention 'Community Families' home visiting programme in the Ballyfermot and Cherry Orchard areas. It was intended that this service would complement the current suite of wraparound supports being offered to families by Family Matters ABC Programme and other community and statutory partners in the area. This report detailed the process used along with the perinatal home visiting context, the findings from a community review and consultation sessions, Community Families readiness assessment along with a Strategic Implementation Plan. This project sought to establish the key steps in Liffey Partnership readiness for implementation of Community Families and inform the final strategic plan.

3.3.12 "Let's Talk" - Pedagogy of Emotional Literacy Research Project

In partnership with Dr. Meera Oke, Associate Professor, Early Childhood Education and Care, NCI. This project focuses on the development and effectiveness of a specially designed book by ELI called Let's Talk. Central to Let's Talk will be supporting emotional literacy by enabling educators (home visitors) and parents to develop appropriate knowledge, attitudes, strategies, and tools in key areas of emotions, such as recognising emotions and feelings; understanding the causes and consequences of emotions; accurately framing and labelling emotional experiences with a diverse vocabulary; and supporting the regulation of emotional expression. The book will be evaluated and field-tested alongside teaching strategies such as creating emotionally safe environments, modelling, and active and empathetic listening. Both educators and parents will participate in the study. It is hypothesised that Let's Talk, when implemented with these strategies, will be an effective tool for educators and parents to enhance emotional literacy in young children.

3.3.13 Home Visitor Athena Swan Participatory Research

Collaboration with NCI's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager. The aim is to explore the impact of the Home Visitors role on their own and the own family's education. Using a participatory research model, where the Home Visitors are trained in social research skills and then go on to examine the impact of their involvement in the Home Visitor programme on their own education, and that of their children. The project is at data analysis stage with the report due in December.

3.4 Research Dissemination

In line with NCI's Research Strategy, ELI continues to disseminate its academic and policy learning through papers and conferences. The following is a list of publications in alphabetical order:

3.4.1 Conference Presentations

- Adeyemo, R. & Darmody, K. (2025) Empowering Communities Through Education: The Early Learning Initiative's Inclusive Support for African Families in Dublin's Inner City, MIC Africa Day, Limerick, 29th May 2025.
- Alcala, A., Bleach, J., O'Neill, J., Kane, T., Hennessy-McCann, E., Booth, J., Pathak, P., Stynes, P. (2024). STEM Play & Learn: A Summer Family Learning Programme in Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Communities, in 2024 IEEE Frontiers in Education (FIE 2024), Oct 13th – 16, 2024, Washington DC, USA.
- Bleach, J. & Stynes, P. (2024) Using Community Action Research to develop grassroots STEM Family Learning Programmes, CARN Conference, Oct 26th – 28th, Malmo Sweden.
- Bleach, J. (2024) Delivering on UN Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) through Community Action Research, CARN Conference, Oct 26th – 28th, Malmo Sweden.
- Darmody, K., Goulding, S. & Oke, M. (2025). Supporting ECEC Practitioner Wellbeing through Selfcare Strategies in Ireland – Using Action Research. ARNA, online, 16th May 2025.
- Darmody, K. (2025) Action Research Colloquium - Action Research in Diverse Educational Contexts 13th International Action Research Colloquium, Maynooth. 27th June 2025
- Mihalka, R. & Steenson, C. (2024, 3-6 September). *Developing sustainable early childhood education systems: comparisons, contexts and the cognoscenti*. European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA), Brighton, England.
- Moore, M., McCarthy, D. (2025) *Home Visiting; Educating families, educates ourselves*. NCI Research Day, Dublin, Ireland.
- Mothersill, D., & Ryan, N., *Parental Attitudes to STEM and Digital Technology in the NEIC*. NCI Research Day, Dublin, Ireland.
- Mothersill, D., Sahni, A., Ryan, N., Hargreaves, A., Armendáriz, F., O'Riordan, B., Bleach, J. & Stynes, P. (2025). Work in Progress: Participatory research on parental attitudes towards STEM in Ireland, 2025 IEEE Engineering Education World Conference (EDUNINE), Montevideo, Uruguay, 2025, pp. 1-4, doi: 10.1109/EDUNINE62377.2025.10981386.
- O'Connor, C., Webster-Deakin, T., Lambley, R., O'Keeffe, I., Shier, H. (2024) *Values & Beliefs in Action Research* CARN Conference, Oct 26th – 28th, Malmo Sweden.
- Oke, M. & Bleach, J. (2025) *Arts-based approaches to support ECEC practitioner well-being through action research*. ARNA Conference, May 16th –17th, hybrid
- Ryan, N. (2024, 5 December). *Early childhood home visiting: addressing the challenge of evidence of long-term impact*. CRN & UCD CHiLD-RC Annual Conference, UCD, Dublin.
- White, F. (2024, 5 December). *Parenting 365: A family-centred support programme for children with developmental delay and additional needs*. CRN & UCD CHiLD-RC Annual Conference, UCD, Dublin.

3.4.2 Publications

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- Byrne, M. & Bleach, J. (2024) *Early Childhood Home Visiting – a collaborative person-centred community approach*. CARN Bulletin 2024
- Byrne, M. & Bleach, J. (In press) Early Childhood Home Visiting – a collaborative person-centred community approach, in Phelan, A. & Llyod, H. *Community Centred Care*, Routledge
- Byrne, M., Cummins L., Mabika S. *My Place to Play: An Interagency Approach to Supporting Infants and Young Children in Emergency Accommodation*. EECERA Journal.
- Darmody, K., Moore, M., Liu-Fitzpatrick, W. & McGrath, L. (In press). Identifying Need and Programme Adaptation: Processes and Learning in the Development of Home from Home. PEIN 10 Year Anniversary Report.
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- Mothersill, D., Ryan, N. Rowsome-Kelly, C., Stynes, P., & Bleach, J., (2024). Supporting Parents to Navigate the Modern Digital Ecosystem, *Ireland’s Yearbook of Education-2024-Research*
- Ryan, N. (2025) *State of the Moment Report. A Review of the ParentChild+ and Stretch Graduate Programme Evaluation*, National College of Ireland, Dublin.
- Sahni, A., Augusto Simiscuka, A., Verma, R., Hargreaves, A., Mothersill, D., Booth, J., Darmody, K., Bleach & Stynes, P. (2024). *Senior Coding Framework for Enhancing Python Skills in Students Aged 13–16* in MIPRO 2024: 47th ICT and Electronics Convention, Opatija, Croatia, Croatia, 20th to 24th May, 2024.
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4 National Centre for Parent Child Home Visiting Family Engagement

Established in 2020, ELI's National Centre partners with 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*. This section of the End of Year Report summarises the 2024-25 highlights.

Empowering families and communities across Ireland

Throughout 2024-25, backed by our Research team, ELI's National Centre upskilled 869 professionals across Ireland to deliver an ELI programme, including those delivering home visiting to 878 children and families across Ireland (Dublin, Louth, Galway, Limerick, Laois Offaly, Longford Westmeath, Kerry, Tipperary, Wexford, Waterford, with Cavan starting in September 2025). With support from DCDE, CYPSC and Tusla, 2,783 families in international protection, homeless accommodation, domestic violence, Traveller communities and families fleeing the Russian War in Ukraine have benefitted from our My Place to Play programme despite their daily challenges. We were honoured to be appointed the host agency for the Community Families Programme in March 2025 and support 1,795 families across Ireland.

Supporting Government through the National Home Visiting Programme

No poverty (SDG 1) is central to our ambition that the 10,812 babies born into poverty each year in Ireland flourish in education, career and life. In 2024, a National Home Visiting Programme was established in Tusla through the Children's Fund, set up to honour the memory of the children who died in Mother and Baby Homes. Together, along with our colleagues in the Home Visiting Alliance, we are working on a national home visiting model and data framework. This initiative, along with the DCDE What Works Building Evidence Project and recent research will shape ELI's national strategy.

Using Data to inform practice, policy and innovation

According to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023), the "collection of sufficient and reliable data on children, disaggregated to enable identification of discrimination and/or disparities in the realization of rights, is an essential part of implementation". With the development of the National Home Visiting and ABC Data Frameworks and the increase in the number of organisations implementing our home visiting programmes, we have prioritised the development of our interdisciplinary research ecosystem and 'living labs' community action research approaches in collaboration with our NCI colleagues and national partners.

Thank you

Thank you to all our partners who make ELI's work possible. 2023-2024 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.



Dr Josephine Bleach,
Director

4.2 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 and Family 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*. 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
ParentChild+ (18-36 months)	309	80
Home from Home	68	21
Community Families Home Visiting	501	28
Community Families Groups	1,294	0
My Place to Play	2,783	207
Home Visiting Alliance	0	533
Total	4,955	869



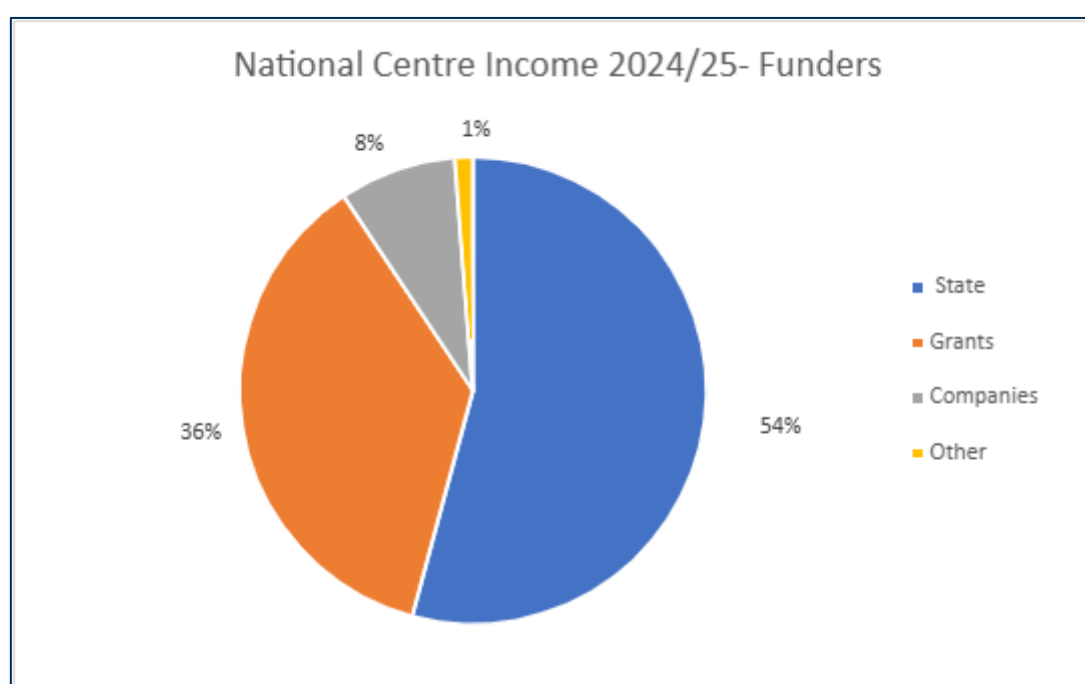
This section summarises the activities of ELI's National Centre for Home Visiting and Family Engagement this year, including National Home Visiting Support, Research and Innovation.

4.3 Finance and Governance

This section accounts for ELI's National Centre 2024-25 income and expenditure along with its governance structures. Financed by a mix of statutory and voluntary funding, including DCEDIY, Tusla and the HSE, it has tightly managed income and expenditure to ensure that programme and partner outcomes and commitments are fully achieved.

Income

The income for the National Centre was €1.36m (up from €818k in 2023/24). The following graph illustrates the breakdown in income with 36% from grants, down from 55% in 2023-24; 9% from corporate and individual funding, down from 15% in 2022/23; and 54% from the State, primarily DCEDIY and Tusla, up from 29% in 2022-23. These figures reflect the increased state funding awarded for the national support for Community Families, Parent Child+ and My Place to Play.



We would like to pay tribute to the generosity of all our donors, many of whom are long-term visionary partners, who saw the need to expand ELI's work to ensure Ireland's most vulnerable children, families and communities thrive. A special thank you to Michael Hartwell (Partner, Deloitte), Declan Quilligan (Managing Director, Citco Fund Services), Joe O'Reilly (Executive Chairman, Chartered Land) 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. We would particularly like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of Sandra Foley (Managing Director, State Street), a long-term member of the Development Committee, who has agreed to sit on the ELI Advisory Committee and chair our Docklands and East Inner City ABC Steering Group.

Did you know that by five years old, 90% of the human brain has already grown? Support vulnerable children's early brain development and subsequent educational achievement by donating what you can to [Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland | Online Fundraising \(idonate.ie\)](#)

If you are interested in partnering with ELI, please contact Josephine Bleach, ELI Director (by phone: 086 8153600 or email: josephine.bleach@ncirl.ie) or Assistant Director, Catriona Flood (by phone: 086 0296894 or by email: catriona.flood@ncirl.ie).

Expenditure

The direct spend for the National Centre for the 12 months to June 2025 was €1.1m, up from €961k in 2023-24. This increase was due to expansion in Research, My Place to Play and Sláintecare Community Families activities along with payment schedules, higher costs, both pay and non-pay. It will be covered by the income received with additional funding retained in reserve to cover future contracted programme costs. The following table illustrates the breakdown of costs for national programmes.

Programmes	Actual Costs 2024/25	Projected Costs 2025/26
	€	€
Home Visiting Alliance	94,260	5,000
National Home Visiting Office	175,969	175,000
ParentChild+ National Sites	283,750	300,000
My Place to Play	109,739	197,350
Sláintecare Community Families	266,742	160,000
Research Projects	150,853	100,000
Direct Costs	1,081,313	937,350
NCI central overheads and services (in-kind)	216,263	184,470
Total Costs	1,297,576	1,106,820

Notes:

- Direct costs are those coded to the ELI accounts.
- Indirect costs are not coded to ELI accounts and consist of overheads and services provided by NCI, such as accounting, payroll, HR, IT, facilities and marketing. It is estimated that these costs account for 20% additional cost or €216,263 in 2024-25.
- The ELI National Centre's Projected Expenditure 2025-26 is based on NCI's Strategic Plan, costs in previous years, pledged funding and outstanding grant applications. It will be amended in December 2026 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 a National Centre for ParentChild Home Visiting and Family Engagement, which supports other organisations across Ireland to implement ELI's home visiting and parent support programmes as well as its research strategy and management. We thank Tony White, Chair and all Steering Group members listed below for their advice, guidance and support over the past year and look forward to working with them in 2025-26.

ELI National Steering Group as of June 2025 is set out below:	
Chairperson - Tony White Margaret Kernan Prof Jimmy Hill, NCI Vice President (Resigned December 2025) Dr Josephine Bleach, ELI Director Anne Fitzpatrick Catriona Flood, ELI Assistant Director	Lisa Fox Christine McCann Dr Breda McTaggart, Dean of School of Business and Social Studies (Joined March 2025) Michelle Moore, National Home Visiting Manager

4.4 National Home Visiting Training and Support Centre

Developing and scaling up sustainable models of Home Visiting programmes across Ireland so that the 10,812 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, ELI's National Home Visiting Support Centre, supports the delivery of high quality evidenced-based sustainable models of Home Visiting and family engagement programmes across Ireland. This is a complex task in an everchanging policy and societal context. Our work ensures that the structures, processes and training to enable high quality governance, accountability and implementation of home visiting programmes in different organisations are in place and are working. This section details this work.

- **National Home Visiting Training and Support Centre**, facilitates the delivery and sustainable expansion of ELI's home visiting programmes to communities across Ireland through the provision of comprehensive support to Managers, Coordinators, and Home Visitors nationwide. With the support of the ReThink Scaling Education Fund, the National Centre has embedded quality assurance practices to guide the programme's growth with integrity. The national team are key to delivering high quality responsive training, support, and oversight, thereby children and families across Ireland receive the support they need to thrive in education, career and life.
- **ParentChild+ National Programme**, which operates in 14 sites across Ireland, is a pre-literacy and parenting programme that strengthens families and prepares children to succeed academically, while empowering the parent to be their child's first and best teacher. Over a two-year period, Home Visitors model oral language, reading and play in their twice-weekly visits. The families then continue the activities in their own time, thereby enabling the ParentChild+ child and their siblings to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills.
- **Home from Home Programme**, which operates across 5 sites, is an adaptation of ParentChild+ to cater for the realities of families living in homeless/emergency accommodation.
- **Community Families Programme** caters for parents of children 0-3 years old. Delivered through a mix of home visiting and parent support groups, it provides information, support and builds trusted relationships, friendships and connectivity in local communities. In collaboration with the HSE, Tusla, Katharine Howard Foundation, it operates across 8 sites across Ireland.
- **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.
- **Home Visiting Alliance**, a collaboration of 5 Irish evidence-based early childhood home visiting programmes (Community Mothers, Infant Mental Health, Lifestart, ParentChild+ and Preparing for Life) represents the collective national voice of early childhood home visiting. Together with the National Home Visiting Programme, it is developing a national model for home visiting as outlined in First Five, Government early years strategy.

4.4.1 National Home Visiting Training and Support Centre

Expanding ELI's home visiting to marginalised communities across Ireland is a key priority in NCI's 2022-27 Strategic Plan. Our goal is to ensure that all children, regardless of their background or location, receive the necessary support to enter school equipped with the language, literacy, and numeracy skills for educational success. Our National Home Visiting Training and Support Centre supports community organisations across Ireland who want to replicate one or more of our home visiting and family support programmes. It has allowed us to broaden the reach of our suite of innovative programmes beyond Dublin's Inner City and reach more vulnerable families across Ireland.

As the number of community organisations delivering one of our home visiting programmes increases and the programme's national reputation continues to grow, so too does the need to expand and diversify our training and support offerings. Beginning with ParentChild+ in 2009, we are now supporting the delivery of Home from Home, My Place to Play and Community Families nationwide. Working closely with our colleagues in the Home Visiting Alliance and the National Home Visiting Office in Tusla, we are contributing to the development of the national model of home visiting as outlined in First Five, Government's Early Years Strategy

The **Rethink Ireland Scaling Education Fund** has been instrumental in supporting the National Centre in advancing to this next phase. With this support, our ParentChild+ National Strategy and Implementation Plan 2024-25 focused on scaling the programme through a network of community and national partners while ensuring sufficient capacity, governance, and sustainability. An EU Development Plan was created to enhance research and implementation through European partnerships. The learning from this project has shaped the development of our National Home Visiting Training and Support Centre.

Funding permitting, we are considering extending our national suite of home visiting and parent support programmes to include Stretch Graduate, Parenting 365 and other emerging innovative programmes. Together, these initiatives reflect our commitment to delivering a holistic, inclusive, and sustainable model of early intervention and family engagement across Ireland.

From Start-up to Implementation

ELI helps community organisations to set up and implement ParentChild+, Home from Home, Community Families and My Place to Play. Our national team supports local managers, coordinators and home visitors across Ireland through every step of the process from the initial discussions to full implementation. Training, coaching and mentoring are provided by ELI to the local managers, coordinators and Home Visitors on an ongoing basis. Programme evaluation is completed regularly (monthly reports and twice-yearly assessments) through ELI's Research Department. If you are interested in delivering one of ELI's home visiting programmes in your community, please contact Michelle Moore, ELI National Home Visitor Manager (by phone: 086 4666407 or email: michelle.moore@ncirl.ie)

Training and Professional Development

In 2024-25, continuous professional development (CPD) remained at the heart of all of ELI's Home Visiting and Family Engagement Programmes, both local and national, ensuring that Coordinators and Home Visitors were equipped with the dispositions, skills, and knowledge needed to support families facing poverty, homelessness, displacement, trauma, and other challenges. Professional development included trauma-informed practice, infant mental health, critical incident management, restorative practice, and culturally responsive engagement with families in emergency accommodation and international protection. Home Visiting teams received training in promoting early literacy, language, and play, as well as in strengthening parental confidence and wellbeing through evidence-informed approaches. Peer learning, mentoring, and structured fidelity and quality assurance supports were

embedded across programmes, supported by the ELI's national team. This investment in staff capacity ensures that Home Visitors are confident and skilled practitioners who can build trusting relationships, respond to complex family needs, and deliver high-quality, consistent support that improves outcomes for children and families nationwide

ParentChild+ and Home from Home

- Mandatory training was provided for all Home Visitors with weekly supervision supplemented by additional training in self-care and restorative practice.
- Home Visitors completed 865.77 hours of internal and external CPD eLearning courses along with in person Infant Mental Health, Developmental Parenting, and Meithal training
- 39 Home Visitors and Coordinators engaged in training on the Let's Talk book
- 19 Coordinators and Home Visitors are pursuing academic/professional qualifications:
 - 4 Home Visitors engaging in a level 5 in subjects such as Child Health and Wellbeing and Early Childhood Education and Care.
 - 11 Home Visitors engaging in a level 6 in subjects such as Curriculum and Pedagogical Practice for Early Childhood Home Visiting. 1 Home Visitor has completed level 6 in Special Needs Assisting.
 - 2 Home Visitors engaging in a level 7 in subjects such as Leadership, Governance and change Management in Home Visiting.
 - 1 completing a Master's in Child Youth and Family Studies.
- Communities of Practice, Mentoring and Support:
 - 16 Coordinators attended 3 Community of Practice Days for training in quality assurance, fidelity to the programme, time management, budget management along with an overview of the Stretch Graduate Programme, an additional support for vulnerable families.
 - 14 Coordinators attended monthly online support sessions relating to managing and supporting staff.

My Place to Play

- 165 professionals attended 6 online briefing sessions on the infant and toddler packs facilitated by a Speech and Language Therapist and MPTP Coordinator

Community Families

- Continuous support provided by Senior Specialist up to March 2025 with further support provided by national team to June 2025.
- Two sites were supported to begin their Community Families journey with Louth Partnership commencing delivery in May 2025 and Liffey Partnership ready for delivery in September 2025.
- Monthly online Community of Practice sessions were held for coordinators in 8 sites with an average attendance of 7.
- 19 people attend the national Community Families gathering in Portlaoise on 22nd May

Home Visiting Alliance

- 248 participants engaged The Wheel Training Links Programme with
 - 69 attending the session on Cultural Awareness on 6th December 2024
 - 75 attending the session on Domestic Abuse on 11th April 2025
 - 52 attending the session on Child Development 0-3 on 20th May 2025
 - 52 attending the session on Child Development 3-5 on 27th May 2025
- 287 participants engaged in the DCEDIY What Works Building Evidence training. There were 2 sessions for Project Coordinator/Managers on 8th and 11th November 2024 with 48 and 49 attendees respectively. There were 3 sessions for Home Visitor on 28th February 14th March and 28th March with 74, 57 and 59 attendees respectively.

4.4.2 ParentChild+ National Programme Delivery

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 17 years, ELI has delivered ParentChild+ to vulnerable families with children aged 16 months to 3 years in Dublin. Beginning with 15 families in 2007, numbers have grown to 416 in 2024/25 and 14 sites across Ireland.

Extending ParentChild+ to other disadvantaged communities across Ireland is central to ELI's 2020-25 Strategic Plan as ELI 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 Centre is committed to scaling up ParentChild+ in a sustainable way with Cavan County Local Development rolling out ParentChild+ in Cavan in Sept 2025 and hopes for the delivery in Cork later in the year. It also ensures fidelity to the programme and high-quality service delivery through its ongoing comprehensive support to ParentChild+ Managers, Coordinators and Home Visitors around the country.

Programme Delivery

- 416 families across Ireland received 12,352 home visits from September 2024 – June 2025.

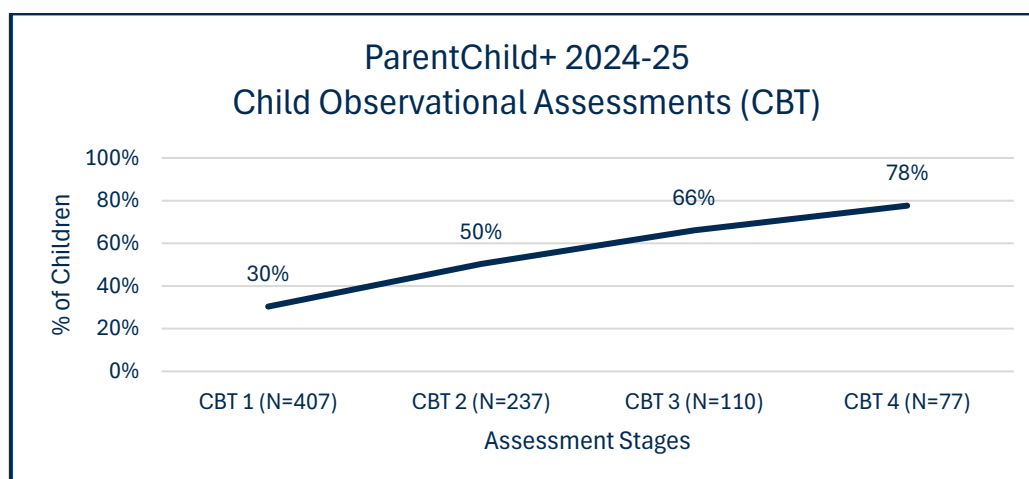
ParentChild+ Area	Started	No. of families	No. of Home Visitors
NCI Dublin's Inner City, D1,2,3,4,8	2007	107	26
Dublin South City Partnership, D4,6,8,12	2009	18	3
ABC Grangegorman/Daughters of Charity, D7	2014	29	5
Garryowen Community Development, Limerick	2015	57	5
Galway Rural Development Ballinasloe, Galway	2015	15	4
Liffey Partnership (ABC), Ballyfermot, Dublin	2017	27	6
St Ultan's, Cherry Orchard, Dublin	2017	16	5
Blue Skies Initiative (ABC), Clondalkin, Dublin	2019	17	4
Louth ABC (ABC), Dundalk, Louth	2019	34	4
Youth New Ross, Wexford	2021	19	4
Brill FRC, Waterford	2021	23	4
Galway Rural Development Tuam, Galway	2022	13	3
Parents First, Tullamore, Offaly	2023	14	3
Louth ABC (ABC), Drogheda, Louth	2024	27	4
Total		416	80

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

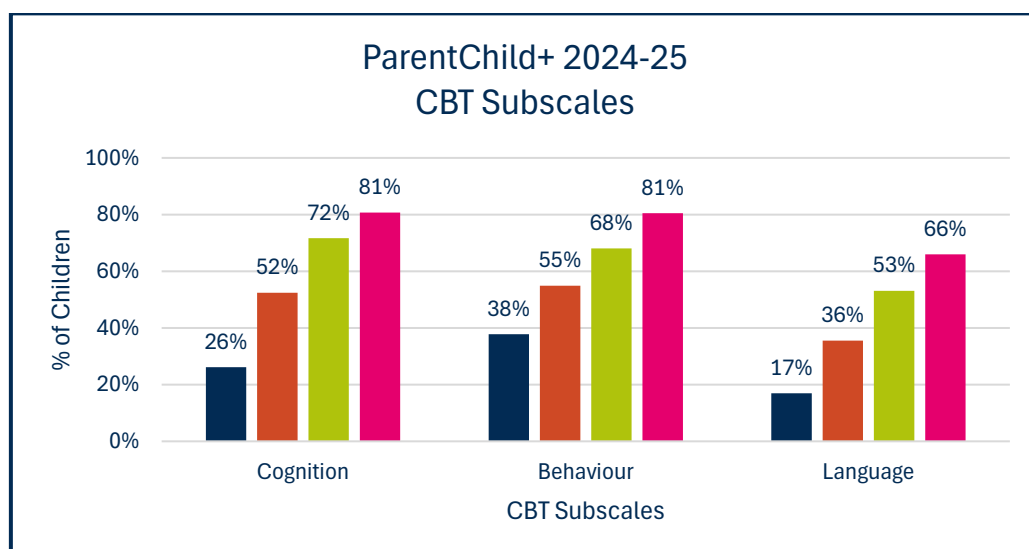
To monitor the developmental trajectory of the children and highlight the parent-child relationship, highlighting areas of learning and interaction that need to be addressed, Home Visitors complete two observational assessments (Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)) at the following points throughout the programme: CBT & PACT 1 after the 6th visit , CBT & PACT 2 after the 44th visit , CBT & PACT 3 after the 68th visit, CBT & PACT 4 after the 92nd visit. In the following graphs, the percentages displayed are calculated based on 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.

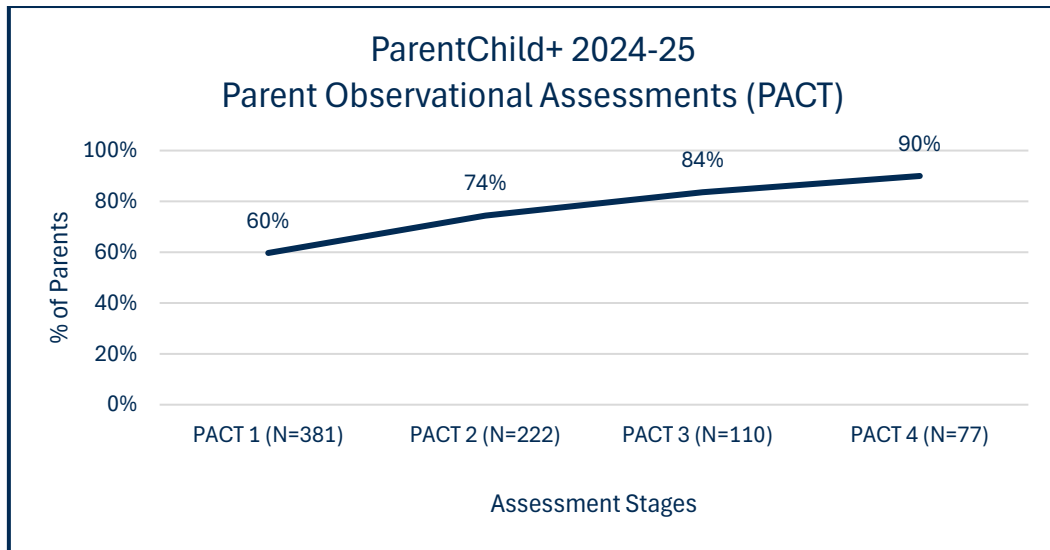
The percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones across the 14 ParentChild+ sites gradually increased throughout the programme, from 30% at the beginning of the programme to 50%, 66% and, finally, 78% on completion of the programme. The percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones after completing the full programme has increased by 7% from 2023-24 (71%).



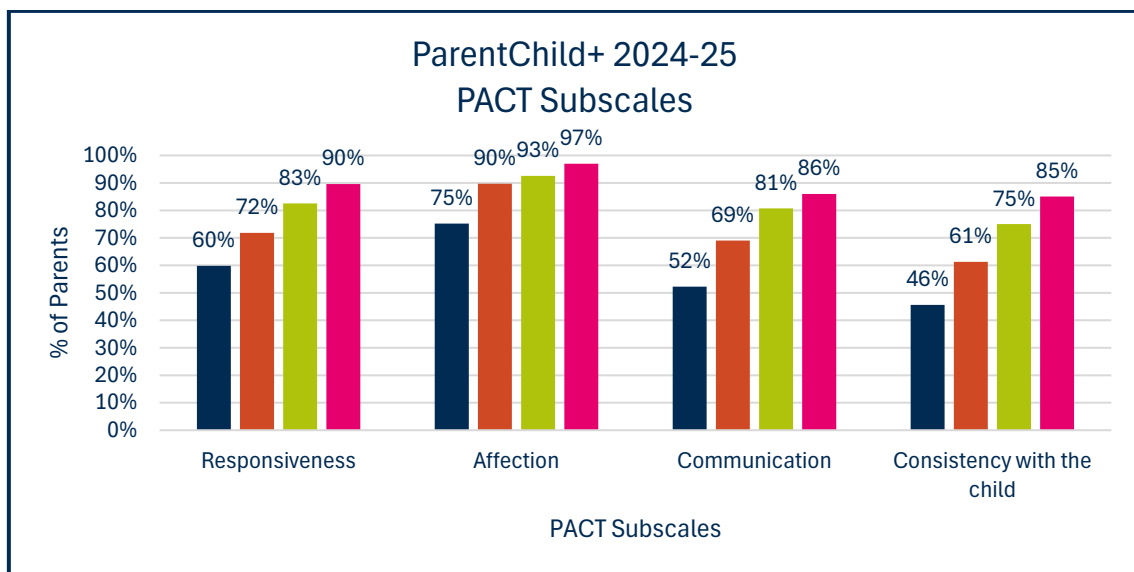
Children engaging in the programme demonstrated developmental increases across the three CBT subscales (cognition, behaviour and language) at each stage of the programme. As can be seen below the greatest overall increase was found in the percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones in the area of cognition (55%), followed by increases in language (49%) and behaviour (43%), the same pattern as the assessment scores in 2023-24.



There was also a significant increase in the percentage of parents across all ParentChild+ sites having high-quality interactions with their children from 60% at PACT 1 to 90% at PACT 4, an increase from parents in PACT 4 in 2023-24 (84%). The percentage of parents having high-quality interactions with their children after completing the full programme has increased by 7% from 2023-24 (73%).



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, parents' communication with their child and parents' consistency with their child) at each stage of assessment. This was particularly evident in parents' consistency (39%) and positive communication with their children (34%). This was followed by increases in responsiveness (30%) and affection (22%). This followed a similar pattern as assessment scores in 2023-24.



Comments from parents included



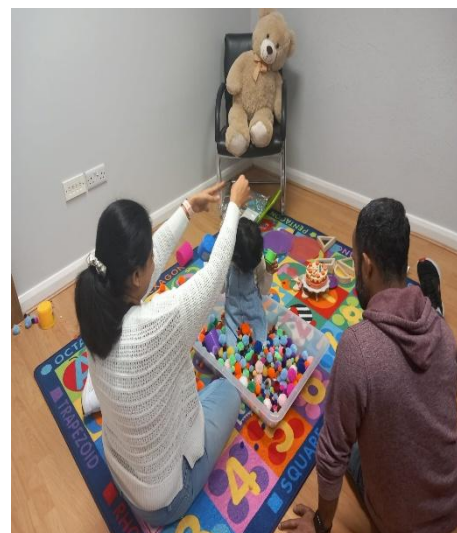
"There are no words to describe how to thank you for the time you gave for (Child's name) development. Thank you for all the help and support." [Parent]



"Thank you so much for all your hard work, compassion and for being so caring with my child and so understanding, you've brought him on so much since we first started with you, he's a different child now, you're amazing at your job" [Parent]

4.4.3 Home from Home National Programme Delivery

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 (see 2019 ([Section 5.4.5](#))). The Home from Home National Centre is committed to scaling up Home from Home in a sustainable way. This year saw 4 sites plus Dublin's Inner City (DIC) deliver the programme nationwide. The deduction from last year's 6 sites was due to lack of funding in one site and another deciding to concentrate their delivery with ParentChild+ for all families they serve.



Programme Delivery

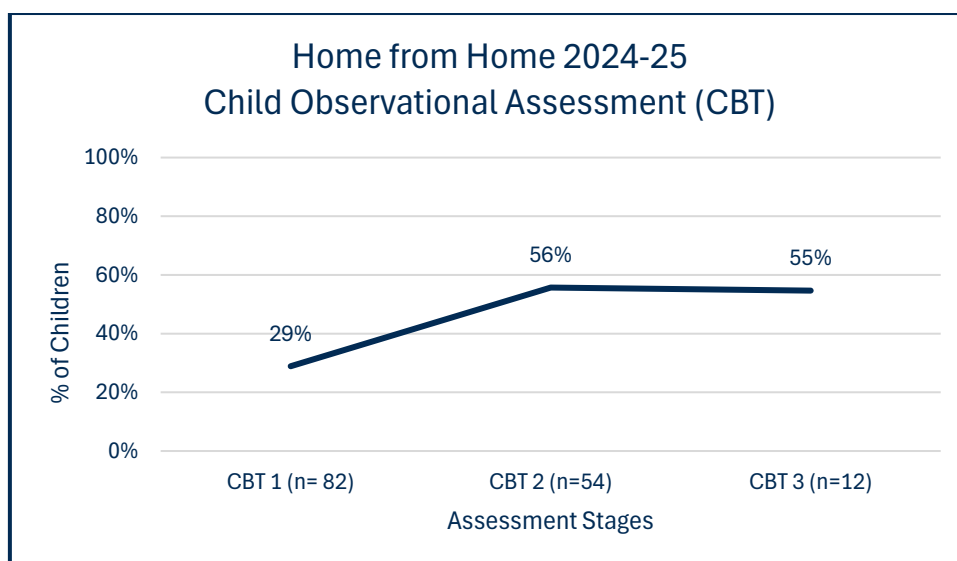
- 98 families nationally received 792 home visits from September 2024 – June 2025.

Home from Home Area	Started	No. of families	No. of Home Visitors
NCI Dublin's Inner City D1,2,3,48	2019	30	9
Blue Skies Initiative (ABC), Clondalkin, Dublin	2021	13	4
Youth New Ross, Wexford	2022	31	3
Louth ABC (ABC), Dundalk	2024	15	2
Louth ABC (ABC), Drogheda	2024	9	3
Total		98	21

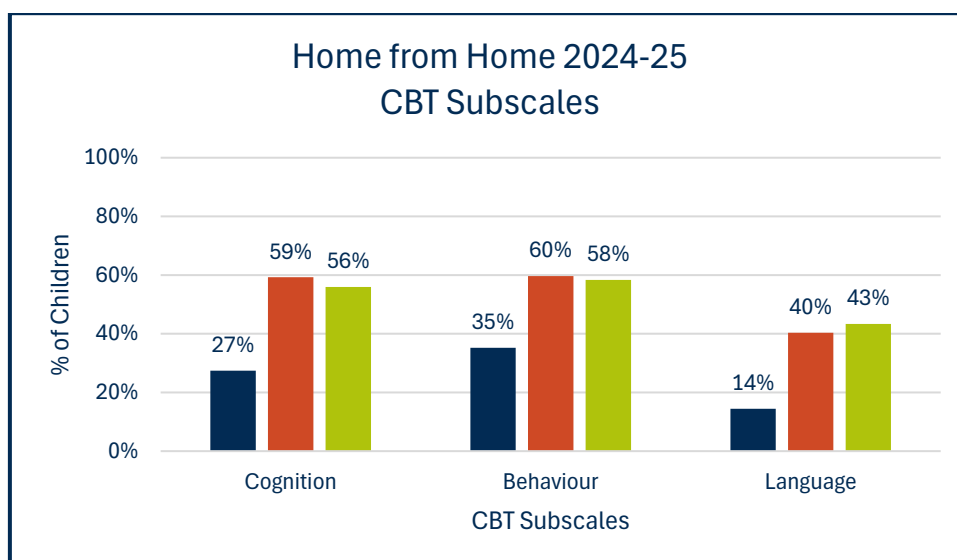
Programme Assessment- Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)

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 4.4.2](#). for further details on these assessments).

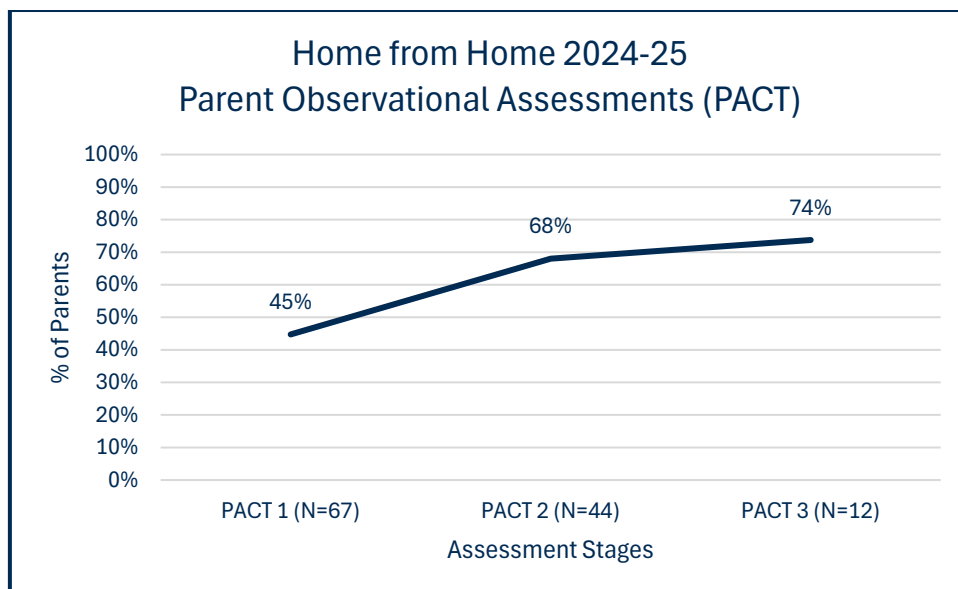
The 2024-25 cohort of children started the programme at greater level of need (29% at baseline) in comparison to 2023-24 (35% at baseline). This increased by 27% at CBT 2 (56%) and then plateaued at 55% at CBT 3. While the overall percentage of development was less than 2023-24 (68% at CBT 3), the increases at CBT 2 were greater (56% in comparison to 48%) and the majority of those progressing to CBT 3 completed the programme on less than 20 visits.



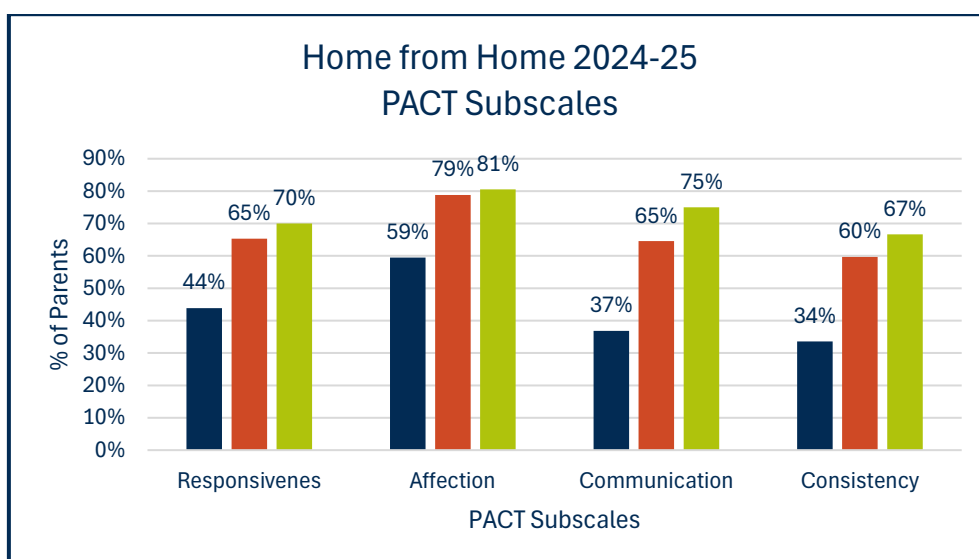
Children engaging in the programme demonstrated developmental increases across the three CBT subscales (cognition, behaviour and language). As can be seen below the greatest overall increase was found in the percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones in cognition and language (29%), followed by increases in behaviour (23%).



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 68% at PACT 2, and 74% at PACT 3. A lesser number of parents began the programme exhibiting positive interactions with their children than in 2023-24 (51%), yet those assessed again at PACT 2 were comparable (71%).



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' positive communication which increased by 38%. This was followed by increases in consistency (33%), responsiveness (26%), and affection (21%).



Comments from participants included



Child in homeless accommodation who finds it difficult to focus, when given one of the VISMs said "oh my God, this is amazing" [Home Visitor]



[talking about the improvements seen through the programme] Mam's confidence grew a lot, started to believe more in herself" [Home Visitor]



I wish to have this programme in our new place. [Parent]

4.4.4 Sláintecare Community Families National Programme

Commencing in 2019 as a collaboration with the local Community Mother Programmes, Tusla, HSE, ELI and the Katharine Howard Foundation, Community Families 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.

Community Families, an evidence-based and integrated national home visiting programme which aims to improve outcomes for children and families in pregnancy and early childhood, was launched nationally in October 2024 with each site holding their own local launch.

Established in 2022, the Community Families National Oversight and Support Group (NOSG), co-chaired by Tusla and the HSE, has responsibility for the oversight and guidance of the Community Families Programme. From July 2024 to March 2024, a Senior Specialist was providing support to Community Families sites across Ireland with ELI appointed the host agency in April 2025. Since then, our national centre team have been working closely with the NOSG and 8 local sites on training, support and data collection. A ninth site, Liffey Partnership, will commence in September 2025.

Programme Delivery

- 627 families supported through home visits, strengthening parent–child relationships and building parenting confidence.
- 1,760 families engaged in group activities (Parent & Baby/Toddler sessions, Infant Massage, weaning workshops), promoting peer support and shared learning.
- 165 onward signposting/referrals provided, ensuring families were connected to additional services for health, wellbeing, and community supports.
- 48 interagency contacts maintained and strengthened, fostering collaborative working across services to provide wrap-around support for families.

Community Families Area	Started	No. of families receiving home visiting	No. of families attending groups	No. of Home Visitors
Dublin Docklands	2015	126	466	8
Clonmel-Tipperary South	1999	122	75	7
Tipperary North	2000	50	114	2
Laois Offaly	2001	45	20	3
Kerry	2001	174	74	6
Longford Westmeath	2008	72	802	4
Limerick	1990	27	199	4
Louth	2025	11	10	2
Total		627	1760	36

4.4.5 My Place to Play Programme

My Place to Play (MPTP) is an innovative, portable programme aiming to enhance interactions between parents and their children from birth to the toddler years living in homeless/emergency/overcrowded accommodation. The programme provides age-appropriate toys and activities to nurture physical, emotional (sense of safety, well-being and belonging), cognitive and language development. The original concept was designed for infants and included a playmat that doubles as a bag for the toys to give infants a place to enjoy crucial tummy time. 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.

MPTP was further developed by a multi-agency National Implementation Group comprising of the ELI, Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) National and local areas, Tusla Partnership, Prevention and Family Support (PPFS), and a representative from HSE's Health Promotion team is due to join in 2025-26. It is hoped that other relevant stakeholders will join the group in the coming year. The project is a leading example of the upscaling of a multi-agency, collaborative and responsive project from local to regional to national level. In 2022-23, 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. In 2023-24 programme was extended to reach Traveller families and families living in domestic violence accommodation. Commissioned through CYPSC National and in continued collaboration with PPFS, Tusla, the Early Learning Initiative worked through local CYPSC networks and City and Childcare Committees to reach families.

Programme Delivery

5 national organisations collaborated on the My Place to Play project (CYPSC, PPFS, IPAS, ABC, Tusla and HSE).

- Packs and mats were distributed across 22 counties in the Republic of Ireland
- 1,224 Baby Mats were purchased for families nationally
 - o 15 mats were delivered by ELI to families in Dublin's Inner City
 - o 1,209 mats were delivered through 74 local organisations to families nationally.
- 1,578 Toddler Packs were purchased nationally this year.
 - o 4 packs were delivered to families in Dublin's Inner City by ELI.
 - o 1,574 packs were delivered through 69 organisations to families nationally.
- 165 professionals attended 6 online briefing sessions on the infant and toddler packs facilitated by a Speech and Language Therapist and MPTP Coordinator
- Tip sheets for how to use the packs were translated into 15 different languages; QR code was added for easy access for families to translations in 15 languages.
- 2,006 Baby mats and 2,234 toddler packs were requested but it was not possible to meet all requests due to funding restrictions and the commitment to an equal number of packs going to each county/CYPSC area in Ireland. The discrepancy between demand and supply was particularly prevalent for families in cramped living conditions and for families in domestic violence service. The demand for packs and mats for families living in cramped accommodation was over twice the available supply; 695 were requested and 256 were delivered. For families in domestic violence services the demand was over three times the supply, 350 packs/mats were requested and 134 were delivered.

Participant Feedback

Parents and practitioners are asked to complete an evaluation two weeks after the parent has received the My Place to Play mat or pack. In total 78 parents and 55 practitioners completed the evaluation.

Feedback was positive with 92% (n=72) of parents reporting that 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 noted that their children enjoyed the variety of colourful, age-appropriate toys and that they provided fun opportunities for parent-child bonding and for the children to practice colours, shapes, and communication skills. Practitioners agreed with these sentiments, with 93% (n=51) reporting that the mat and pack provided more opportunities for the parents to play with their children, and valuable learning opportunities for child development. 97% (n=76) of parents and 98% (n=54) of practitioners would recommend the mat and pack to other parents.



Child playing with the My Place to Play Toddler Pack

Practitioners were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the briefing sessions, 97% (n=126) found the sessions interesting and 98% (n=127) found the content easy to understand. 97% (n=126) believe that the content will support the improvement of the quality of their practice and 92% (n=119) felt that they are confident in making changes in their workplaces after the briefing sessions

Comments from participants included



"I didn't know how important play and tummy time were – my boy has gotten so good at holding his head up since using the mat." [Parent]



"The packs give a purpose to reaching out to families who are living in difficult situations, and who are possibly not linking with any other services, gives an opportunity for professionals to meet these children and families and to recognise when a parent is really struggling and try to refer to suitable supports if that is the case." [Practitioner]

4.4.6 Home Visiting Alliance



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. With the establishment of a new National Home Visiting Programme in Tusla as part of the Children's Fund, the National Home Visiting Manager and Data Quality Officer joined the HVA in October 2024. 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.

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 years 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 locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Share our common learning at programme, approach, implementation, and policy levels.

Programme Delivery

- 11 executive group meetings chaired by the Director of ELI with the ELI Administrator providing administrative assistance.
- 9 webinars or event including National Home Visiting Day on Friday 13th October 2025
- Research
 - DCEDIY What Works Building Evidence Collaborative Exploratory Study of Data Definitions, Knowledge, Frameworks and Practices across Early Childhood Home Visiting Programmes was completed in 2024-25 with the report to be launched in October 2025. 287 stakeholders engaged in consultation and/or training sessions as part of the project.
 - Contributed to the *Home Visiting Review and National Vision for the Future* (McGilloway et al, 2024), which was published in October 2024
- Training:
 - 248 participants engaged The Wheel Training Links Programme with
 - 69 attending the session on Cultural Awareness on 6th December 2024
 - 75 attending the session on Domestic Abuse on 11th April 2025
 - 52 attending the session on Child Development 0-3 on 20th May 2025
 - 52 attending the session on Child Development 3-5 on 27th May 2025
 - 287 participants engaged in the DCEDIY What Works Building Evidence training. There were 2 sessions for Project Coordinator/ Managers on 8th and 11th November 2024 with 48 and 49 attendees respectively. There were 3 sessions for Home Visitor on 28th February, 14th March and 28th March with 74, 57 and 59 attendees respectively.
- Advocacy and Communication
 - Continued engagement with National Home Visiting Office, DCEDIY, Tusla, HSE, and others on scaling home visiting and national data outcomes frameworks.

5 Dublin's Inner City Programmes

Since 2006, ELI has partnered with our local Dublin's Inner City community partners to improve the educational aspirations and outcomes of children and young people. Delivering and sustaining an innovative suite of Home Visiting and Family/Community engagement programmes, while responding to complex and challenging emerging needs is the key focus of the Dublin Inner City team. This section of the End of Year Report gives the 2024-25 highlights, along with a brief overview of ELI's Dublin's Inner City and summaries of all its programmes, including the ABC in Dublin Docklands and Grangegorman and NEIC programmes.

More details are available on the website: www.ncirl.ie/eli. If you would like more information, please contact Assistant Director Home Visiting and Parent Support, Catriona Flood by email at catriona.flood@ncirl.ie or phone 086 0296894 or Assistant Director Community Services Programmes, Brigina O'Riordan by e-mail brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie or phone: 086 7965572.

Sustain and evolving our Dublin's Inner-City Hub

NCI/ELI became the new lead agency for the Grangegorman ABC Programme in January 2025. This change complements ELI's strategic objective to sustain and evolve our Dublin's Inner-City Hub. NCI has a long and distinguished history of championing social change and working to rebalance the scales of inequality. With NCI/ELI as the host agency for the Grangegorman ABC programme, we can amplify the collective voice for children and families living in Dublin's the inner city and strengthen our capacity to impact change.

In October 2024, the new National Community Families Programme was launched in the Department of Health. Following on from that, ELI officially launched our local Dublin's Inner City Community Families Programme in February 2025. We are delighted to now be a Community Families site after time and work was spent ensuring that our ABC 0-2 Home Visting Programme was adapted to incorporate the core elements of Community Families. As part of this change, the ABC 0-5 Parent Support Groups programme has moved under the umbrella of the Community Families Programme. This offers consistency with other Community Families programmes throughout the country and strengthens our programme delivery in Dublin's Inner City.

Provide safe spaces, where good things happen for children, families and community

Over 2024-2025, the whole ELI team have settled into our new offices in Spencer Dock. We have welcomed many professionals and parents to events, training sessions and meetings in our new space. Children and young people, continue to attend events in NCI's main campus which offers excellent spaces for them to grow, learn and play.

2024-2025, was a busy time for launches in NCI. We were delighted to have the Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohoe, TD to launch our new PlayLab and Sanctuary Space in January 2025. This space was generously funded by the Community Recognition Fund and the Community Support Fund. Without their support, we would not be able to develop a dedicated, safe and developmentally appropriate space for under 5's.

Responding to Changing Contexts and Challenges

Dublin inner city continues to face significant challenges, requiring an adaptive approach to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families. There continues to be high numbers of families living in homelessness, IPAS and other emergency accommodation, as well as persistent issues of poverty, disability and mental health service waiting lists, addiction, and crime. With the support of our valued funders ELI is working in partnership with other community partners to ensure that child and family services provided are trauma informed. Our Restorative Practices programmes empower educators

and professionals across the community to create environments that are safe, respectful, and empowering. Our Restorative Parenting and Self Care Senior Coordinator supports parents, guardians and practitioners in the area to build resilience, focus on caring for themselves to be the best they can be for the children in their care. This is all done in a person centred, trauma informed manner.

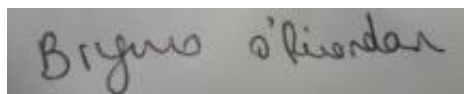
Parenting in the Digital Ecosystem

Family learning and parent engagement are key to ELI's successful education programmes. Skilled staff, many from the local community, work as peer educators to bring a joy of learning into the home, supporting parents as their child's first and best teacher. Over the past 10 years, ELI has facilitated inclusive cross sectoral STEM learning programmes that enable children to access STEM education, develop key digital skills and build positive STEM identities and engagement. New digital technologies across society have brought new challenges for children and parents. Through ongoing research supported by Research Ireland, ELI is seeking to understand parental attitudes and engagement with STEM. This will enable us to further enhance and develop programmes supporting parents to safely navigate STEM and emerging technologies for themselves and their children. This will add to our suite of prevention and early intervention programmes offered across the inner city and address the increasing 'digital divide' by giving parents the skills and confidence to safely engage with the digital world.

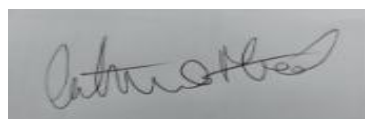
Thank You

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 2025-26.

Kind regards,



Brígina O'Riordan
Assistant Director
Community Services Programme



Catriona Flood
Assistant Director
Home Visiting and Parent Support

5.2 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 increase 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=1,473 families) - positive home environment through playful learning interactions.
- **Literacies** (N=3,684 children) – improving social, emotional, language, coding and thinking skills.
- **Educational Guidance** (N=466 young people) - accessing education and career opportunities.
- **Capacity Building, Training and Mentoring** (N=490 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.



Indicators of Learning
(89%, n= 1912)



Indicators of Satisfaction
(92%, n=1999)



Students Aspiring to 3rd level education.
(68%, n=177)

Dublin's Inner City is one of the most disadvantaged areas in the country, with a concentration of high-need families including homelessness, addiction and gangland crime. Our partners enable marginalized children, their families and the community, to acquire the skills and self-confidence

needed to dream big and go far. ELI's Dublin's Inner Programmes are funded through a mix of government, primarily the Area Based Child (ABC) Programme, North East Inner City (NEIC) initiative, corporate and philanthropic funding.

5.2.1 Area-based Childhood (ABC) Programme

The Area Based Child Poverty Programme (ABC), is a national prevention and early intervention programme funded by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality via Tusla. The ABC Programme was established in 2013/2014 to deliver better outcomes for children and families living in areas where poverty is most deeply entrenched. There are 12 ABC programmes across Ireland and NCI/ELI are the lead agency for the Dublin Docklands and East Inner City and Grangegorman programmes Area Based Childhood Programme (ABC) Tusla - Child and Family Agency. The ABC programme works in partnership with communities, services and government to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

Delivered by NCI/ELI since 2014, the **Dublin Docklands and East Inner-City ABC programme** was designed by a consortium of local statutory and non-statutory services based in the inner city. The programme offers the whole population prevention programmes (e.g. Zoom Ahead with Books) alongside early intervention programmes, targeting specific needs of the local children (e.g. ParentChild+). This blended approach aims to support all children within the Dublin Docklands and East Inner City.

NCI/ELI became the lead agency for the **Grangegorman ABC programme** in January 2025 and its consortium of organisations and services working with children and families in Dublin's northwest inner city. Like the Dublin Docklands and East Inner-City ABC programme, Grangegorman ABC offers the whole population prevention programmes (e.g. Stepping Up Transition Programme) alongside early intervention programmes, targeting specific needs of local children (e.g. the multi-disciplinary team). Since January 2025, the Steering Group, Consortium and the ELI Grangegorman team have been reviewing programme provision, identifying current needs in the community along with gaps in current service provision.

5.2.3 North East Inner City (NEIC) Programme Implementation Board

The NEIC Programme Implementation Board led by an independent chair, Jim Gavin, is a key partner of ELI, funding valuable programmes for children, young people, families and community members in Dublin North East Inner city. ELI shares the NEIC's vision of "making the North East Inner City a safe, attractive and vibrant living and working environment for the community and its families with opportunities for all to lead full lives". ELI was delighted that NEIC funding was continued in 2024-25 for Restorative Practices, Doodle Den, Parenting Coordinator and Educational Guidance programmes at second level. Additional funding was received for Parenting 365.

5.2.4 Philanthropic and Corporate Partnerships/Partners

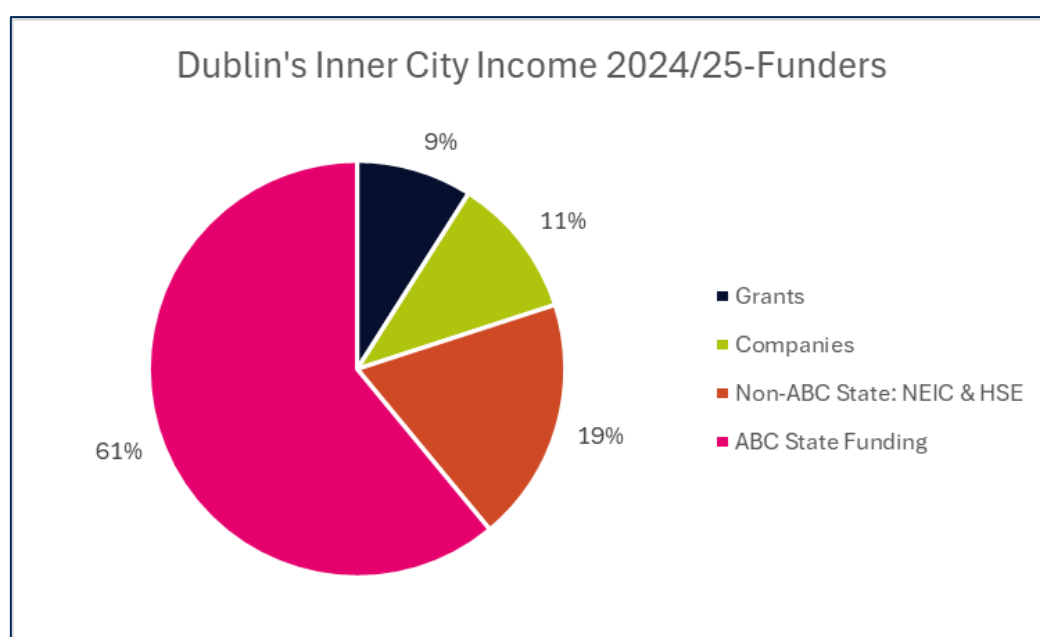
ELI has successfully engaged a network of philanthropic and corporate partners to extend and enhance our continuum of educational support for children and families in Dublin inner city, from birth through to third level. We are grateful for their contributions and their shared commitment to creating a real, measurable, and lasting impact on the lives and educational outcomes of children and young people. We are always looking to grow our network of corporate partners and would welcome the opportunity to speak with companies interested in supporting our mission. Please contact Brigina O'Riordan (by phone: 086 7965572 or email: brigina.oriordan@ncirl.ie) for more information on how your organisation could get involved with ELI.

5.3 Finance and Governance

This section accounts for ELI's Dublin's Inner City 2024/25 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 €2.1m (up from €1.6m in 2023/24), mainly as a result of the awarding of the Grangegorman ABC contract. The following graph illustrates the breakdown in income with 61% from ABC Programme, up from 49% in 2023/24, 19% from other State sources, primarily NEIC and HSE, down from 25% in 2023/24 9% from grants, down from 15% in 2023/24, 11% from corporate funding, down from 12% in 2023/24.



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 Michael Hartwell (Partner, Deloitte), Declan Quilligan (Managing Director, Citco Fund Services), Joe O'Reilly (Executive Chairman, Chartered Land) 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. We would particularly like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of Sandra Foley (Managing Director, State Street), a long-term member of the Development Committee, who has agreed to sit on the ELI Advisory Committee and chair our Docklands and East Inner City ABC Steering Group.

Did you know that by five years old, 90% of the human brain has already grown? Support vulnerable children's early brain development and subsequent educational achievement by donating what you can to [Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland | Online Fundraising \(idonate.ie\)](#)

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)

Expenditure 2024-25

The combined spend for Dublin's Inner City Programmes (including the ABC funding) for the 12 months to June 2025 was €2.25m (up from €1.7m in 2023/24) with expenditure on the ABC Programmes amounting to €1.3m (up from €863k in 2023/24) and €954k (up from €828k in 2023/24) through the NEIC, HSE, corporate donations and grants. This increase in expenditure was due to increased activities and related delivery costs; both pay and non-pay. It will be covered by restricted funding received in 2023/24, which was retained in reserve to cover contracted 2024/25 programme costs. The following table illustrates the breakdown of costs for national programmes.

Programmes	Actual Costs 2024/25	Projected Costs 2025/26
ABC D Community Families home visiting	217,567	230,000
ABC D ParentChild+ home visiting	262,951	270,000
ABC G ParentChild+/home from home/0-2	85,167	157,644
ParentChild+/Home from Home	164,507	170,000
Stretch Graduate Home Visiting+	95,447	100,000
Parent Child Home Visiting	825,639	927,644
ABC D Community Families Groups	112,461	120,000
ABC G Circle of Security & Groups	21,000	70,000
Community Families Groups	53,375	40,000
Parenting 365	89,508	85,000
ABC G Infant Mental Health/0-2 support	18,030	100,000
ABC G Multidisciplinary team	193,434	300,000
ABC D Restorative Practice Parenting	54,788	55,000
NEIC Parenting Coordinator	74,971	65,000
Parent Child Support Groups	617,567	835,000
ABC D Early Numeracy	49,329	50,000
ABC G Early Years Community Support	13,003	20,000
ABC D Zoom Ahead with Books	24,713	25,000
ABC D Doodle Den Programme	109,429	115,812
ABC G Doodle Den Programme	123,073	200,000
NEIC Doodle Den	65,706	70,000
Stretch Challenges	25,896	20,000
Robotic Coding Clubs & STEM Play and Learn	130,034	65,000
DCEDIY Talking Heads EAL	75,000	25,000
Literacies Second Level	29,620	20,000
Literacies & STEM	645,803	610,812
ABC G Stepping Transition Programme	18,195	20,000
NEIC Educational Guidance	74,684	70,000
NEIC Brighter Futures	74,862	70,000
Educational & Career Guidance	167,741	160,000
Direct Costs	2,256,750	2,533,456
NCI central overheads and services (in-kind)	452,350	502,691
Total Costs	2,709,100	3,036,147

Notes:

- Direct costs are those coded to the ELI accounts.
- Indirect costs are not coded to the ELI account and consist of overheads and services provided by NCI, such as accounting, payroll, HR, IT, facilities and marketing. It is estimated that these costs account for 20% additional cost or €452,350
- ABC funding from January to June 2026 is subject to its inclusion in the Government's 2026 Budget and the projected expenditure will be amended to reflect the 2026 ABC budget agreed with Tusla.
- Dublin's Inner City Projected Expenditure 2025/26 is based on NCI's Strategic Plan, costs in previous years, pledged funding, outstanding grant applications as well as proposed programme expansion for 2025/26. It will be amended in December 2025 to reflect funding received and additional pledges/grants.

Governance

With NCI being awarded the contract for the ABC Grangegorman contract, there are now two ABC Steering Groups covering Dublin's Inner City.

The Dublin Docklands and East Inner-City Area Based Childhood (ABC-D) Steering Group provides oversight and direction for the ABC-D grant along with Dublin's Inner City NEIC, corporate and grant funded programmes. We thank the Chair, Sandra Foley and all the ABC-D steering group members listed below for their advice, guidance and support over the past year and look forward to working with them in 2025-26.

Docklands and East Inner City ABC Steering Group as of June 2025 is set out below:	
Chairperson – Sandra Foley Josephine Bleach, ELI Director Donnchadh Ó Madagáin, NCI Finance Director Geraldine Duff Joanne O'Shea (resigned January 2024) Tom O'Brien Emma Nugent	Lorraine Doherty (Resigned March 2025) Denise Hevey Denise McDonald Imelda Doyle Elaine Dunphy Jean Delaney (Joined October 2024)

The Grangegorman Area Based Childhood (ABC-G) Steering Group provides oversight and direction for the ABC-G grant. We thank the Chair, Eadaoin Kelly and all the ABC-G steering group members listed below for their advice, guidance and support over the past year and look forward to working with them in 2025-26.

Grangegorman ABC Steering Group as of June 2025 is set out below:	
Chairperson - Eadaoin Kelly Katie Holohan Paul Ring Laura Glancy Catriona Flood- ELI Assistant Director	Conor Casby Kathleen McCann Mary McPhillips Josephine Bleach, ELI Director Jackie Cullen- Grangegorman Senior Specialist

5.4 Parent & Child Home Visiting and Support Programmes

This section outlines 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 listed in the tables below.

Objectives:

- To increase parental skills, knowledge and engagement in 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 and information to create a stimulating home learning environment and ensure successful navigation of systems and transitions.
- To enhance and develop the existing interagency collaboration within the area.

Parent & Child Home Visiting Programmes	Children	Parents
ABC D Community Families Home Visiting (0-2 years)	200	199
ABC D ParentChild+ (16-36 months)	110	107
ABC G ParentChild+ (16-36 months)	27	27
Home from Home	38	38
Stretch Graduate Home Visiting	32	32
Stretch Graduate Support Calls	56	56
STEM Play & Learn	30	30
Total – Home Visiting	520	527

Parent & Child Support Programmes	Children	Parents
ABC D Community Families Groups (0-5 years)	680	680
ABC D 0-5 Summer Programme	110	110
ABC G Groups	65	60
ABC G Circle of Security	0	5
ABC D Restorative Parenting (0-11)	0	19
Parenting365	94	91
ABC G Multi-disciplinary	53	45
NEIC Parenting Programme	0	42
Triple P	0	43
Total – Parent Supports	1,002	1,095



Indicators of Learning
(91%, n= 373)



Indicators of Satisfaction
(98%, n=363)

5.4.1 ABC Community Families

In 2024-25 the ABC 0-2 Years Home Visiting Programme, which had been in operation in the ELI since 2015, fully transitioned to the Community Families model which is 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 was officially launched locally on 12th February 2025. Information on Community Families nationally can be found in [Section 4.4.4](#). ELI/NCI became the lead agency for the Grangegorman ABC programme in January 2025 where Daughters of Charity has been running Parent and Toddler Groups since 2022.



Community Families is a community home visiting and group support programme for parents of children 0-3 years old, which puts parents first, empowering them through trusted relationships with a Home Visitor during their child's early years. It provides information, support and builds friendships and connectivity in local communities.

ABC D Community Families Home Visiting

- 199 families took part over the year.
- 2,190 home visits took place in 2024-25.
- 87 families participated in trips to:
 - The National Gallery of Ireland, where 16 families received a child-friendly tour
 - NCI Christmas Party, where 45 families received a book
 - Teddy Bears Picnic in Merrion Square with 26 families.
- 195 referrals into the programme were received. The team continued to work in partnership with the families' Public Health Nurses, and Family Support Practitioners to provide continuity of care and share the one key message of integrated support.
- In addition to maintaining good relationships with social work departments and homeless hubs, this year there was a growth in engagement with families in Direct Provision.
- The team received training and support with the transition to the Community Families model.

Child and Parent Observation Tool

The Child and Parent Observation Tool tracks the wellbeing and development of the children and parents as they progress through the programme. The 1st Observation is completed after the 4th visit; the 2nd Observation is completed after the 12th visit and the remaining observations are completed every 12 visits thereafter.

The below table presents the observations of the parents and children engaging in 2024-25 and the percentage of those scoring often or always at each of the observation stages. Lack of social support and isolation continued to be issues for participating parents throughout the programme. However, there were promising developments in parents' knowledge and confidence at the 3rd Observation, with knowledge rising by 22% and confidence by 6% compared with the previous year. Child development indicators remained consistently strong, with over 90% of children responding appropriately to parents, developing as expected, and maintaining good health and diet throughout the programme. This data highlights the importance of the 0-2 programme to support local families and improve knowledge and confidence in times of need.

	Obs 1 (N=113)	Obs 2 (N=92)	Obs 3 (N=43)	Obs 4 (N=18)*
Parent Observations by Home Visitor				
Social Support	39%	43%	44%	17%
Isolated	29%	27%	16%	39%
Health	55%	61%	67%	61%
Warmth	99%	99%	100%	100%
Responsiveness	91%	99%	90%	94%
Knowledge	55%	75%	84%	83%
Confidence	84%	95%	95%	94%
Child Observations by Home Visitor				
Responds to parent appropriately	94%	96%	98%	89%
Developing as expected	95%	91%	98%	94%
Healthy	93%	96%	93%	100%
Appropriate diet	93%	93%	91%	94%
* Note: Because few families still need support by Observation 4 , that these numbers are too low to compare for overall trends. These were included to show how many long-term families participated with us this year.				

Participant Feedback

Most parents (95%; n=85) found the programme useful and 99% (n=86) would recommend the programme to a friend. 97% (n=86) of parents reported learning new approaches and ideas from their Home Visitor and 95% (n=86) feel confident using these. 95% (n=86) of parents noted learning practical tips around playing and interacting with their baby and 83% (n=86) noted practical tips for supporting their child's development. This includes 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 parents included



"That it's an amazing service that took so much stress off me knowing these home visitors have so much experience and can make me feel more at ease with any worries." [Parent]



"The programme has been fantastic particularly for social skills and play development." [Parent]

ABC D Community Families Group Support

- Approximately 691 families engaged in groups in 2024-25.
- 18 groups were held across the year (Storytelling, Sing & Smile, Fitness for Mams, Baby Read, Rattle & Roll, Infant Massage courses, Plastic-free Playgroup, Summer Programme, Storytelling in local IPAS centre and also Storytelling delivered in Mandarin).
- 41 families engaged in the 6 Infant Massage courses.
- 24 families engaged across 4 Read, Rattle and Roll courses.
- Two successful Pilot groups from 2023/24 were continued this year, a plastic-free playgroup and a group for residents of an International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) centre.
- 2 groups were delivered in the new PlayLab throughout 2024/25 (mam & Baby fitness and Mandarin storytelling). An increase in attendance was noted after the move.
- 5 summer programme groups were delivered to 86 families.

ABC Grangegorman Group Support

- Approximately 60 parents and 65 children engaged in the Parent and Toddler groups run by Daughters of Charity in Grangegorman between January and June 2025.
- The group runs two mornings a week, a total of 42 sessions held.

ABC D Group Facilitator observations

At the end of each session, group facilitators in ABC Dublin Docklands complete an observational tool to document the learning outcomes across various group sessions being delivered. The most commonly supported area of development during the sessions was social skills (92%). This was followed by fine motor skills (91%) and gross motor skills (91%). Communication skills (87%), concentration (86%) as well as speech and language (86%) were also strongly supported throughout the group's sessions. Each of the group's sessions aimed to incorporate one of Aistear's themes. The most featured theme was Wellbeing (98%), which was followed by Identity and Belonging (95%) as well as Exploring and Thinking (94%). The group's sessions also aimed to focus on parent learning, with 92% of the sessions including a parent topic, such as safety, self-care, supporting communication, etc.



ABC D Group Participant Feedback

Parents in ABC Dublin Docklands were invited to complete evaluation surveys after participating in the programme. Evaluations revealed high levels of satisfaction for the groups with 97% of parents (n=77) reporting that they were glad they attended, and they felt supported by the group's facilitator. Most parents indicated that they learned new approaches and ideas at the group sessions (90%, n=77). 76% of parents indicated that groups supported them in developing their child's social, language, and thinking skills. Also, 99% (n=75) of parents reported experiencing positive benefits to their own well-being and their child's development.

Comments from parents included



"All works great, great staff and songs, fantastic toys and interactions"



"I like how they start out with some sing songs or a story book, it gets the kids attention before going straight to playing with toys. It's helped my little one like to listen to a story time at home now too. I think most groups I've gone too I've always found Fiona to be a great help with informing me of upcoming groups or the summer activities and she is very interactive with all the kids which is lovely."

5.4.2 Parenting365 Programme

The Parenting365 Programme supports parents and families of children with additional needs. Addressing the many challenges faced 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. Parenting365 is a unique and highly sought-after programme with a high demand across Dublin for enrolment from parents since the programme started in 2021. Another popular feature of the programme is the active and encouraged involvement of siblings. Research is a principal component of this programme and further details about the Parenting365 research project can be found in section 3.3.

Programme delivery

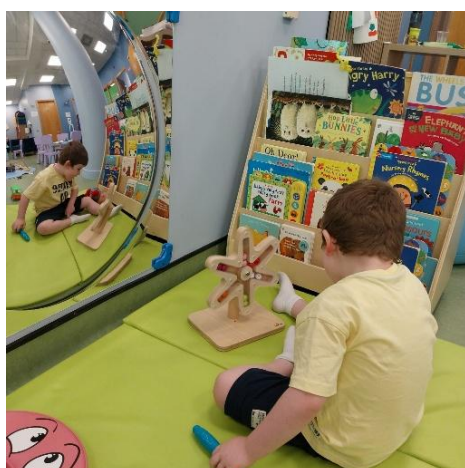
- 76 families, with a total of 82 children (including 21 siblings) engaged in the programme across the summer programme and 3 terms.
 - 60 families attended the play sessions – 61 children were enrolled on the programme.
 - 34 families in total engaged in the parent support sessions conducted via Zoom. Families on the waiting list or not enrolled on the full programme but connected to ELI through other programmes were given the opportunity to attend.
- The 6-week online parenting programme featured 5 guest speakers and ELI staff trained in Infant Massage and Deep Pressure delivering 5 unique sessions to parents across the 3 terms. The experts included a Play Therapist, Local Beag MDT, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists.
- Engagement from fathers remained high on this programme with 29 fathers participating.
- 4 summer play events were held in NCI with 20 children attending.
- 2 reunion events were held in NCI at Christmas and Easter with 28 families attending.
- Play groups gained a designated space when they were moved to the new PlayLab in NCI in January 2025.
- The team continued to their interagency work to support the programme including with Down Syndrome Ireland, Tusla, local creches, Cross Care and HSE Child and Disability Network Team
 - In particular a stronger connection was developed with the CDNT who hosted family forums in NCI which always had ELI staff members in attendance to inform parents about the programme.

Facilitator Reflections

After each session, facilitators completed an observational tool to document learning outcomes throughout the programme. According to these facilitators' reflections, the most commonly supported area of child development across the sessions was free play (77%), followed closely by fine motor skills (76%), and social/emotional skills (70%). There was an increase in the participation of both parents of the child (Mother and Father) enrolled in the programme, with attendance at sessions rising from 83% in 2023-24 to 92% in 2024-25. There were also high levels of sibling participation in the session, with facilitators reporting that 78% of the siblings of the enrolled child would attend and participate, which was the same as last year.

Participant Feedback

A total of 28 parents completed the post-programme evaluation across three sessions in 2024-2025. This represents a 26% decrease in respondents compared with 2023-24 (N=34). Satisfaction rates for the programme were high with 100% (n=28) of parents reporting that the programme was beneficial to them and their children. At the beginning of the programme parents were asked to set goals for themselves and their children. For themselves, parents identified areas for improvement such as understanding their child's needs, improving their own parenting skills, especially in supporting their children's emotional regulation as well as their child's learning, and developing more effective communication with their child.



Child enjoying regulation through play in the Play Lab during a Parenting365 session

Upon completion of the programme, more than half of the parents reported that they had achieved or were close to achieving the goals they had set for themselves (57%, n=16). This represents a 50% increase compared to their self-evaluation conducted at baseline (n=3). In terms of the goals that these parents set for their children, 46% of parents reported that their child had achieved or were close to achieving the goals (n=13), which represents a 39% increase compared to the pre-programme self-evaluation (n=3). The most common identified (in the pre-programme evaluation) and achieved (in the post-programme evaluation) goals include improvements in language and communication skills, increased confidence and social skills, and better self-awareness and more effective self-regulation skills.

Comments from parents included



"This programme needs to keep going, it's vital for parents to have some sort of network for information and understanding. The only thing that could improve would be the length of the sessions...An ongoing outlet for the children to engage with other children on the spectrum.... The ladies do a fantastic job there for our children, thank you all!" [Parent]



"I really appreciated the ease that he was accepted into the programme. It has been so difficult to get help in other areas waiting lists, high costs, referral criteria etc. This was a phone call and an email which was brilliant and was free which was amazing. I really appreciated the energy and enthusiasm of the team and their experience and suggestions and advice." [Parent]



"The children had a great time there. One parent told me the child looked forward to come on Saturdays and "making ice cream" with the staff. To see everyone had good time and confident to work in was fantastic." [Facilitator]

5.4.3 ABC ParentChild+ Programme

Originally from the US, the ParentChild+ programme is an innovative, home-based literacy and parenting programme that strengthens families and prepares children to succeed academically. For over 18 years, we have been delivering ParentChild+ to vulnerable families with children aged 16 months - 3 years in Dublin's Inner City. Beginning with 15 families in 2007, the numbers have grown to 107 families in 2024-2025. The National ParentChild+ Centre, established in January 2020, supports implementation. More details on ParentChild+ National can be found in [Section 4.4.2.](#) of this report. ELI/NCI became the lead agency for the Grangegorman Area Based Child Poverty programme in January 2025. Figures reported below breakdown the Dublin Docklands and East Inner City ABC Programme and the Grangegorman ABC programme separately.



Graduation Day Class of 2025

Programme Delivery ABC Dublin Docklands

- 107 families participated in ParentChild+ Dublin Docklands this year, engaging in 3,972 home visits.
- 32 families completed the programme and graduated at ceremonies held in NCI in January and June.
- 25 families left the programme before completion. This is often due to family relocation.
- 75% retention rate which is a slight decrease from 78% in 2023-24.
- 45 female and 62 male children took part in the programme.
- 99 female adults and 7 males participated in the programme.
- 28 different nationalities were represented amongst the cohort. The three largest nationalities represented were 42% Irish, 15% Chinese and 6% Brazilian.
- 98 referrals were 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.

Programme Delivery ABC Grangegorman

As ELI/NCI commenced as the lead agency for Grangegorman ABC in January 2025, figures below relate to January to June 2025

- 27 Families participated in ParentChild+ Grangegorman, engaging in 428 home visits.
- 3 families completed the programme and graduated. Graduations took place in June.
- 2 families left the programme before completion.
- 91% retention rate between January and June 2025.
- 13 female and 14 male children took part in the programme.
- 27 female adults and 3 males participated in the programme.
- 12 nationalities were represented amongst the cohort, the largest nationality being Irish at 24%.
- 11 referrals were received from Public Health Nurses, Local schools, Social Workers and other Non-profit organisations and charities.

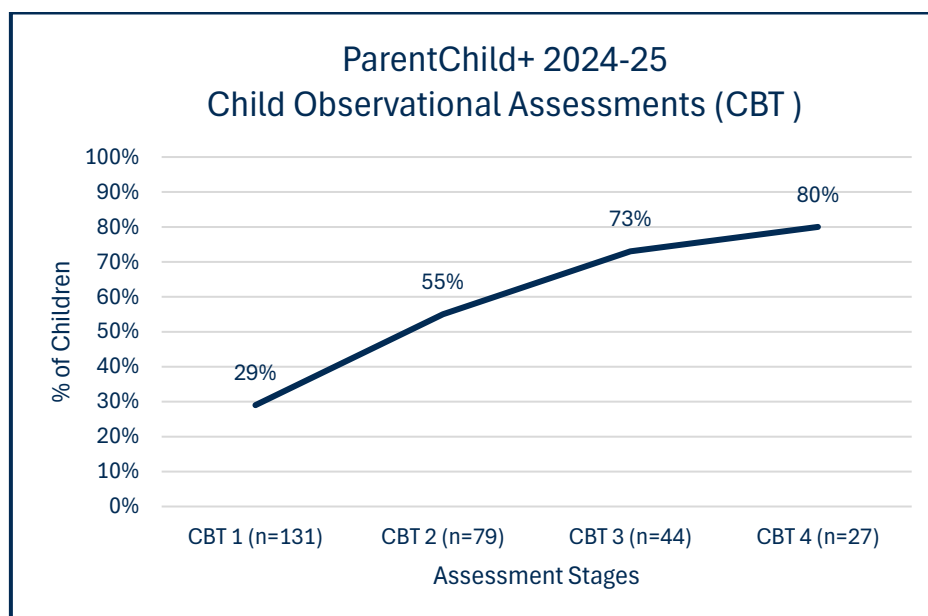
Programme Assessment - Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) and Parent and Child Together (PACT)

Throughout the programme Home Visitors complete two observational assessments (CBT and PACT). For more information on the assessments please see [Section 4.4.2](#)

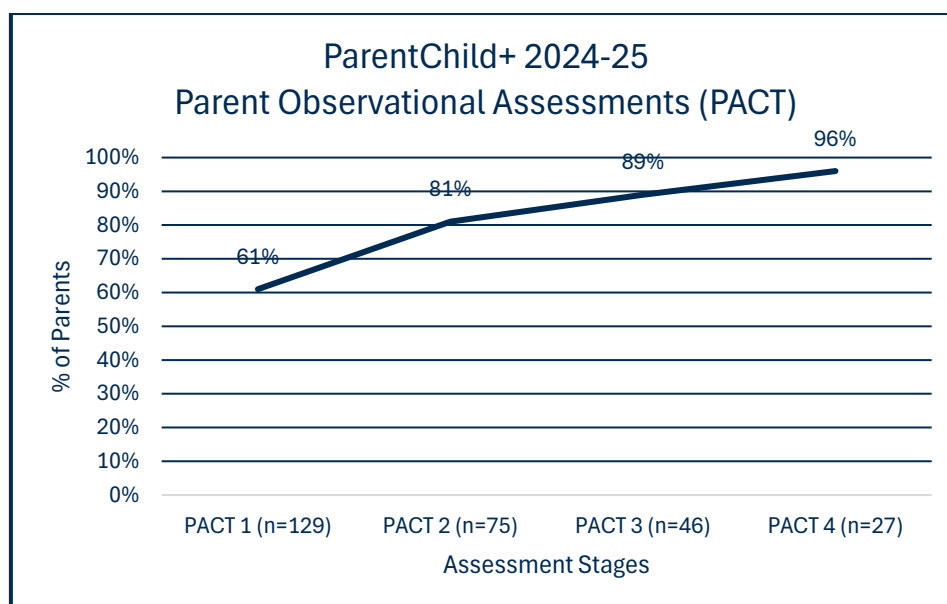
ABC Dublin Docklands and ABC Grangegorman

Comparisons are made to the data below to the national 2024-25 cohort and to the 2023-24 Dublin cohort containing only ABC Dublin Docklands. That said, the inclusion of the ABC Grangegorman data in 2024-25 has not resulted in considerable deviance from the 2023-24 data.

The percentage of children reaching their developmental milestones in Dublin's Inner City has gradually increased throughout the programme, from 29% at baseline to 80% on completion of the programme. This 51% increase is similar to that of the 2023-24 cohort (49%) and the 2024-25 increase across all ParentChild+ sites nationally (47%, see [Section 4.4.2](#)) 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 (35%) in the percentage of parents having high-quality interactions with their children from 61% at PACT 1 to 96% at PACT 4. This increase is greater than was seen in the 2023-24 cohort (30%) and the national 2024-25 cohort (30%). 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 Dublin Docklands

Both children and parents showed positive engagement across their visits in 2024-25. Home Visitors reported children as fully engaged for 71% of the visits, the same level of engagement as was seen in 2023-24. Children were reported as somewhat engaged with 26.5% percent of the visits and not engaged in just 2.5%. Parents were reported as fully engaged in 90% of their visits in 2024-25, which is higher than the level of engagement as 2023-24 (84%). Parents were 'somewhat engaged' in 9.5% of the visits and just not engaged with just .5% of the visits.

Learning & Feedback Dublin Docklands

Satisfaction rates remained high with most parents reporting they found this programme to be useful (97%, n=58). Most parents reported feeling confident using the strategies learned for reading and playing with their child (97%, n=58). All parents reported learning new approaches and ideas from participating in the programme (n=59). 88 percent of parents reported their children benefited in the areas of attention span (n=52) and 88% in social skills (n=53), and 78% reported that their children improved in their numeracy and literacy skills (n=47). Furthermore, every parent would recommend the programme to another parent (n=59), and 97% of parents (n=58) felt supported by their home visitor.

Comments from parents included



"Absolutely love how child led the program is. It's never a big deal if the child is not up for it on the day, the home visitor will move onto something the child wants to do"



"Our home visitor had helped us tremendously: from showing us understanding, compassion, carrying (caring), for listening to our concerns and worries, providing support and strategies to be able to cope with each stage. We've been blessed and lucky to have the privilege to be part of this family."

5.4.4 Home from Home Programme

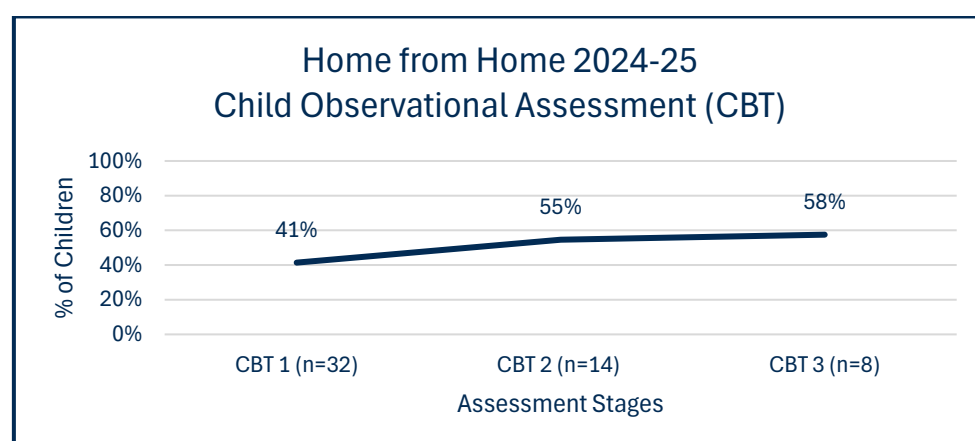
The Home from Home Transition Programme is an intensive weekly home visiting programme developed by our Home Visiting Team in Dublin's Inner City in 2019 for families living in emergency/homeless and International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS). It provides an integrated plan of intervention 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. Strong relationships formed with managers in services provision over the years have fostered a smooth referral pathway to Home from Home and have also facilitated referrals to other ELI programmes for families where relevant and appropriate.

Programme Delivery

- 30 families participated in the Home from Home Programme in 2024-25
- 43 referrals were received from B&Bs, Homeless Family Hubs, Sonas Women's and Children's Refuge. The team has built relationships with IPAS centres to support the families in the International Protection ('asylum') process. Those who did not engage in the programme were too young, referred to another programme, or the family chose not to engage.
- 239 visits took place.
- 11 interagency meetings took place this year.
- ELI participated in the Young People at Risk (YPAR) Children in Emergency Accommodation Working Group and 'Friends of Gateway', a multi-disciplinary group to support International Protection Asylum-seeking families.
- The new PlayLab in NCI allows for a dedicated space for families to visit when their living accommodation is not suitable. 35 Home Visits took place in the PlayLab this year. In addition to this, external Homeless organisations have also used the PlayLab space for families.
- There was a 78% retention rate in 2024/25, an increase on the 68% in 2023-24.

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

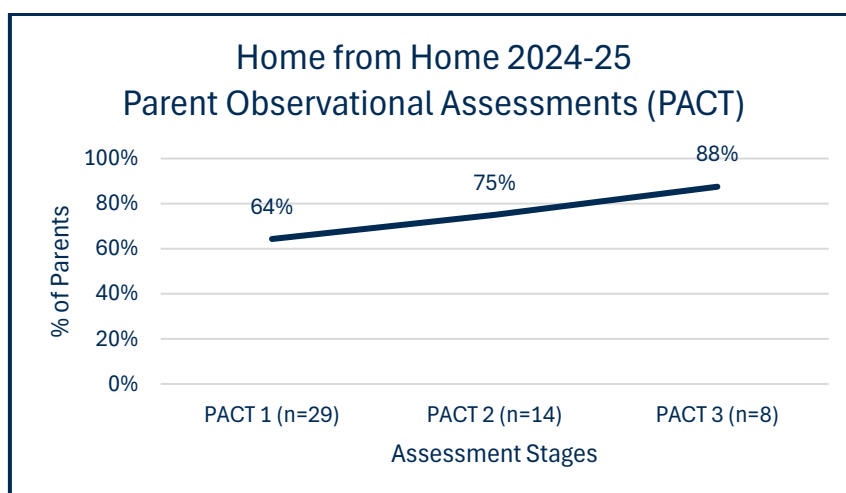
Throughout the programme Home Visitors complete up to four observational assessments (CBT and PACT), depending on the need of participating families. For more information on the assessments please see [Section 4.4.2](#).



As can be seen in the graph above, 41% of the children in the 2024-25 Home from Home cohort were reaching their developmental milestones on entering the programme, a similar baseline to the 2023-24 cohort (40%). 55% of children were meeting their developmental milestones at CBT 2 this year, compared to 54% of children in 2023-24. For those who completed a CBT 3 58% were reaching their

milestones, in comparison to 55% in 2023-24. Children engaging in the programme demonstrated developmental increases across the three CBT subscales (cognition, behaviour and language).

The 2024-25 cohort of parents experienced a positive improvement in their interactions with their children from the first to the third assessment stages with a total increase of 24%. PACT data this year represented a slightly lower baseline when compared to last year, with 64% of parents showing positive parent interactions in comparison to 67% in 2022-23. Yet the percentage of parents having positive interactions at PACT 3 was greater at 88% in comparison to 78%. For parents engaging in the programme the good quality of interactions 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 and Child Engagement

Parents were fully engaged for 80% of the visits, and children were fully engaged for 77% of the visits. Parents' levels of engagement were less than that of the ParentChild+ cohort (90%), but greater than the 2023-24 cohort (75%). Children were fully in a greater percentage of their visits than that of the ParentChild+ cohort (71%) and the same as 2023-24 (77%).

Participant Feedback

10 of the parents provided feedback through exit evaluations and end of year evaluations. All parents reported that they found the programme useful (N=10) and felt confident using the strategies learned for reading and playing with their child. 80% (n=8) parents also reported that their child has improved their language and 90% (n=9) that it improved their numeracy skills. All parents reported that their child has improved in the areas of attention span and 90% that it improved their social skills.

Comments from parents included



"Our home visitor has been always very helpful giving me tips and support in children's events and community groups.....She's been key in our routine since we got to know each other."



"It's really interesting for kids because they explore many new toys, books & new techniques"

5.4.5 Stretch Graduate Programme

The Stretch Graduate Programme, a research-based prevention and early intervention programme, was designed as a follow up to ELI's ParentChild+ programme. It aims to retain connection between ELI and the families throughout the child's educational journey. It offers a staggered step-down approach including bespoke signposting to other programmes and services both within ELI and externally. The programme aims to continue enhancing parental competence and confidence regarding their children's holistic development and enhance positive parenting practices and parental and family wellbeing.



The programme comprises three pathways that families can join depending on their level of need. Pathway 1 provides home visits, Pathway 2 provides regular support by phone, and Pathway 3 provides themed family educational events and can be a supplement to Pathways 1 and 2. Also offered is a 6-week STEM Play & Learn summer programme aiming to combat summer learning loss in Stretch Graduate and other disadvantaged families in our community.

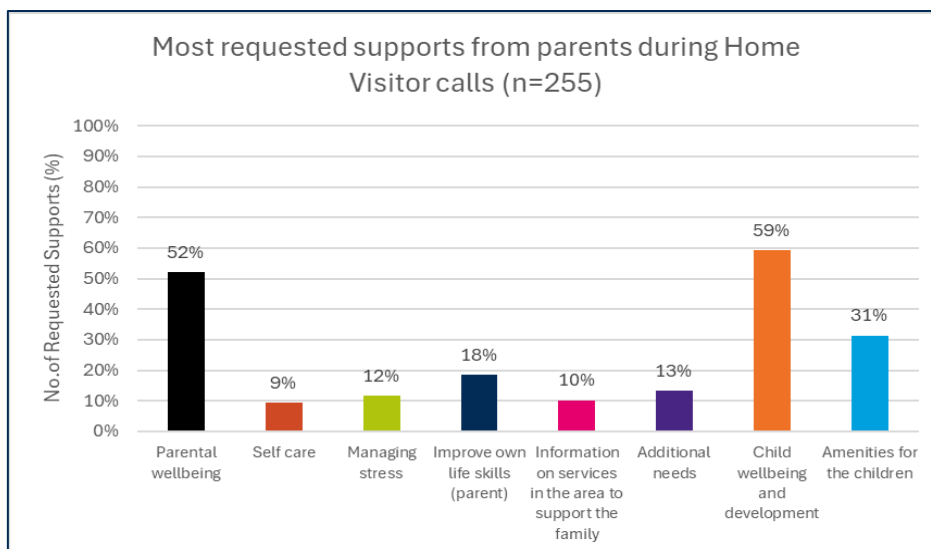
Programme Delivery

151 families engaged with 38 families receiving home visits and 113 receiving termly check-in calls.

- 350 family home visits were delivered, comprising 106 parent focused visits, 219 parent and child focused visits and 14 child focused visits
- 241 termly check-in calls were made to 113 families. The average call duration was 20 minutes.
- 64 referrals were made to other ELI programmes, and 27 to external programmes or services.
- 221 resource packs were provided to families.
- 4 Events were held with 59 families attending including a Christmas party, Earth Day – recycling & sustainability, an event about Dental hygiene and a STEM event.
- 33 families participated in STEM Play & Learn; engaging in 133 in-person visits.

Home Visitor Reflections

Home Visitors complete reflections after every visit, recording child development encouraged, family wellbeing and referrals. In 2024-25, 84% of parents (n=294) and 83% of children (n=288) were reported as doing very well or well across all visits. The most encouraged areas of child development during the visits were communication (80%), speech and language (60%), and fine motor skills (56%). Parent supports most covered, including parental wellbeing (65%), self-care (40%), and managing stress (38%). Check-in calls data showed a shift in support needs, while child wellbeing and development was the main concern in 2023-2024, more parents in 2024-25 also sought support for their own wellbeing.



Participant Feedback

In 2024-2025, 15 Stretch Graduate parents completed the programme End-of-Year evaluation. All parents found the programme useful and felt supported by home visitors (N=15 each). Parents reported improved parenting skills and children's development, especially through quality time, and learn through play (87%, n=13). They also noted improvements in their child's social and emotional skills (87%, n=13), attention, and speech & language (73%, n=11 each).

Check-in calls evaluations for parents showed similar results with to home visiting families. 75% reported their child was doing well (n=27), and 69% felt they were doing well as parents (n=25). They also highlighted areas for growth, including engaging activities (58%, n=21), supporting child wellbeing (47%, n=17), and improving life skills and mental health (42%, n=15).

For STEM Play & Learn, 28 parents completed the evaluation. Most enjoyed the programme (89%, n=25) and observed gains in their child's language (79%, n=22), fine motor, and concentration skills (75%, n=21). Confidence in supporting STEM at home rose to 78% (n=21), a 15% increase from pre-programme.

Comments from parents included



"Home Visitor had so much patience and lots of creativity. My child was very engaged, and he also learned more than I imagined. Thank you." [Stem Play and Learn parent]



"... the different types of art material, my son and I learnt a lot of things from that. The home visitor was so patient, she matched my son's need and helped my son develop his language and communication skills, social and imagination skills. We will miss her."
[Home Visiting parent]



"It was so nice to talk to the visitor, and I can share my worries with her and get some advice from her. She was there to listen to my issues, and she was understanding of me and helped me through the difficult time of my life. [She] invited my son to the P356 programme [which] was so good, and both my son and I learnt a lot there." [Check-in Call parent]

5.4.6 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. A key goal is to establish a Parenting Forum and involve parents in the design, delivery and evaluation of parenting supports and programmes which we intend to do in early 2025-26.

Our NEIC Parenting Support Programme Coordinator also delivers the Triple P Programme courses and workshops. For more information see section 5.4.9.

Programme Delivery

- 11 NEIC Parenting courses (Triple-P and Circle of Security) with 57 parents in attendance.
- 83 parents were referred to a service, course or to other support services by the NEIC Parenting Coordinator.
- 49 professionals from 15 organisations were engaged in the 7 Parent Strategy Meetings to explore how we can use existing resources effectively to support parents, with an average of about 7 attendees per meeting.
 - In February a Plan and Review Day was held
 - A workshop was held for parents to develop questions for the needs assessment.
- A third iteration of the Parents Needs Assessment Questionnaire was distributed to parents in the community. For more details, see Section 3.3.4. NEIC Parenting Programme Needs Assessment.
- Engaged with 58 organizations to map existing services and resources for parents in the NEIC, who provide supports to parents.
- ELI has been commissioned by NEIC to oversee an external evaluation of the NEIC Parenting Programme. This external evaluation is funded via the What Works Programme. Planning for this project is underway, and it shall commence in 2025/26.

5.4.7 Parenting Programmes

A range of parenting programmes are provided to the communities in Dublin Docklands and Grangegorman. These programmes include the Restorative Parenting Programme, Triple P and Circle of Security. These programmes aim to support healthy parent-child relationships, attachment and self-efficacy by focusing on developing parents' skills and strategies for managing challenging behaviours and situations.

Programme Delivery

123 parents engaged in parenting programmes and support in Dublin's Inner City in 2024-25.

ABC Dublin Docklands Restorative Parenting

- 7 parents engaged in 2 Family Wellbeing courses, delivered in person at a local community centre and online aimed at supporting healthy relationships focusing on parents' self-awareness, communication skills and self-care practices.
- 16 parents engaged across 4 online workshops focused on supporting emotional literacy and wellbeing, communication, stress response, and self-care in parenting.
- 2 parents engaged in 2 one-to-one parent support sessions.

Healthy Communities Triple P

- 10 parents engaged in 2 6-week Group Triple P programmes. The age range of the children was 2 ½ - 12 years.
- 42 parents engaged in 6 Discussion Groups.
- 29 parents engaged in 3 Fear Less Triple P groups.

ABC Grangegorman Circle of Security

- 12 people attended an information session held for parents and guardians in advance of the programme including a Family Support worker, Community Development Outreach worker, PHN, Home School Liaison, EYS manager and Parents/Guardians. The session explained the structure of the programme as well as the learning outcomes, benefits and how to refer parents to the programme.
- 5 parents attended a Circle of Security course. Sessions explored topics such as children's needs, helping children manage their emotions, helping parents address their own emotions and exploring rupture and repair in parent-child relationships.

Participant Feedback

Parents engaging in Restorative Parenting and Triple P Groups were invited to complete evaluations on the programmes. 17 evaluations were received at post-programme. Satisfaction levels were high with all parents rating their overall experience of the programme as "good" or "excellent" (N=14). Additionally, all participants agreed that the programme content was relevant in addressing the challenges they experienced as parents. In terms of the feedback on Triple P Discussion Group, all respondents (N=5) agreed that they were glad attending the discussion group and that they intended to use the strategies they learned from the session.

Comments from parents included



"It has helped me to take a step back before I react and think and try to handle the situation better thinking how my child is feeling" [Restorative Parenting Parent]



"Overall, it was a great programme very insightful and informative. Both [facilitators] were fantastic and made it very easy for us to share any issues we had. I will definitely be implementing the strategies that I think would best suit my daughter who is almost 3".
[Parent, Triple P Discussion Group]

5.4.8 ABC G Step by Step Multidisciplinary Team

Under ABC, the Step-by-Step Multidisciplinary Team provides family support and one on one creative therapy to children. This multidisciplinary approach allows them to provide more comprehensive support to families and children. Children are supported through individual creative art and therapy sessions while the family support sessions enable the team to address parental needs and strengthen parental capacity. For families engaged in both interventions, this enables the team to address family dynamics or needs that may also be impacting the child.

Programme Delivery

- 45 parents and 53 children overall were supported from January to June 2025.
- 9 families engaged in family support sessions
- 22 children were provided with one-to-one creative therapy sessions.

5.5 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 (ABC D, ABC G & NEIC), STEM Family Learning Events, Junior & Senior Robotic Coding Clubs, NCI Challenges, Tuition Support, Language Cafés and Talking Heads EAL programme.

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
ABC D Early Numeracy Project (0-8 years)	1,265	1,897
ABC D Zoom Ahead with Books (4-6 years)	1,056	1,584
ABC D & NEIC Doodle Den	94	91
ABC G Doodle Den	60	52
NCI Challenges	665	43
STEM Family Learning Events (6-9 years)	113	10
Junior Robotic Coding Club	122	21
Senior Robotic Coding Club	34	21
Tuition Support	66	0
Language Cafés	64	0
Talking Heads	145	0
Totals	3,684	3,719



Indicators of Learning
(87%, n= 1080)



Indicators of Satisfaction
(91%, n=1177)

5.5.1 ABC Early Numeracy Programme

Beginning in 2011 with funding from the National Early Years Access Initiative (NEYAI), this programme is aimed at improving early years numeracy and mathematical skills from birth to 6 years of age. This ABC funded programme has grown from 16 organisations and 498 children in 2011-12 to 32 organisations and 1,265 children in 2024-25. The programme revolves around the three community Early Numeracy Weeks. This year's themes were Sequence and Pattern, Counting and Measurement. Working group meetings and onsite mentoring are provided by ELI to support practitioners to reflect on and improve the quality of the programme and their practice using the updated Aistear Síolta Practice Guide as a resource

Programme Delivery

- 1,265 children and 1,897 parents engaged in the programme across the three terms.
- 11 early years services, 11 schools, 3 afterschools and 5 libraries engaged and received numeracy cards and activity packs to be used at home and in the school/service. This year we continued to work with one ASD class.
- Approximately 61 families were invited to attend numeracy-themed activities and events which were hosted by the 18 organisations.

Participant feedback

Upon the completion of each numeracy week, both staff and parents provided feedback through online or paper evaluations. Over the three terms, 257 parents and 150 staff members completed evaluations. Although lower than those received from parents in 2023-24 (N=390), this is likely due to staffing challenges in the early years services in 2024-25.

Parents' satisfaction reports were highly positive, with 98% (n=250) reporting that both them and their child enjoyed the activities and indicating they would recommend the program to a friend. The majority of parents (93%, n=234) reported that they used the numeracy cards with their children at home. Additionally, 90% of parents agreed that their child improved their numeracy skills during the programme (n=228). In terms of parents' responses to the best aspect of participating in the numeracy weeks or numeracy activities, many parents valued their child's learning most (81%, n=208), which was closely followed by their own involvement (80%, n=206). The provision of numeracy activity cards and resources was also valued by parents (58%, n=148).

Similarly, staff reported the child's learning as the best aspect (80%, n=102), followed by the provision of numeracy cards and resources. Staff reported the programme was an enjoyable experience (96%, n=110), and a valuable learning opportunity for the children (97%, n=111) and parents (96%, n=106) involved. Additionally, staff reported that the most important aspects of the program for children's learning were the stories, songs, and rhymes (83%, n=95).

Comments from participants included



"My child now knows about big and small, and enjoys pouring water from one cup to another as a part of measurement. Improve her communication especially while talking about big and small" [Parent]



"The children showed more interest than I expected. They really enjoyed measuring their height. I learned how to use the different games and activities to create fun for the children." [Staff]

5.2 ABC Zoom Ahead with Books

The Zoom Ahead with Books project encourages parental involvement and promotes children's enjoyment and motivation to read for pleasure. With family members acting as book buddies, the programme is designed for children from preschool to 1st classes.

Programme Delivery

- 1,056 children and their families in 13 primary schools and 1 preschool participated
- 9,900 books were read with some schools continuing beyond its initial 3 weeks
- Some schools had translations of the books available for families with English as an Additional Language. There were also translations into Ukrainian, Polish, Romanian, Mandarin for the prompt cards, which provide words related to the themes and ideas for things to talk about.
- All children received their resource pack including parents' questions to support reading, individual documents for each week, colouring pencils and copybook in which to include their drawings.
- The school exhibition events saw children receiving a framed picture of their artwork to bring home.
- Schools were encouraged to take library visits, where families were given the opportunity to apply for a library card. Two schools had their exhibition at their local library. Some local pre-schools who didn't take part in the programme visited the exhibition in the library.
- One class participated in the Paddington Bear Project with Cheyne Capital, based in London, in collaboration with basis.point. Volunteers and children interacted over zoom, volunteers reading storied from the book in London locations.

Participant feedback

Post-Programme evaluations were distributed to children, their Book Buddies, and participating staff. There was a small decrease in the number of evaluations returned compared to the previous year, 174 Book Buddy evaluations, 166 child evaluations and 11 staff evaluations, compared to 189 Book Buddies and 12 staff returned in 2023-2024. Feedback was highly positive, with 97% (n=145) of Book Buddies and 82% (n= 9) of staff agreeing that the programme was an enjoyable experience for the child or children involved. Furthermore, 96% of Book Buddies (n=158) and 82% of staff (n=9) found the programme to be a valuable learning opportunity for the child. All child respondents (n=166) reported that they enjoyed Zoom Ahead with Books (n=166), and 96% (n=156) reported that it helped them with their reading. 67% (n=114) of Book Buddies reported gaining enjoyment from the programme, 65% (n=108) spending more time with their child, and 55% (n=91) become more aware of their child's learning. 36% of Book Buddies reported that they were provided with translated materials (n=57), which shows a 53% decrease compared to 2023-2024 (89%, n=28). This was likely due to the greater English proficiency in parents in 24-25 as reported by the HSCLs.

Comments from participants included



"Zoom Ahead with Books worked well because it was fun and engaged me to improve my child's reading skills. For me, the programme was well-structured and easy to use, and I appreciated the opportunity to work together with my child". [Book Buddy]



"Children were proud to share their work with other students in class and laugh at their Book Buddies work and talk about their own drawings, what part of the story they were depicting. They enjoyed listening to their friends talk about the story they read and would make plans to read that book the next night! They also loved to receive the teachers comment, sticker or stamp!" [Staff]



Proud three generations who all attended the same school

5.5.3 Doodle Den Programme Delivery

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 ABC Dublin Docklands and Northeast Inner City

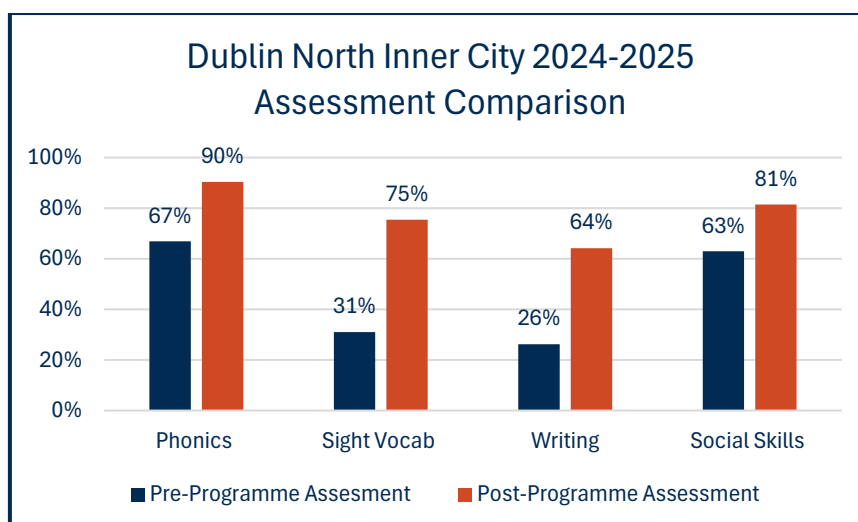
- 94 children enrolled in the programme across the 3 ABC Dublin Docklands sites (n=45) and 3 NEIC sites (n=49) with 68 children completing the programme.
- 52 children, 91 parents and 48 siblings attended the Graduation ceremony in June 2025.
- 4 schools (n=42) reported on the literacy needs of the children attending Doodle Den.
 - 48% of children (n=20) had a high level of literacy need, 33% (n=14) medium and 19% (n=8) low level.
- 4 schools (n=42) reported on English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Special Educational Need (SEN) students.
 - The percentage of children with EAL was 50% (n=20), a slight decrease 2023/24 (51%).
 - 12% (n=5) had a SEN, higher than 2023/24 (8%), but lower than the 17% of children in 2022/23.
- 2 family events were held in Charleville Mall Library and with Mud Island, a local community garden. Parent events were held regularly at each site, including a Halloween Craft event.
- 17 volunteers from PWC and KPMG took part in the programme.

Programme Delivery ABC Grangegorman

- 60 children enrolled over 4 sites in ABC Grangegorman with 49 children completing the programme.
- 46 children, 52 parents and 13 siblings attended the Graduation ceremony in June 2025.
- 9 parent and family events were held including a visit by a children's author, library visits, information sessions and picnics.

Doodle Den Assessments & Feedback

Assessments were conducted with the children at the start of the Doodle Den programme and again in June of 2025 as they completed the programme. These assessments evaluated the children's phonics, writing skills, sight vocabulary, and social skills. The following data is for both ABC Dublin Docklands and ABC Grangegorman. As shown in the graph below, average scores across every assessment area improved. The largest increase was observed in children's sight vocabulary scores, which increased by 44%. This was followed by writing skills, which increased by 38%, phonics which increased by 23%, and finally social skills which increased by 18%.



In comparison to the 2023-2024 scores for Dublin’s Docklands and North Inner City, the pre-programme assessment averages were higher across all areas apart from writing. Writing skills were 26% compared to 31% last year. This year, the average pre-programme assessment score for sight vocabulary was 31%, increasing from 27% in 2023-2024. Social skills averaged 63%, compared to 59% last year. The largest difference was seen in phonics, which rose to 67% from 59% in 2023-2024. Looking at the post-programme results, social skills remained the same as last year at 81%. Sight vocabulary increased by 3%, from 72% in 2023-2024 to 75% this year and phonics by 3%. Writing skills decreased from 75% to 64%. As can be seen from the analysis above, the inclusion of the ABC Grangegorman data, although generally lower than the Dublin Docklands/NEIC cohort in 2024-25, does not result in considerable deviation from previous years scores.

Participant Feedback ABC Dublin Docklands & NEIC



Satisfaction rates for the programme were high, with all parents (n=28) reporting that it was an enjoyable experience for the children. Parents also reported that the programme was helpful for their child, with all respondents (n=28) indicating the impact, particularly in reading ability (82%, n=23) and writing ability (79%, n=22). The most commonly reported benefit was improved listening skills (89%, n=25), which was followed by making friends (86%, n=24) and understanding (86%, n=24). 84% (n=26) of children who took part in Doodle Den agreed that the programme was an enjoyable experience for them.

Comments from participants included



“It was a great family fun and all reading and writing and drawing was really good”
[Parent]



“My son enjoyed the activities and spending time with his peers. He also asks now to go to the library every Wednesday evening” [Parent]



“[The best thing about the Doodle Den Programme was] children growing in confidence and developing positive attitudes towards reading” [Doodle Den Facilitator]

5.5.4 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, maths skills, 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 in 2024-25 consisted of three events: Table Quiz, Rummikub and Monopoly, with a total of 665 children involved across 12 local primary schools.
- 21 corporate volunteers from Mason Hayes and Curran, Citco, Central Bank of Ireland, and Deloitte supported across the three events.

Participant Feedback



The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 96% (n=176) of children reporting that they enjoyed participating in the challenges. 95% (n=36) of parents also agreed that it was an enjoyable experience for the children who took part. Additionally, 100% (N=21) of staff members who were present stated that the challenges provided a valuable learning opportunity for the children involved. All participating volunteers agreed that they were happy they took part in the events (N=11) and that they were motivated to participate by a feeling of making a difference in the community.

Monopoly Event

Comments from participants included



"Playing each week in class, practicing maths and collaboration. It was excellent!"
[Teacher]



"The event was very well organised. The organisers were knowledgeable and friendly. Everything was explained well, and the kids knew what to expect. Because of all of this, the event went very smoothly, and it was obvious that the kids really enjoyed it."
[Volunteer]



"That we all worked together and that we done it on laptops And I just love quiz I love that we got some time off school." [Student]

5.5.5 STEM Family Learning Events

The STEM Family Learning Events were developed to build awareness, curiosity and confidence in the scientific method through fun and relevant experiences. They aim to use new and creative ways to involve those who would not typically engage with STEM.

Programme Delivery

- 7 in-person STEM events were held separately in 2024-25:
 - 87 children attended a STEM Carnival event in partnership with the AMBER Research Centre in Trinity College Dublin.
 - 10 Stretch Graduate families attended a Science Week event in NCI.
 - 20 children attended an Engineering Week event in City Quay school.
 - 13 Stretch Graduate families attended a sustainability event on Earth Day in April 2025.
 - 52 families and 7 volunteers from KPMG attended across 2 Doodle Den graduations. Also, in attendance at one of the graduations were professionals from the Department of Education, NEIC and the Department of the Taoiseach.
 - 10 families participated in a STEM and Coffee event in NCI for families to share learnings from our Parental Attitudes to STEM research with the community and hear their feedback.

Participant Feedback

58 evaluations were collected from parents at the STEM events in 2024-25. All parents agreed the programme was an enjoyable experience for their children (N=58) and 93% respondents agreed it was an enjoyable experience for themselves (n=54).

Similarly, both children and staff reported positive experiences with these events. 97% (n=148) of child respondents agreed that the event was fun or they liked participating in the programme. For children who were asked if they would like to learn and do more science and engineering activities in the future after taking part in this event, 87% of children responded positively (n=121). This represents an 8% increase compared to last year (n=108).



Students showcasing their creations

Comments from parents included



“Everything went better than expected, [child’ name] loved it, and I also loved it. THANK YOU for inviting us. Kind regards” [Stretch Graduate Programme Earth Day, Parent]



“I think its best opportunity for him to explore himself also get the environment that help him to regulate his emotions. I am happy to continue this.” [STEM Play & Learn, Parent]

5.5.6 Robotic Coding Clubs

The Robotic Coding Clubs is a collaboration with NCI's School of Computing. Participants learn about robotics, programming and electronics with an mBot, which is 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

- 122 students took part in Junior Coding Clubs in 3 schools and 2 afterschools.
- 67 children and 19 parents attended a final coding event in the schools and NCI.
- 7 volunteers supported the coding programme from KPMG and Central Bank of Ireland.
- 34 students participated in a pilot Advance Coding Club for older students (12-17), delivered in collaboration with NCI's School of Computing.
- The team collaborated with colleagues in NCI's School of Psychology on a Gender in STEM study. Data collection has ceased, and findings will be presented in 2025-26. More details can be found in [Section 3.3.2 Gender in STEM](#).

Junior Coding Club Participant Feedback



80% (n=54) of students reported enjoying the coding club and 48% (n=32) of students reported that they would take part again if they had the chance. This is a decrease on 23-24 (60%, n=54), however, this was likely due to the inclusion of a “not sure” response option, which accounted for 33% of responses (n=22). The desire of students attending third level education remained high, with 74% (n=49) of students expressing a desire to pursue third level education after taking part in the programme which was the same as 23-24. Additionally, students' confidence in their computer skills increased by 63% (n=42) and coding skills by 54 % (n=35). The learning outcome most noted by 81% of the children was that they learned to make the robot light up (n=56) and build a robot using a screwdriver 72 % (n= 50).

All parents of junior coding club students reported that they believe STEM skills are crucial for their child's future education and career goals (N=20). This shows an 11% increase in parents' feedback on the same question in comparison to last year. Additionally, 94% of parents reported that the programme improved both their child's STEM skills and their confidence as parents supporting their children to learn STEM (n=17, respectively).

The coding events that took place throughout the year were a great opportunity for further learning and enjoyment for the families involved. Upon completion of the coding event, 98% of children reported that they had fun (n=59), and 78% of children reported that they would recommend these games to a friend (n=45). Parents' feedback on the events was positive, with 100% agreed that this event was both valuable and enjoyable learning for their child (N=8, respectively). Consistent with parents' feedback, all staff who attended the events agreed with the parents that the programme was a valuable learning opportunity and an enjoyable experience for all children involved (N=5, respectively).

Senior Coding Club Participant Feedback

Desire to pursue third level education was high in this cohort (71%, n=34 at pre-programme and 76% n=29 at post). Notable gains were also observed in students' self-confidence in STEM-related skills.

Their confidence in their computer skills and coding skills rose by 54% each, and interest in science and technology increased by 19%. Additionally, parents of participating students provided positive feedback on their children's confidence and interests gained from taking part in the programme. Upon completion, 93% of parents reported that their child found technology interesting or very interesting (n=14), and 87% said their child found coding interesting or very interesting (n=13). These results indicate improvements in students' confidence, interests, and skills after participating in the senior coding club.

Comments from participants included



"My favourite part of coding club was] by showing us how to make a robot not building it, how to make a robot that can stand, how to do science and better at it, and how to code."

[Child, Junior Coding Club]



"Well so far I can see my son [child's name] is improving in his education while in school by using more of his computer skills" [Parent, Junior Coding Club]



"The students loved the activities, and everything was very well organised and laid out."

[Staff, Coding Event]

5.5.7 Language and Tuition Support

ELI's Language and Tuition Support programmes aims to provide primary and second level students with extra opportunities for learning in a safe and positive environment. Talking Heads is a programme focusing on conversational English for students with English as an Additional Language delivered with the support of volunteers and interns.

Programme Delivery

298 young people participated in language and tuition support sessions, delivered both virtually and face-to-face.

- 64 students enrolled in Leaving Certificate Maths tuition support, an increase of 40 from 2023-24 (N=24). 4 weekly sessions (2 Ordinary Level and 2 Higher Level) were held across 25 weeks.
- 25 students enrolled in 2 weekly Maths sessions (1 Ordinary Level and 1 Higher Level) for Junior Certificate students were run over 22 weeks.
- 64 students attended 2 Language Cafés held in NCI and Central Bank of Ireland - 51 in Spanish and French and 13 in Irish. 15 volunteers participated from Central Bank of Ireland, Deloitte and Citco.
- 44 secondary school students engaged in Talking Heads which ran over 18 weeks with an average of 18 students attending each week across three sessions. 3 volunteers supported this programme.
- 101 primary school students took part in Talking Heads for primary level students which was offered to all 9 eligible NEIC schools in collaboration with City Connects. The programme ran 71 sessions across the school year, across 4 school group running twice per week.

Participant Feedback

After taking part in the Language Cafés, 88% (n=56) of students reported increased confidence in speaking their target language, and 81% of students expressed a greater interest in learning it. Moreover, 97% of students reported that their skills in speaking the target language with new people had improved. Teachers and Volunteers also provided positive feedback, with 75% of teachers agreed that the Language Café was both valuable and enjoyable learning opportunities for their students.



Students and Volunteers at Language Café

Post programme data from 74 primary level and 20 secondary level students in Talking Heads indicated programme enjoyment was high with 80% (n=16) of secondary school students having enjoyed taking part, and 88% (n=65) of primary school students having had fun learning English. 80% (n= 16) of secondary level students and 71% (n=49) of primary level students also expressed the desire to continue with more English language classes. Additionally, on completion of Talking Heads, 80% (n=16) of secondary level students and 82% (n=60) primary level students reported feeling more comfortable speaking English.

Comments from participants included



"I enjoyed speaking with my classmates and I enjoyed moving onto different tables."
[Language Café, Student]



"The fun and the games which made it enjoyable and fun, the food after the games we played together." [Talking Heads Secondary, Student]



"I have fun and I'm with my best friend and I love learning." [Talking Heads Primary, Student]

5.6 Educational Guidance

The Educational Guidance Programmes aim to support young people, parents and communities to understand the education system and know what steps they might need to take to access further education and advance their career opportunities. This supports the children and young people in the local community to achieve their education, life and career goals.

These programmes, which are developed through careful collaboration with local schools, afterschools and youth and community services are ABC G Stepping Up Transition programme, NEIC Educational Guidance programme; A Day in the Life; NEIC Brighter Futures Restorative Practices; and Discover University.

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.

Educational and Career Guidance	Young People	Parents
ABC G Stepping Up Transition Programme	254	254
Educational Guidance (fifth/sixth class)	153	0
Educational Guidance Exhibition (Secondary)	83	7
A Day in the Life Events	25	0
Discover University (14-17 years)	58	20
NEIC Brighter Futures Restorative Practices	147	0
Totals	720	281



Indicators of Learning
(92%, n= 293)



Indicators of Satisfaction
(88%, n=289)

5.6.1 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

- 236 students from 6 schools engaged across both Primary and Secondary level programmes.
- 153 students from 3 primary schools attended an in-person tour of Dublin Port.
- 7 parents of second level students attended an information seminar about 3rd level options.
- 57 career projects were submitted by students for the final exhibition events.
- 2 judging sessions for the career projects were held in-person in NCI and Citco with 27 volunteer judges from Citco, Arthur Cox, EXL, Glenveagh, Central Bank of Ireland, and Maples Group giving project feedback and choosing winning projects at each session.
- In January 2025, a Pilot Mid Term Camp was held where 11 students from another secondary school group participated in 3 full days of Educational Guidance.

Participant Feedback

Post-programme evaluations were conducted with both primary (N=121) and secondary students (N=39). Among these respondents, 80% (n=124 out of 157) reported that they enjoyed the project. Although more than half of respondents reported they would like to go to college when they finish school (58%, n=69), this is a decrease on the 71% (n=91) of students in 2023-24.

Responses from this year's participating students indicate that the key learning outcomes of the programme were achieved.



Across both groups, 73% (n=112 out of 154) reported that they learnt how taking different subjects in school links to different jobs, and 72% (n=113 out of 156) learned how to do research. Additionally, 55% of respondents from both groups agreed that they learnt about possible jobs (n=84 out of 153), and 50% agreed that they learnt how to present (n=76 out of 153).

Comments from participants included



"The class loved every part, the tour, making the project and presenting. It was great to see their enthusiasm and engagement over the months." [Teacher]



"I learned if you have a passion for [the job], you will enjoy it more." [Student]

5.6.2 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 chat with different professionals over the course of an hour, all from different educational and career backgrounds and working in different job sectors. It is incorporated into the Educational Guidance, Discover University and other relevant Programmes.

Programme Delivery

- 25 students attended *A Day in the Life* event in November 2024 with 5 Corporate Volunteers from Arthur Cox and The Lir, Trinity College Dublin.
- 11 students and 4 volunteers from Arthur Cox participated in *A Day in the Life* event which was held as part of the Educational Guidance Programme Mid Term Camp.
- 55 students participated in an additional *A Day in the Life* event which was held in June 2025 as part of Discover University.

Participant Feedback

Responses from the students indicate that 96% (n=23) reported knowing more about different careers after the event, and 83% (n=20) felt more confident discussing their future careers. Additionally, more than half of students reported having a better idea of the types of careers they may or may not want in the future after the event (n=58%, n=14). Positive outcomes were also reflected in the teacher feedback with both teachers reporting that students had meaningful engagements with professionals, gained greater knowledge about their career options, and found the event to be a valuable learning opportunity. All volunteers (N=3) expressed that they would volunteer with ELI again.



Comments from participants included



"I learned if you have a passion for [the job], you will enjoy it more." [Student]



"I liked talking with the mentors. They gave me insight into different jobs and learned that it's okay to take your time. Overall, I liked it very much and found it engaging and helpful."
[Student]

5.6.3 NEIC Brighter Futures Restorative Practice

In 2016-17, Restorative Practices (RP) was one of the Mulvey Report recommendations to support the North-East Inner City (NEIC) community envision and plan for a better future for people in the area. 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. This programme is also incorporated into other programmes

Programme Delivery

147 young people (aged 12-24 years) participated in restorative-focused activities facilitated in-person, through primary and secondary schools, youth services, corporate organisations and National College of Ireland.

- 108 young people engaged in Learning and Development opportunities during 2024-25, including
 - 53 young people (TY and 5th Year) from Larkin Community College and St Joseph's College trained as 'Relationship Keepers', to create a sense of connection and belonging in their school and community.
 - 6 young people engaged in Opening the Door with Arthur Cox.
 - 49 Discover University students engaged in Relationship Keepers training to support them in building relationships and prepare them for their overall experience.
- 1 young person engaged in Mentoring and Support, this will continue to develop further in 2025-26.
- 33 1st year NCI students engaged in a Listening Circle to support relationship building.
- 5 students engaged in a Listening Circle to support relationship building and repairing harm.

Participant Feedback

100% (n=28) of participants in Relationship Keepers reported the training was useful and that the skills learned will support them as a Relationship Keeper in their community. 100% (n=28) felt they were able to participate in discussions and felt listened to. Following the workshops, most participants reported feeling confident being a Relationship Keeper (93%, n=26) and leading restorative circles after the workshop (96%, n=27). This represents an 18% increase in comparison with 2023-24. Both teachers reported that participating in Relationship Keepers developed and enhanced the students' skills in using restorative activities for problem solving, conflict resolution and to repair harm.

Comments from participants included



"The most useful thing in the training was how to connect to the 1st years and help them."
[Student]



"Learning new ways to help towards mental health Understanding each other." [Student]



*"Discussions around value systems and what tools they can use to form relationships
Modelling relationship building exercises."* [Teacher]

5.6.4 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. In 2024-25 consultations on a Youth Advisory Panel were held with participants, funded by Tusla Child and Youth Participation Initiative 2025.

Programme Delivery

- 58 young people participated in Discover University 2025.
- 8 NCI students and 4 NCI staff were recruited as team leaders and project leaders to mentor and guide young people through the programme.
- Project Leaders were from the Schools of Psychology, Business, Early Childhood Education and Care and Computing in NCI.
- 29 volunteers from 9 local corporate organisations supported Discover University across 3 volunteer events, with some individuals participating in multiple events, including:
 - 10 in ADITL sharing career & education experiences
 - 14 participated as dragons for Dragons Den, giving feedback to students on their project work.
 - 12 participated as judges during the project showcase, interviewing students on their 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 Jigsaw, State Street, HubSpot, and a sports day in Trinity College Sports Centre.
- 55 students attended a graduation ceremony and presented their projects. This event also featured an award ceremony where students received a certificate for their participation. Approximately 20 parents attended along with other family members and friends.
- 48 students participated in 2 Youth Council consultation meetings to brainstorm and advise for what would be needed for students and young people to be able to participate in a Youth Advisory Panel funded by Tusla Child and Youth Participation Initiative 2025.

Participant Feedback

A post-programme survey of students (N=50) revealed that the majority of students found the programme enjoyable (94%, n=47) and would recommend it to a friend (92%, n=46), which improved by 8% from 2023-24. This enjoyment from the students aligns with feedback from parents (90%, n=18), who agreed that the programme was an enjoyable experience for their children. 84% (n=41) of students reported that they gained a better understanding of higher education, increased excitement about continuing to higher education (70%, n=35) and are better prepared for third level education (62%, n=31). The students also showed significant development in their ability to work with different types of people (86%, n=42). In line with this, parents agreed that their child's confidence (83%, n=15), teamwork (72%, n=13), and social skills (67%, n=12) improved.

Responses from team leaders (N=7) were extremely positive, with everyone agreeing that they would recommend the experience to a friend. All team leaders (N=7) reported that the programme helped develop their leadership and communication skills and improved their facilitation skills and ability to work with young people. Project leaders (N=3) also had a very positive experience and would recommend it to a colleague and agreed that they were happy they participated. Finally, all our corporate volunteers indicated they would recommend the experience to a colleague and would volunteer again (N=7).



Comments from participants included



"I really enjoyed the program. The staff was kind, and I got more confident speaking out loud. Also, I really liked the teamwork and the challenges." [Student]



"[My child] grew confidence, experienced student life, and encouraged [them] to go/enrol in future." [Parent]



"I gained the ability to communicate complex material in a way that is accessible to younger generations, as opposed to typical undergraduate age range." [Project Leader]

5.7 Capacity Building, Training and Mentoring

Long-term sustainable change requires continued innovation and upskilling. While changes in one family and service are 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, are 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, Numeracy, STEM, Literacy, Restorative Practice, and Self-care.

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 communitywide 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	89
ABC G Early Years Seminar	36
ABC D Infant Mental Health Network Group	27
ABC G Infant Mental Health Network Group	73
Restorative Practice Training Courses	131
Restorative Practice CPD	169
Restorative Practice Trainers	6
ELI Internships	20
Totals	551



Indicators of Learning
(91%, n= 373)



Indicators of Satisfaction
(98%, n=363)

5.7.1 Early Years Professionals and RP Self-care

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

- 28 early years educators attending 3 Early Numeracy Working Group meetings – a reflective space and peer learning opportunity (average of 9 attendees per meeting).
- 24 participants attended 3 Pre-Numeracy Workshops to share planning for the upcoming numeracy week with an average of 8 attendees per workshop.
- 305 numeracy mentoring support meetings/visits were provided to schools and early childhood education care services throughout the year.
- Home Visitors and Group Facilitators completed 1,325 hours of CPD training.
- 34 Early Years Professionals including ELI Home Visitors and practitioners participating in the Infant Mental Health Network engaged in 4 self-care sessions.
- 3 facilitators trained in Stepping Stones to support parents with children with additional needs.

Participant Feedback

Feedback from post-training surveys indicated that 76% (n=16) of Pre-Numeracy Workshop participants found the session interesting, well facilitated, and useful for improving their practice, with 73% (n=15) reporting the content was clear and appropriately paced. In the Self-Care Training, the highest positive ratings were for guided meditation 64% (n=14), self-knowledge 58% (n=12), and breathing techniques/body scan 57% (n=14), with participants highlighting the value of practical, easy-to-apply strategies and the need for continued learning opportunities.

Comments from participants included



“I found talking to the other professionals of huge help – providing and communicating different ideas and resources.” [Pre-Numeracy Workshop Participant]

5.7.2 Infant Mental Health Network

Infant Mental Health Network Groups (IMH-NG) were established by the Irish Association for Infant Mental Health (I-AIMH) to support the translation and implementation of infant mental health skills into frontline practice. ELI/NCI became the lead agency for the Grangegorman Area Based Child Poverty programme in January 2025. Figures reported below breakdown the Dublin Docklands and East Inner City ABC Programme and the Grangegorman ABC programme separately.

IMH-NG ELI Dublin Docklands

The Inner-city IMH-NG (Dublin 1,2,3,4,8) was established in 2020 and co-chaired/facilitated by the ELI Community Families coordinator and a staff member from the national maternity hospital. The membership is made up of many professionals working directly with children and families in a medical, caring or educational capacity. This includes HSE community and hospital settings, Tusla home visiting and community settings, family resource settings and parenting support programmes.

Programme Delivery

- 107 practitioners from a range of agencies signed up to the Infant mental health Master Classes and engaged with the Network over the past 5 years
- 24 members attended 9 sessions regularly in 2024-25, exploring themes such as early attachment both in neonatal wards and childhood illness, brain development, connecting through breastfeeding, the effects on infant mental health when domestic violence is present in the home and recognising and responding to sensory overwhelm in infants and parents.

IMH-NG ABC Grangegorman

The Dublin 7 & 1 IMH-NG was established in June 2024 by One Family in partnership with ABC Grangegorman. The membership is made up of local partners working in front line practice in local child and family community projects including schools, early years services, NGO's, HSE practitioners and Tusla staff. A central aim of the network in its first year has been to develop an understanding of infant mental health theory in the area and apply the same to practice using a shared language across services. In the upcoming year the network will seek to further imbed itself within the community, fostering dialogue around infant mental health and strengthening interagency collaboration.

Programme Delivery

- 73 practitioners from a range of agencies have signed up to the Network so far.
- An average of 15 members attended 5 sessions regularly between January and June, exploring themes such as post-natal depression, the importance of nature and the importance of self-care.

5.7.3 NEIC Restorative Practice Training

Restorative Practice (RP), which is funded by the North-East Inner City (NEIC) Task Force and Government's ABC Programme, is an approach to building and maintaining relationships and resolving conflict in a wide range of community organisations, while complementing other approaches, i.e., coaching, mediation, and restorative justice.

Programme Delivery

- 84 different organisations participated in the NEIC restorative practice initiative in 2024-25.
- 131 professionals engaged in Restorative Practices Training:
 - 61 participants engaged with Getting Started with Restorative Practice (introductory) training across three courses.
 - 21 participants engaged with Moving Forward with Restorative Practice (intermediate) training over two courses.
 - 16 participants engaged with Leading with Restorative Practice (advanced) training. This programme has been steadily growing with more services implementing restorative practices and their own training and support.
 - 33 teachers, principals, SNAs, and other community professionals participated in the Drumcondra Education Centre summer courses 'Restorative Practices for Classrooms and School Communities' and 'Restorative Leadership: Embedding Restorative Culture in Schools', which was piloted in July 2024.
- 169 professionals engaged in continuous professional development, including:
 - 11 Doodle Den facilitators engaged in an introduction to restorative language.
 - 9 professionals supporting Discover University engaged in introductory RP workshops.
 - 17 ParentChild+ Coordinators engaged in a Let's Talk Webinar.
 - 78 professionals and community members attended CPD workshops for International Justice Week.
 - 16 local professionals engaged in Community Circle Support.
 - 16 professionals from City Quay school engaged in a Restorative Language workshop
 - 22 professionals engaged in Creating Communities of Practice workshop.
- 6 professionals continued to engage training/facilitation activities, ongoing mentoring and support, and course facilitation, both online and in-person. 8 support sessions were delivered during 2024/25.
- 151 mentoring and support visits took place in total across the community — 44 face-to-face, and the remaining 107 using video conferencing platforms, video calls or phone calls.

- 138 community professionals and community members attended 10 monthly in-person community of practice meetings in 2024/25
- The European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) have selected ELI to become a member of the 'Restorative Cities' working group, one of only 12 organisations selected from Europe, America, Canada and Australia. ELI will be representing the North East Inner City, Dublin, Ireland, and northern Europe during its two-year term.

Participant Feedback



There was a notable 53% improvement in participants' knowledge of Restorative Practices which was *Good, Very Good or Excellent* for 97% (n=70) of participants post-programme, demonstrating a substantial increase in participants' self-assessed knowledge after the programme. Most participants (98%, n=66) also agreed that the knowledge and skills learned from the programme are transferable to their roles. 97% (n=71) reported they felt more confident in their ability to apply the skills that they have learnt from the programme. These results represent increases of 5% and 4%, respectively, compared with those

of 2023-24.

Summer course for teachers

Comments from participants included



"Restorative Practice is a great framework to resolve day to day conflicts in school with all members of the school community. [Their] principles of equality and fairness enable a fair safe and structured pathway of resolving issues."



"I think [Restorative Practice] will help build relationships positively, not always focusing on repair. This course has allowed me to be clearer in communication, particularly around expressing feelings and needs."



"We have successfully implemented RP in a section of our organisation, sustaining that with staff changes and developing it is a challenge. It has made for a better learning and working organisation."

5.7.4 Third Level Internship

Our internship programmes offer students the opportunity to develop their personal, academic and professional skills, while becoming active in the local community.

Programme Delivery

- 7 NCI Students participated in the Third Level Internship programme
 - 4 for the General ELI Internship and 3 for the Research Internship- studying Psychology (5), Early Childhood Education and Care (1), and master's in data Analytics (1).
 - 4 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
 - 3 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.

- 8 NCI students- Psychology (4), Early Childhood Education and Care (2), Business (1), and Computing (1) were recruited as team leaders for the Discover University programme this summer. Team leaders assisted with the daily running of the summer programme whilst ensuring that young people attending were supported through each activity and project work.
- 12 Transition Year Students from local secondary students engaged in short internships throughout the year working across a variety of areas supporting with groups and events and developing administration and organisational skills.
- 1 third level student from the USA engaged in an 8-week summer internship, primarily developing research skills.

Third Level Internship Participant Feedback



5 ELI interns completed the end of year evaluation. All respondents strongly agreed that their participation in the intern programme supported their career development. Additionally, these respondents agreed that the internship was rewarding, and that they were provided with meaningful work as well adequate support & supervision during the internship. The positive experience of these interns was also reflected in the comments below about their participation in the

programme.

ELI Intern Facilitating Secondary Talking Heads Programme

Comments from participants included



"It helped me gain a deeper understanding of my strengths and weaknesses. It was also a major bonus to have had access to the staff tearoom during lectures!"



"I really enjoyed the practical elements of the Internship including the Talking Heads programme, the Rummikub and Monopoly events, doodle den site visits, library visits and class visits. I met so many new people and made three close friends because of this internship. This internship provided me with the skills and resources to effectively communicate with younger students and children, enhance my admin and professional skills, and improve my organisational skills and learn to be a compassionate and patient individual. Alongside my studies, this internship provided me with experience in being able to prioritise and multitask my tasks day by day. The internship and its team were very flexible in being able to accommodate me, which I am very grateful for."

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 2024-25, 222 (191 corporate; 31 other) volunteers contributed to a range of ELI's programmes. This is a slight increase on 2023-24 engagement (n=209). It was fantastic to have a diverse mix of professionals from the working world visit schools, participate in classroom practices, support Doodle Den, Discover University and attend student events such as the Monopoly Challenge in May, the Table Quiz in March, STEM events and exhibitions throughout the year at NCI.



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. Sign-up for one-off events and workshops was more popular due to staff variable work schedules, but there was also good support for regular weekly volunteering. We would also like to acknowledge the number of volunteers (corporate, community and otherwise) who contribute to ELI's work through our five voluntary committees – ELI Advisory Committee and its 4 subcommittees - Development Committee, ABC Docklands, ABC Grangegorman and National Centre Steering Groups.

Participant Feedback

A total of 64 volunteers across 12 programmes completed post-programme evaluations after their volunteering with these programmes. Based on feedback from these respondents, the majority reported that they were happy with their participation in the ELI Volunteer Programme (95%, n=61). Additionally, 97% reported that they were both satisfied with the support they received during their involvement and would recommend this experience to their colleagues (n=62, respectively). When asked about their reasons for volunteering, 95% indicated that they were motivated by the desire “to make a difference”(n=61), which was followed by 52% (n=33) who agreed “to have fun” as a motivation. Similarly, corporate key contact persons expressed positive views about the volunteering experience.

Comments from participants included



“Interaction with students worked really well. From my perspective, the students really enjoyed this activity and felt relaxed while expressing themselves in French orally. They were also very open to receive feedback and correction in some of their responses. I think this is a great initiative!” [Volunteer, Language Cafe]



“The staff were super helpful and informative on what they do, our roll, how volunteers like us benefit their work and the impact the overall ELI program has on the community. Working with the families was a very rewarding experience, they were all lovely and super nice to deal with.” [Cooperate Key Contact Person]



“People organising and who I was in contact with from ELI were very helpful. The 2 volunteers in doodle den were very welcoming and made each week enjoyable and easy to get involved.”
[Volunteer, Doodle Den]

Programme	Number of Volunteers	Lead Corporate Partner
Mentoring and Support		
ELI Advisory Committees and Steering Groups	35	Deloitte, Citco, State Street, Chartered Land and Land Development Agency
Volunteering Link People in Companies	24	Arthur Cox, Basis.point, BNP Paribas, Central Bank of Ireland, Citco, Cheyne Capital, Deloitte, EXL, GAM, Glenveagh, Google, HubSpot, Kennedy Wilson, KPMG, Maples, Mason Hayes and Curran, McCann FitzGerald, McGarrell-Reilly, Morgan Stanley, Northern Trust, PWC, State Street
Skills Sharing	7	Deloitte, Glenveagh
Afterschool and Community Programmes		
STEM Events	9	Glenveagh, basis.point (Prescient, Caceis), Central Bank of Ireland,
Doodle Den Afterschool Programme	18	KPMG, PWC, Independant Volunteer (*1 retired employee)
Restorative Practice	4	Arthur Cox
Christmas Party	1	Deloitte
Primary Level Programmes		
Educational Guidance	16	Central Bank of Ireland, Citco, EXL
NCI Challenges	21	Deloitte, Central Bank of Ireland, Citco, Mason Hayes & Curran
Coding Clubs	7	KPMG, Central Bank of Ireland
Zoom Ahead with Books	7	Cheyne Capital
Second Level Programmes		
Discover University	36	Glenveagh, Central Bank of Ireland, Morgan Stanley, EXL, Arthur Cox, Citco, State Street, Deloitte, KPMG, HubSpot, Volunteers from other companies/organisations (Jigsaw Mental Health Centre)
A Day in the Life Careers Events	8	Arthur Cox, Volunteers from other organisations (The Lir-Trinity)
Language Cafés	15	Central Bank of Ireland, Deloitte, Citco
Talking Heads EAL Support	3	Citco, Deloitte, PwC
Educational Guidance	11	Arthur Cox, Glenveagh, Central Bank of Ireland, EXL
Total	222	

6 Looking Forward 2025-26

Children's wellbeing, health (SDG 3) and education (SDG4) is the foundation to a sustainable peaceful and prosperous world (UN SDGs). ELI addresses emerging needs and serious gaps in essential child and family disability, mental health, educational and other services. Described as ambitious and innovative, both nationally and internationally, ELI will continue in 2025-26 to provide pioneering inclusive and diverse prevention and early intervention programmes in Dublin's Inner City and across Ireland.

ELI remains committed to the NCI's mission of changing lives through education and partnering with others to level the educational playing field for at-risk children across Ireland. Community Action Research 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.

6.1 Strategic Innovation

A key objective of NCI's 2022-27 Strategic Plan is to provide transformative 'cradle to college' accessible education services. Being part of the NCI, a vibrant third-level institution that the local community sees as "our college", is essential to realizing our vision. Since 2006, we have welcomed local children, parents, families and services into NCI. The opening of our Spencer Dock campus along with our new Play Hub and Sanctuary Space in our Mayor Square campus continues this tradition. Supplementing these spaces will be the dedicated child and family facilities in the National Centre for Research and Reconciliation (NCRR) on Sean McDermott St, which is now at the design stage. This will increase the space available, especially for our Community Families groups and home visits for families living in temporary or overcrowded accommodation and for children with additional needs and disabilities.

Balancing forward thinking innovative strategic planning with prudent day-to-day operations will continue in 2025-2026 with ELI and our 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. With the transfer of ABC Grangegorman from TUD to NCI, ELI is now delivering the Area Based Childhood Programme (ABC) across Dublin's Inner City (Post codes: 1,3,7 northside and 2,4,8 southside) and is the collective voice for children and families living in areas where poverty is most deeply entrenched. Fidelity to ELI's original vision and NCI's Governing Body's commitment to its local community remains key along with developing the funding streams required to sustain the work.

ELI's National Centre continues to evolve. Its key priority is ELI's mission to bring home visiting and family engagement programmes to every community in Ireland, thereby ensuring that the 10,400 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. 2024-25 was a significant year with our appointment as the lead agency for Community Families nationally; the establishment and engagement with the National Home Visiting Programme in Tusla and ongoing development of National Model of Home Visiting as part of the [First 5 | A Government Strategy For Babies & Young Children](#). These initiatives are shaping ELI strategic thinking. Research is core to the National Centre with a focus on fostering a vibrant, successful, and interactive research community

that generates ideas and discoveries, creates new fields of knowledge, and makes a difference to the development of our local, national, and global communities.

6.2 Risk Assessment and Contingency Planning

NCI's Governing Body along with the executive and management teams meet regularly to discuss risk and contingency plans. 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 Committee and Steering Groups.

6.3 Operational Priorities

At operational level, the stark reality for the ELI team and our partners is that

- 10,000+ babies are born into poverty each year in Ireland,
- 5,000 children living in homelessness and another 9,000 children living in international protection, most of which are in our Dublin Inner City Catchment area
- 42,000 children have been waiting more than a year for vital healthcare in the community, with 14,000+ children waiting more than a year for psychological services,

ELI, together with our partners, are dealing with these and other challenges on a daily basis. Together we are levelling the playing field for these children.

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 both ABC Steering Groups.

While supporting other organisations to deliver ELI's Home Visiting and Family Engagement programmes is the responsibility of the National Centre, it also leads out ELI's research activities. Led by the National Steering Group, work will continue on defining our national ambition, identity and focus as well as building the capacities and structures required to scale up our programmes across the country.

Increased need and complexity both locally and nationally have been challenging. Meeting those needs in a time of funding constraints has been difficult. However, we will continue to rise to the challenge. Securing the long-term multi-annual funding needed to deliver high quality responsive trauma-informed programmes that improve outcomes for at-risk children and families will continue to be a priority in 2025-26 as will upskilling our dedicated staff, volunteers and partners to negotiate change and emerging issues, both at local and national level.

6.4 Changing Children's 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 during these difficult times.

With another challenging year ahead in 2025-26, 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.

