

# PARENTING SUPPORT INITIATIVE (2013-2016)

**SUPPORTING PARENTS OF THE UNDER 3s  
IN THEIR PARENTING ROLE**



**Summary of a Partnership Initiative with  
the Community Foundation for Ireland**

# Foreword

The Parenting Support Initiative (2013-2016) enabled Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF) in partnership with Community Foundation for Ireland (CFI) to provide strategic grants over three years to 16 Core Projects with a focus on supporting parents of young children under 3 years. The Parenting Support Initiative (PSI) also enabled the Foundation to support an additional 43 projects throughout the country for one year. The initiative has provided great insight and learning into this important area of work which highlighted the breadth of the work and the range of creative models and approaches to engaging with and supporting parents of young children.

The Trustees of KHF are pleased that this Initiative was so successful, in no small way due to the efforts and commitment of a large number of people. KHF is a small organisation and is consequently reliant on partners to achieve the realisation of many of its objectives. The experience of this particular partnership and the positive relationships with the staff at the Community Foundation for Ireland, particularly Tina Roche and Helen Beatty, reinforces the Foundation's belief in the benefits of collaboration and working together. Special thanks to the PSI Projects for being so open and co-operative and to the Lead Organisations for the way they embraced this work and gave us so much assistance throughout the Initiative. Their willingness to welcome this Initiative was rooted in their commitment to improve the support services available for children and families.

The guidance received from the PSI Advisory Group ensured the Initiative remained on track and true to its objectives. The methodical approach to the Initiative was guided by an independent consultant, Marguerite Hanratty, who ensured that the process was designed thoroughly, thereby aiding the successful implementation of the Initiative. Marguerite was responsible for careful documentation at all stages, culminating in this report. KHF was also very fortunate to have Jennifer Carroll working part-time with PSI in 2015 as part of a 12 month Atlantic Philanthropies Fellowship arrangement. This additional capacity enabled KHF to provide more direct support to the Projects through regular contact, updates and guidance. In the final year of PSI, a facilitated review process with the Projects was developed by KHF and implemented by an independent facilitator, Marie Carroll. The review process enabled the projects to reflect on the experience of planning and implementing PSI and also provided important learning for both KHF and CFI as funders. A summary report 'PSI Review Process' was produced in June 2017. Highlights from this report inform this edition of Community Matters.

The Foundation would like to thank its wide number of friends and colleagues, including those referred to above, for supporting the work of the staff of KHF: Noelle Spring, Director; Gina Allen, Administrator; Jane Treacy, Finance Officer and Francis Chance, Programme Manager with The Nurture Programme: Infant Health and Wellbeing. This support affirms the Foundation's developmental approach to its work in engaging in special projects, especially in the areas of early intervention and family support.

KHF has enjoyed the contact with all the projects involved in PSI over the past number of years. The Foundation is very pleased that the profile of such projects has been raised through the Initiative and that significant learning has been deemed through the commitment of all involved with PSI. We wish all involved continued success in the future.

# Introduction

This issue of the Katharine Howard Foundation's Community Matters provides a summary of the **Parenting Support Initiative (2013-2016)**. The Initiative (PSI) was a collaborative partnership between the Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF) and the Community Foundation for Ireland (CFI).

The PSI aimed to support projects and initiatives that promote and support parents in their parental role, improve outcomes (health, wellbeing and learning) for their young children (from birth to 3 years) and work in a collaborative and integrated way. The grants programme sought to identify and learn from community based parent support programmes and projects that encourage creative and innovative ways of supporting parents of young children and promote and build on good practice using evidence-based and/or evidence informed approaches. PSI focused on supporting a number of projects in socio-economically disadvantaged areas or specific socially disadvantaged (target) groups, engaged in collaborative approaches to working with parents of children from birth to 3 years.

A central part of the collaborative approach between KHF and CFI was agreement that KHF would take the lead role in the design, development and implementation of PSI. CFI was also a key member of the PSI Advisory Group.



**The Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF)** is an independent Foundation focused on improving the lives of young children and their families. The Foundation's work is underpinned by a commitment to equality and overcoming disadvantage and to promoting equality of opportunity for all children.

The Foundation's approach involves working with others in identifying needs, building on existing programmes, making grants and sharing the learning.



**The Community Foundation for Ireland (CFI)** is a philanthropic organisation which seeks just and progressive social change. It provides a long-term source of independent funding for the community and voluntary sector, mostly in Ireland.

The Foundation empowers people who want to make a difference through a model of philanthropy that is based on trust, effectiveness and impact by helping donors to cause sustainable change.



# Rationale for PSI

**KHF undertook a review process in 2013 with a view to developing a three-year strategic plan. The review process highlighted the changing Irish policy context in relation to children and families including the establishment of the Department for Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), plans for the formation of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and the planning of a National Early Years Strategy.**

Much of the reflections and discussions that KHF undertook with key stakeholders, as part of this strategic planning process, highlighted the important lessons from working in the early years sector, particularly the learning from the prevention and early intervention initiatives and the gaps in supports for parents of children from pre-birth to 3 years.

It was within this changing context that KHF planned and developed a strategic grants initiative with a focus on supporting parents of children under 3 years. This work was undertaken in the context of wide consultation and continued to build on KHF's relationships with other statutory, voluntary and community organisations.

The Foundation also reaffirmed its commitment to plan its work based on evidence from research and practice and in the belief, that small grants when informed by relevant evidence can have an important impact in achieving proportionally greater outcomes for children, families and communities.

The underlying understanding of the Parenting Supporting Initiative was that the quality of parenting that a child receives impacts on their wellbeing, overall development (in particular language and later literacy) and life opportunities and that the determining factor in the quality of children's lives is their family.

In developing the Parenting Support Initiative, KHF was also aware that a consistent theme within the literature is the all-pervasive influence of the home learning environment on children's educational and social development. Collaboration with families about children's development and learning was seen as critically important.

KHF has always acknowledged the value of parents and the need to support them in their important role and is committed to continuing to support parents in their parenting role. The key principles of effective provision of all parenting support, which KHF is committed to, include:



- › Recognising that parents at all levels on the continuum of need should be supported in their parenting role.
- › Increasing community access to quality based parenting support programmes through a partnership model involving statutory, community and voluntary service providers.

# Background to PSI

The Parenting Support Initiative was a 3 year (2013-2016), strategic grants programme with a focus on children from birth to 3 years and their parents, with a particular emphasis on supporting parents in their parenting role. The grants aimed to be open, flexible and responsive to those community based initiatives that wished to expand and/or develop their work with parents and young children.

## The objectives of PSI included:

- › Strengthening prevention and early intervention supports for children and families to achieve better health, wellbeing and learning outcomes for their children;
- › Reinforcing the developmental role of the Children and Young People's Services Committees, City/County Childcare Committees, National Childcare Voluntary Organisations, Family Resource Centres and other community based services working directly with children from birth to 3 years and their parents;
- › Strengthening the links between existing health and community based services to support a holistic approach to meeting infants' and young children's needs;
- › Building on the learning from initiatives such as, the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) and the National Early Years Access Programme (NEYAI).

## Expected Outcomes:

PSI was designed to support prevention and early intervention evidence informed or evidenced-based programmes, practices and approaches that would:

- › Support parents in meeting their children's developmental needs – physical, social - emotional and cognitive;
- › Support parents as their children's primary educators in creating a positive home learning environment;
- › Support informal learning of parents with a particular emphasis on parent literacy;
- › Increase parental self-efficacy and confidence in their parenting role;
- › Increase parenting skills and capacity;
- › Reduce parental stress;
- › Promote positive parent child interaction and attachments.

## It was envisaged that PSI would;

- › Operate within the framework of the expected Early Years Strategy and other relevant strategies such as the Healthy Ireland Strategy;
- › Involve a partnership approach to strengthening early years services in supporting children and families;
- › Provide learning opportunities for projects/ programmes;
- › Focus on the importance of good implementation in the delivery of the projects.

*Criteria for selection of projects was based on the expected outcomes.*



# Funding and selection of PSI Projects

**A joint fund of €600,000 was allocated in grants for this Initiative over the 3 year period. PSI was launched in September 2013 and over 200 applications were received. This response indicated a high level of the interest from a diverse range of organisations within the community, voluntary and statutory sectors.**

**Out of the 200 applications, 16 core projects were awarded funding of €181,397 in 2014 with the potential for these projects to secure a further two years of funding, depending on progress achieved.**

**Due to the high level of response and quality of applications a further €100,000 was allocated by KHF to 43 projects as once-off small grants in 2014. In year (2) of the Initiative, €176,799 was allocated to the core projects and in the final year (3) the funding allocated was €156,241.**



Minister James Reilly & KHF Director Noelle Spring with Barbara Coates & Collette Martin, Dublin South City Partnership, at Networking Event 2015



Q&A with panel at Networking Event 2015

The response to the PSI's call for applications indicated:

- There was a high number of small projects in the sector working with, or wishing to work with, parents of children of this age-group indicating a gap in the sector that needs support
- There was limited funding and high competition for funding of small projects delivering evidence based/informed services for parents of children from birth to 3 years
- There was strong potential to enhance best practice collaboration between projects and agencies engaging with this cohort of parents and children.

The assessment process for selecting the 16 core projects was very comprehensive and assisted by an Advisory Group, which was established to advise on the development and implementation of the Initiative.

As PSI was designed to support a specific small number of projects it was therefore essential that the selection process identified the most suitable projects that were likely to have the greatest impact in terms of improving outcomes for children. The Parenting Support Initiative focused on prioritising areas and projects that were not in receipt of large scale funding such as the National Early Years Access Initiative (NEYAI) and Area Based Response to Child Poverty Programme (ABC).

The amount of funding allocated varied between projects and from year to year with funding up to €20,000 per project available for each of the 3 years. Funding for years (2) and (3) was subject to satisfactory review of project progress reports and the recommendations of the Advisory Group.

The 43 projects selected for once-off grants in 2014 included a wide range of organisations throughout the country including Family Resource Centres, City/County Childcare Committees, Child and Family Centres, Family Support Organisations, Youth Services, Disability Services, Drugs Projects, Traveller Programmes, Partnership/Local Development Organisations, Health Services and Arts Projects.

### PSI Advisory Group Members

- **Stella Owens**, *Centre for Effective Services, 2014-2017*
- **Orla Tuohy**, *Lifestart Foundation and Tusla - Child & Family Agency, 2014-2017*
- **Helen Beatty**, *Community Foundation for Ireland, 2014-2017*
- **Emma Byrne MacNamee**, *Northside Partnership & Preparing for Life, 2014-2017*
- **Francis Chance**, *Barnardos, 2014 - April 2015*
- **Noelle Spring and Marguerite Hanratty**, *Katharine Howard Foundation, 2014-2017*

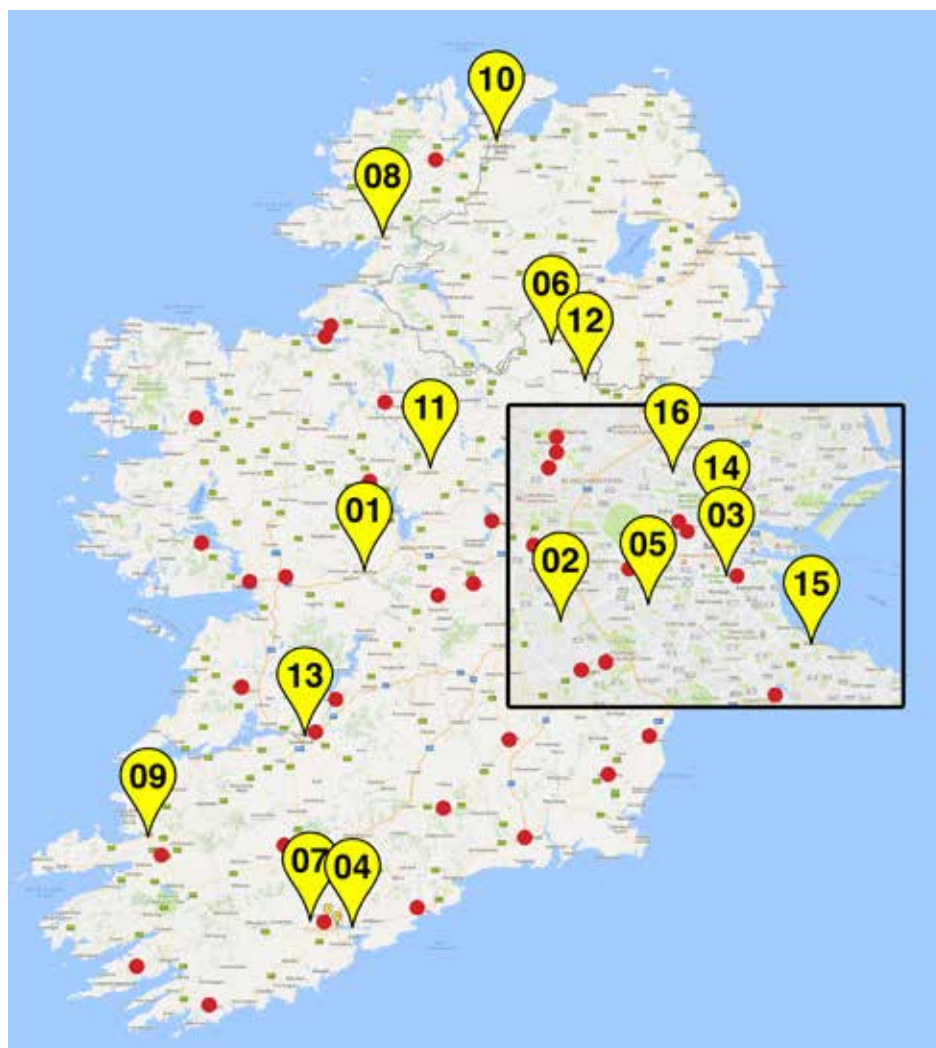


# Summary Description of PSI Core Projects

## Overview of projects funded

The Projects selected as the 16 core projects had identified ways of engaging and working with parents of children from birth to 3 years, with a particular focus on developing collaborative area based approaches to working with and supporting parents including:

- Planning and delivery of evidence based parenting support programmes;
- Supporting parent and child interaction programmes;
- Promoting and supporting positive parent and child mental health;
- Providing outreach parenting support programmes;
- Providing training for early years staff to build their capacity to engage and support parents;
- Supporting child and parent literacy and the home learning environment;
- Identifying and implementing strategies that target the most vulnerable parents;
- Reviewing and evaluating parent support programmes and processes.



### PSI PROJECTS

01	Ballinasloe Social Services, Galway
02	Barnardos, Dublin
03	Co-Operative Housing Ireland, Dublin
04	Bessborough Centre, Cork
05	Dublin South City Partnership
06	Chatterbox Cavan and Monaghan
07	Cork City Partnership
08	Downstrands FRC, Donegal
09	Kerry Children & Young People's Services Committee
10	Lifestart, Donegal
11	Longford Community Resources (funded for Year (1) only)
12	Monaghan Integrated Development
13	Bedford Row, Limerick
14	Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, Dublin
15	Southside Partnership, Dublin
16	North West Area Partnership, Dublin
	43 Once-off Grant Recipients

**Overall 59 projects received grants through PSI, 43 once-off grant projects and 16 core projects with most of the KHF's support and focus centring on the 16 core projects. An important element of PSI was its communication strategy which included the development of an information leaflet and designing a PSI Map that indicated the geographical spread of the projects funded.**



Lead Organisation	PSI Project Theme
1. Ballinasloe Social Services, Galway	Delivery of Incredible Years Parenting Programme; Individual and group sessions targeting parents and children with additional needs
2. Barnardos, Dublin	Delivery of a Parent Support Project in Crumlin, Dublin 12
3. Bedford Row, Limerick	Delivery of a Prison Support Project working with young women prisoners and ex-prisoners
4. Bessborough Centre, Cork	Support for Parent and Baby Group 'Babble Group' for vulnerable mothers/fathers and babies, resident in the Centre's family assessment unit
5. Chatterbox, Cavan & Monaghan	Delivery of Elklan Speech and Language Project targeting disadvantaged parents in Cavan and Monaghan
6. Co-operative Housing Ireland (formerly National Association of Building Co-operatives Society Ltd. (NABCO)), Dublin	Training of staff in the delivery of parenting support programmes- including Marte Meo and Parents Plus Programmes in 3 locations in Dublin
7. Cork City Partnership	Delivery of multi-faceted Parent and Baby Programmes targeting early years services in disadvantaged communities across Cork City
8. Downstrands Family Resource Centre, Donegal	Delivery of Child and Parent Programmes through Parent and Toddler Groups in 9 Family Resource Centres in Donegal, including targeting of vulnerable families
9. Dublin North West Area Partnership (formerly Tolka Partnership), Dublin 7 (PSI funding for year (1) and (2))	Delivery of Parenting Baby Support Programme
10. Dublin South City Partnership (formerly Canal Communities Partnership)	Delivery of Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) to families in a newly expanded Partnership area
11. Kerry Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC)	Delivery of a Language and Play Programme to Family Resource Centres and Parent and Toddler Groups, including targeting the more vulnerable families in County Kerry
12. Lifestart, Donegal	Delivery of a Train the Trainers 'Spirals' Parenting Programme- a Countywide Strategy and the development of Resource Materials for those working parents and babies 0-3
13. Longford Community Resources Limited (PSI funding for year (1))	Delivery of Filial Play Therapy Programme
14. Monaghan integrated Development (MID)	Delivery of Early Years Parents Plus training Programme to Early Years Services and establishment of a Network of 17 services working with children/young people in County Monaghan
15. Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, Dublin 1	Delivery of Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) to traveller families in Blanchardstown and Finglas areas
16. Southside Partnership, Dublin	Delivery of an Integrated Early Intervention and Family Support Initiative targeting vulnerable parents in the Mounttown area

# KHF Approach to Planning and Development



Southside Partnership, Barnardos  
& Dublin South City Partnership at Networking Event 2017

**Similar to previous KHF collaborative initiatives, including the Parent and the Toddler Group Initiative (2006-2008), the Parenting Support Initiative included the establishment of an Advisory Group which played a key role in each stage of development and involved great commitment from those involved. KHF also provided development support along with funding and identified mechanisms for regular engagement and communication with the projects. A central part of this approach was the three Networking Events which provided an opportunity for projects to highlight their work and share learning.**

In addition, the projects submitted regular progress reports as requested which also provided invaluable insights into the work and enabled the Advisory Group to review and advise on funding in years (2) and (3).

In the final year of the Initiative, KHF decided to provide projects with a more reflective space and developed a facilitated review process with each of the projects from December 2016 to March 2017 and this enabled projects to reflect on the experience of planning and implementing a PSI project. The review process also aimed to provide important learning for both KHF and CFI, as funders, and for others working in this area.

KHF was also engaged in its own review process as a Foundation and in developing its new strategic plan for 2017-2020. Given the importance of PSI for KHF over the past three years, KHF was keen to learn from the projects about their experiences and learning with a view to considering how this work could be best supported into the future. A summary report of the review process, **'PSI Review Process' June 2017**, was also produced along with individual reports for each of the projects.

# Key Elements of PSI Projects

The PSI projects included a spectrum from specific targeted therapeutic interventions to projects with a more universal focus and some that provided for both. For all PSI projects, including those that had a universal approach, a key priority was to engage those parents who were most in need. This raised particular challenges for vulnerable parents, including those whose first language was not English, who found it harder to engage and participate.

Key elements: There were three priority elements evident in the work of the Core PSI projects. These were, **collaborative working, engaging parents and training in and delivery of Parenting Support Programmes.**



The Community Foundation for Ireland



Katharine Howard Foundation

Brookview Childcare and Community Service - 28 families reached.  
Island Key Child And Family Service - 48 Families reached.  
St. Finians Childcare and Community Service - 48 Families reached.

"Supporting Parents in their Parenting role through the delivery of specific Parenting programmes to provide beneficial outcomes for vulnerable children in social housing settings in urban areas of disadvantage"

2 Parent and toddler groups established in Tallaght and East wall with a parental "Hot Topic" covered each week offering support both formally and informally to parents.

Other Agencies liaised with include Early childhood Ireland, Barnardo's, Parents Plus charity, Scoil Aithe, Brookfield Youth and Community Centre, Mary Mercer Centre, Brookfield Health Centre, South Dublin County Childcare and CDI.

## Key elements of PSI Project Year two

- Introduce Parents to the National Curriculum Framework (Aistear) with the introduction of the Journey books throughout the 3 services in hope to create the optimum home and school learning environment.
- Training and upskilling of staff to consistently ensure we have the most proficient and capable Early Years Practitioners with the capacity to engage and support parents. Accredited facilitator in Parents Plus to the highest level of competency.
- Continue to support and reach as many families as possible in areas of social disadvantage with the running of specific evidence based Parenting Programmes such as Parents Plus.

Through our ongoing consultation process with parents we aim to measure the success and effectiveness of the project. We are also in the data analysis process of a quantitative research questionnaire distributed to 110 families using our services. The evaluation of these questionnaires will inform how parents receive information for future practice. Staff quantitative questionnaires are also collected at each training session to ensure Practitioner needs are met.



Parents completing the Parents Plus course in Tallaght December 2014.

6 parent completed the course with a parental self care support group established after. All noted the programmes worth and the difference in made to their everyday wellbeing and family life.



Parents receiving certificates in the final session of the Parents Together Programme in Island Key June 2014

8 parents attended the course in total and a great sense of community was established between parents. A parents support group was established with a majority of parents seeking support with children with additional needs.



The Nabco team hard at work at Aistear training with Early Childhood Ireland in March 2015.

16 professionals trained in the curriculum with the intent of implementing the journey books throughout the 3 services. The journey books document the children's learning and development and link in Aistear's themes and learning goals so parents have a clear understanding of the curriculum and it benefits.



16 NABCO Early Years Practitioners receiving Certificates in the Marie Meo programme with Early Childhood Ireland, July 2014

The Marie Meo Method which promotes positive and supportive adult/child interactions and interventions was relayed back to parents in parent support groups and Parent and Toddler mornings and proved particularly helpful for parents of those with

Co-operative Housing Ireland Poster Presentation at Networking Event 2015



# Key Elements of PSI Projects

## Collaborative / Inter-agency Approach

**One of the important PSI criteria was for projects to develop and promote a focus on collaborative working. Projects were encouraged to show a collaborative approach to planning and implementation.**

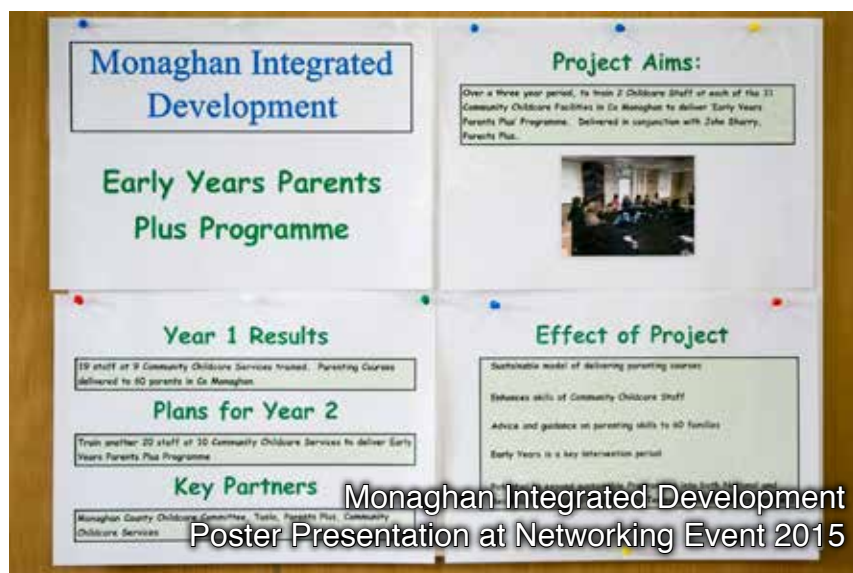
All the Core Projects demonstrated evidence of this approach with many projects having an interagency steering group in place to oversee and develop the PSI project with a small number of projects managed and delivered by one main organisation. Many of the projects had a County remit which proved challenging and exciting in terms of what could be achieved through a collaborative approach. This was highlighted in Donegal through the collaboration of **9 Family Resource Centres** providing a range of parent support programmes and **Lifestart Donegal** through its train the trainers Spirals Programme, engaging with and training a wide range of professionals working with families and young children in the County.

The **Chatterbox Speech and Language project** had a wide reach in targeting parents in both Cavan and Monaghan while **Monaghan Integrated Development** also took a County approach to training childcare staff in Parents Plus Programme and establishing a network of 17 services working with children/young people from 0-18 years. The **Kerry Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYSPC)** delivered a Language and Play Programme to a large number of Parent and Toddler Groups throughout the County while **Cork City Partnership** delivered multi-faceted Parent and Baby programmes targeting early years' services in disadvantaged communities across Cork City.

There were a number of PSI projects that moved beyond county boundaries such as the extension of the **Lifestart 'Sessional Interventions Programme'**, which is expanding to additional Lifestart areas of Leitrim, Roscommon and West Cavan. The five LDC/Partnerships involved in PSI (**Cork City, Dublin South City, North West Area Partnership, Monaghan Integrated Development and Southside Partnership**) had experience of collaborative working and led through inter-agency structures and networks. **Kerry CYPSC** effectively developed and implemented its PSI Language and Play Programme through its existing 'Parent and Learning Group' structure.

A number of the PSI projects required a considerable amount of work to create a partnership approach in the development of a new local initiative and these included the **Southside Partnership's** 'Integrated Early Intervention and Family Support Initiative' and **Barnardos Parent Support programme** in Dublin 12.

While many projects had interagency structures in place from the outset, for others a structure emerged through implementation of the project such as the **Ballinasloe Social Services** and **Bedford Row PSI Projects**.







Cork City Partnership Launch of 2016 Calendar

## Organisations Involved in PSI Steering Groups

- › HSE Primary Care Services: including Public Health Nursing; Speech and Language Therapy; Early Intervention Teams; Psychological Services; Health Promotion; Dentistry; GPs; Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- › Tusla Child and Family Agency: including the Social Work Service and the 'Partnership, Prevention and Family Support Programme' (PPFS).
- › Schools: including Principals / Vice Principals; Home School Community Liaison Service; Early Start Programme; National Education Psychological Service (NEPS).
- › County Childcare Committees (CCCs).
- › Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC).
- › Local Development Companies (LDCs) / Partnerships.
- › Family Resource Centres (FRC).
- › Prison Service: Probation Service; Probation and Linkage Limerick (PALLS).
- › Barnardos.
- › Local Authorities; Libraries and Community Departments.
- › Early Childhood Ireland.
- › Area Based Childhood Programmes (ABC).
- › Springboard Family Support Projects.
- › Community Childcare Centres.
- › Community Development Projects.
- › Housing Agencies.
- › Local Drugs Projects and Treatment Centres.
- › Parents Plus Ltd.
- › Archways; Incredible Years Programme.
- › Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families (UK).
- › National College of Ireland, University College Cork, Letterkenny IT.

# Key Elements of PSI Projects

## Engaging Parents

Engaging parents of the under 3s was also central to PSI and the funded projects took different approaches to engaging parents. They all targeted parents most in need with some focusing on specific target groups or disadvantaged areas. Projects were creative in identifying different ways of encouraging parents to engage, often recognising the need for individual work before a parent was ready or felt able to attend a group setting. Some projects had direct access to parents such as Family Resource Centres and those working within community childcare and Early Years settings.

A number of the projects worked with very vulnerable parents including the **Bedford Row** project which supported young women prisoners and ex-prisoners providing a holistic approach through engagement with other key prison, probation and housing services and supports.

The **Bessborough Centre's** Mother and Baby 'Babble Group' provided a therapeutic approach to small groups of mothers and their babies. Other projects working with vulnerable parents included **Ballinasloe, Barnardos and Southside Partnership** developing specific programmes to engage parents in welcoming community settings.

**Co-operative Housing Ireland** focused on working with parents in its 3 centres across Dublin and established parent support and Parent and Toddler Groups as part of its ongoing support structure.

A Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) was delivered by **Dublin South City Partnership** in the Crumlin area while **Pavee Point** also delivered this programme to traveller families in the Blanchardstown and Finglas areas and recruited and trained travellers to deliver the programme which proved very effective.

The PSI projects, in general, were open and welcoming to mothers, fathers, grandparents, child minders or whoever was the key carer of the child.

### Some of the benefits of engaging and supporting parents highlighted by projects included the following:

- › Positive participation of parents including fathers
- › Parents sharing anxieties and concerns and supported to find solutions
- › Promoting the importance of parent's role as child's first educator
- › Engagement with parents from the very start-through ante natal programmes
- › Parents learnt about other supports available in their community
- › Parents became more skilled and informed
- › Parents learnt more about child development and how to support their child's development
- › Children had opportunities to access books and other sensory materials
- › Opportunities provided for children to interact with other children



PAVEE POINT  
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

## Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP)



### What is PCHP?

PCHP is an innovative, home based literacy and parenting programme that strengthens families and prepares children to succeed academically.

In 2014, Pavee Point secured funding from the Katharine Howard Foundation to pilot PCHP with Traveller families in the Blanchardstown/Finglas area.

The aim of the programme is to increase the literacy levels of Traveller children; encourage and a higher level of parental engagement in children's education; reinforce the importance of literacy and education in the Traveller community.

### In the first year of the programme we:

- Trained seven potential Traveller Home Visitors.
- Recruited three Traveller Home Visitors to work on the programme
- Recruited 7 Traveller families to participate in the programme
- 2 Home Visitors began a FETAC level 5 qualification in Childcare.

In year 2, we intend to expand, recruiting an additional 3 Traveller families to participate in the programme and one Traveller Home Visitor. We will undertake Child Behaviour Trait (CBT) assessments with participating families to evaluate participating children's progression.



Our collaboration with the National College of Ireland has been crucial to ensuring the success of the project. They have offered guidance, expertise and invaluable support.

The progress and outcomes of the project are monitored and evaluated through the CBT assessments, and interviews with Home Visitors and participating families.

Pavee Point Poster Presentation at Networking Event 2015

## Training in and delivery of Parenting Support Programmes

An important element of the PSI initiative was supporting and encouraging the use of evidence based or evidence informed parenting programmes with an emphasis on strengthening parent's capacity to parent.

A range of evidence based programmes were delivered, or training was provided, to enable delivery of such programmes including:

- › Incredible Years Programmes (**Ballinasloe Social Services**)
- › Parents Plus Programme (**Co-operative Housing Ireland and Monaghan Integrated**)
- › Spirals Programme (**Lifestart, Donegal**)
- › Elklan Speech and Language Programme (**Chatterbox, Cavan and Monaghan**)
- › Marte Meo Training (**Co-operative Housing Ireland**)
- › Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) (**Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Dublin South City Partnership**)
- › Peep Programme (**Barnardos Dublin 12 and Southside Partnership**)

A range of other parent support programmes, activities and courses (including both group and individual parent supports) were also provided through PSI projects including:

- › A Parent and Baby programme delivered through the 'Babble Group' (**Bessborough Centre Cork**)
- › 'Preparing to be Parents' programme (**Cork City Partnership**)
- › 'First Friends-Mounttown' an integrated early year's programme (**Southside Partnership, Dublin**)
- › 'Flying Start' Programme (**Barnardos**)
- › 'Play and Language' Programme (**Kerry CYPSC**)
- › Integrated Child and Parent Activity programme delivered through 9 FRCs (**Downstrands Donegal**)
- › Information/support sessions with Parent and Toddler Groups (**Co-operative Housing Ireland and Kerry CYPSC**)
- › Support work with young women in prison and an outreach service for ex-prisoners (**Bedford Row**)



# Key Learning from PSI

The key learning areas from PSI centred on the three main elements of the initiative as outlined and include collaborative working, engaging parents, supporting training in and delivery of evidence based/informed parenting support programmes.

## Working in Collaboration with Other Stakeholders

- › All the PSI projects demonstrated the importance of collaborative working in the development and implementation of projects with a view to delivering better outcomes for parents and children aged 0-3 years.
- › Most of the projects established a Steering Group Structure to oversee and guide the work with an agreed organisation identified to lead the process.
- › The benefits of collaboration were highlighted with evidence of clear planning and decision making and the development of effective reflection mechanisms to review and redirect the focus of projects where needed.
- › PSI projects, in connecting with other services, agencies and organisations, accessed a wide range of knowledge, skills and expertise to planning and delivery.
- › Many of the PSI projects developed positive collaboration with statutory services including HSE Primary Care and Tusla. Relationships were greatly enhanced with Primary Care staff and Early Intervention Teams. In some projects the staff from Tusla and the HSE became key stakeholders, involved with the management of projects, delivery of training, and/or provision of information sessions for parents and referral of parents.
- › Through the PSI projects many of the statutory partners also found new ways of engaging with parents in community settings.
- › A key learning from PSI was the importance of identifying the organisation that could lead and provide the vision, skills and leadership to support the project implementation.
- › The PSI grants also helped to leverage other funding through the partnership approach and often enabled organisations and services already working together to develop a specific focus on working with and supporting parents of children under 3 years.
- › Collaborative working through PSI also provided new opportunities to develop creative approaches and models of working, both at local and county levels.

***The PSI Review Process Report highlighted that when collaboration works well it can be both productive and effective but this approach also requires resources and time to ensure all stakeholders can engage fully***





# Parental Engagement

Key Learning from PSI in engaging parents:

- PSI projects involved different approaches to engaging parents but all had a focus on inclusion.
- Projects ranged from those with a universal approach to projects working with vulnerable parents. Given the creative and flexible nature of the projects, work with parents was often reviewed and adapted to meet the specific needs of parents.
- Broad engagement through Family Resources Centres and Parent and Toddler Groups across Donegal and Kerry proved very effective in engaging with parents through a range of programmes and activities and connected parents with other supports, services and opportunities within their communities.
- The focus of the PSI projects was also on creating a respectful partnership approach in engaging with parents and providing courses and programmes in welcoming, accessible and comfortable non-stigmatising settings. With some projects, the use of a 'buddy' or pre-booking system helped parents to access and continue in projects.
- Parent isolation was a common theme and concern for projects in planning, both isolation in terms of geography but also an awareness of parents experiencing isolation due to language or mental health issues with projects seeking ways of reaching out to the most vulnerable.
- A central element of the PSI projects was the importance of creating a greater understanding of child development and, in particular, bonding and attachment with an emphasis on the important role that parents play in their child's life. The Lifestart PSI project in Donegal provided training in the Spirals Programme for professionals working with young families and developed support materials to help parents deal with specific issues with their child.
- For many vulnerable parents participating in a group setting can be challenging and individual complementary supports are often required.

***The PSI Review Process Report highlighted that building trust, securing engagement with and responding to the complexity of issues facing vulnerable families is complex and difficult work. Targeting families including those who are most vulnerable takes time, expertise and resources.***

# Key Learnings from PSI

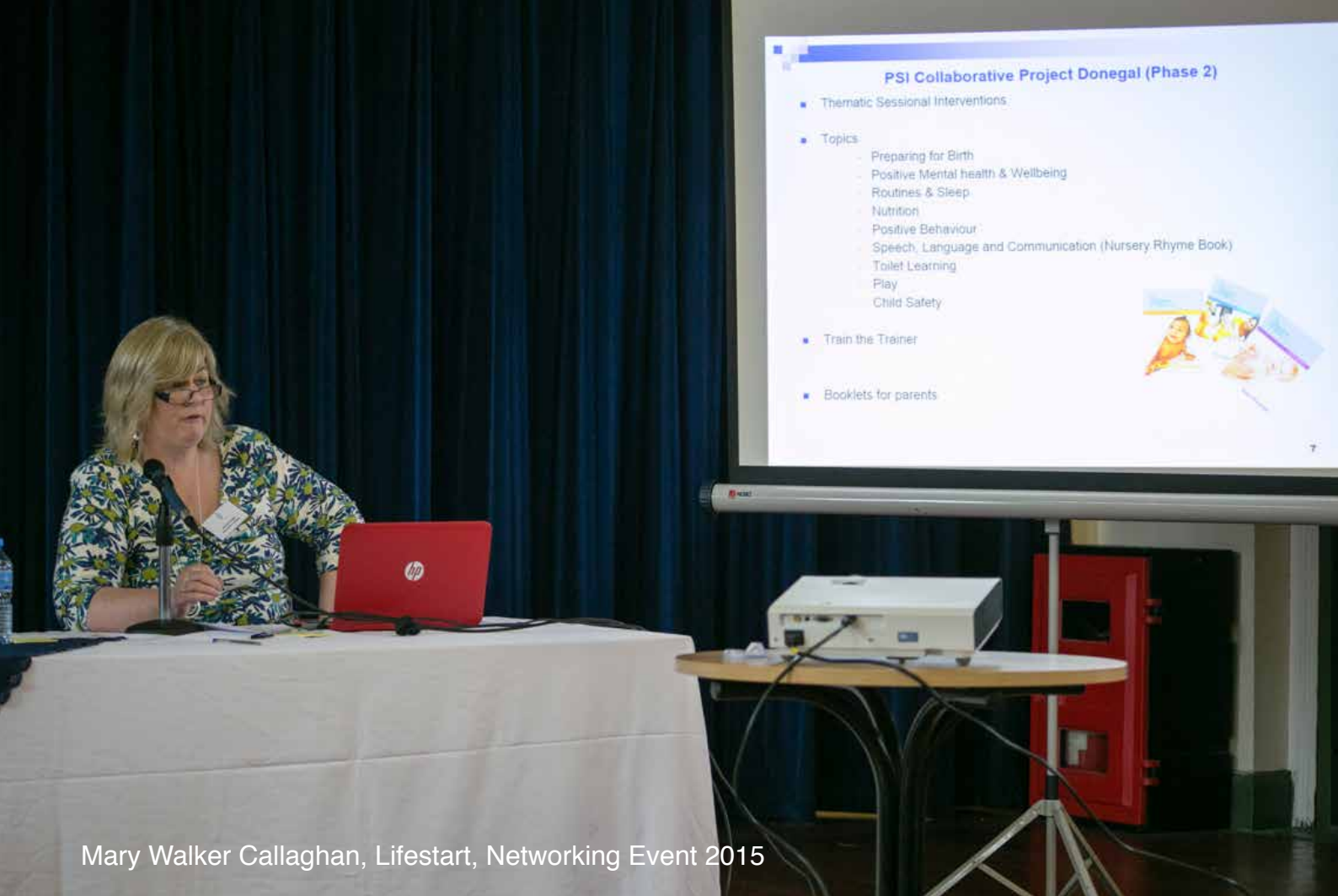
## Parenting Support Programmes

A diverse range of projects were funded through PSI that offered relevant and effective models of parenting supports from high level therapeutic interventions to universal services at both Local and County levels. In general, PSI projects placed a strong emphasis on supporting professional development training in and delivery of evidence based programmes including Parents Plus, Incredible Years, Marte Meo, Lifestart Spirals programmes and Parent Child Home Programmes. A range of other parenting support programmes and activities were also supported through PSI including the Language and Play Programme delivered to Family Resources Centres and Parent and Toddler Groups by Kerry CYPSC and the delivery of Child and Parent Programmes through a Network of 9 FRCs in Donegal.

A number of new community initiatives developed through PSI also developed specific parent supports, such as Southside Partnership's Integrated Early intervention initiative targeting vulnerable parents in the Mounttown area. The training of traveller women to deliver the Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP) to traveller families in Finglas and Blanchardstown also proved very successful for the women involved and the families who engaged with the Programme.

- PSI highlighted the importance of training staff in early years services and other services working with young families with a view to the development of a consistency in quality and approach to working with parents and improving outcomes for children and families.
- Ensuring follow up to training is built in to support delivery of parenting support programmes is essential to ensure fidelity to the Programme and that necessary supports and mentoring are provided to staff.
- There is the potential for a number of the PSI projects to use the expertise gained and bring it to other organisations and services such as the Bessborough Centre's Therapeutic Infant Health approach or the Lifestart Sessional Interventions programme.
- Pilot initiatives such as the delivery of the PCHP programme to travellers could be reviewed, expanded and delivered to traveller families in other areas throughout the country.
- PSI demonstrated the importance of recognising the range of parenting support programmes available to respond to the different needs of parents. These supports should be valued and resourced and where needed complemented by one to one interventions.
- The experience of PSI highlighted the benefits of planning and delivering a diverse range of parent support programmes.

***The PSI Review Process Report highlighted that it is important to ensure that programmes and support respond to particular needs and that 'one size programme does not fit all'. The approaches used to support parents should be determined by local needs and build on the skills and competencies of local services/communities.***



Mary Walker Callaghan, Lifestart, Networking Event 2015

## Learning for Funders / Foundations

PSI provided KHF with the opportunity to provide strategic small grants while influencing child and family policy. Some of the lessons learnt through this work may also help to inform other funders and foundations with small grant schemes in planning a strategic response to identified needs. PSI highlighted the following in relation to KHF's role as a grant making Foundation:

- Small grants provide much needed practical support to organisations as evidenced in the feedback through the progress reports, PSI Networking Events and the PSI Review Process Report 2017;
- Small grant programmes have the potential to make a significant impact, particularly when they involve organisations with some existing infrastructure and expertise;
- Grants should be planned and administered in a flexible way that responds to the actual needs and timeframe of projects;
- Providing development support along with grants and a clear communication strategy was central to KHF's approach to the development and implementation of PSI;
- Tracking and monitoring the funding to Projects is an important part of grant assistance and can be achieved through brief progress reports which provide information on how the grant was spent but also provide invaluable information and insights into the work of projects;
- A supportive relationship with applicants is essential in ensuring that Projects have the capacity to meet the requirements of the grants process;
- The PSI Review Process report highlighted that projects reported that the KHF approach was enabling, programmatic, non-prescriptive and based on the concept of 'learning by doing';
- Working with other organisations and agencies with 'on the ground knowledge' provides real learning opportunities for the development and implementation of new initiatives;
- In the case of PSI and previous KHF collaborative Initiatives establishing an Advisory Group was central to the overall framework for the effective planning, development and implementation of the programme.



## Key Learnings from PSI

# Learning for Wider Policy Context

The grants provided through PSI indicated that such an approach can achieve significant impact at local and county levels. KHF's experience and learning from PSI could help to inform and support work and policies at national level aimed at supporting parents and improving outcomes for children and families.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) is central to policy development in this area and ***Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (2014-2020)***, the National Policy Framework, identifies 'Supporting Parents' and 'Earlier Intervention and Prevention' as two of its key transformational goals in achieving its focus of improving outcomes for children and young people.

The learning from PSI and the work of the Core PSI Projects could provide useful insights to support this approach. KHF will aim to maximise the learning from PSI to influence policy.



Networking Event 2017



Specific relevant policy areas and strategies to consider include the following:

**The Department's High-Level Policy Statement on Supporting Parents and Families (April 2015)** re-enforces the commitment to parents and family support. PSI identified a range of different approaches to supporting families, from universal to targeted programmes and activities, which indicated the importance of responding to identified needs in different ways.

**The Policy and Innovation Unit within DCYA has also developed the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI)** with a view to providing a co-ordinated approach to improving capacity and knowledge in prevention and early interventions policy, services and practice. An important element of PSI for KHF was working with projects in the development of creative and innovative ways of working with parents of young children and promoting and building on good practice using evidence based and/or evidence informed approaches. PSI provided an important opportunity for projects to apply some of the learning from evidence based/informed policy and practice to a local context and to incorporate evaluation as part of the process.

**The Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs)** provide the structure at local level for effective inter-agency co-ordination and collaboration to achieve best outcomes for children and young people. PSI highlighted the importance of inter-agency collaborative working and what can be achieved through shared vision and agreed responses to the needs of young children and their families. For example, Kerry CYPSC took on the role of lead agency in one of the PSI projects in the delivery of a Language and Play Programme across the county.

**Tusla- Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme (2015-2018)** is described as a comprehensive programme of early intervention and preventative work being undertaken by Tusla. It is an important programme to consider in relation to the learning from PSI and in particular the PPFS Parenting work stream and Parenting Support Strategy. Many of the PSI Projects had active engagement with Tusla frontline staff and management in the planning, development and implementation of PSI. This collaborative approach greatly enhanced the work of the Projects.

**Health Service Executive (HSE):** There has also been positive engagement with PSI by HSE Primary Care staff including Public Health Nursing, Speech and Language Therapy, Early Intervention Teams, Psychological Services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The engagement and collaboration with these key family support services have been an important part of the successful implementation of many of the PSI Projects. The Department of Health's Healthy Ireland Framework and the HSE's National Healthy Childhood Programme also provide important opportunities to connect with PSI learning. The Nurture Programme: Infant Health and Wellbeing, which is funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, is managed by KHF and delivered by the HSE as part of the Healthy Childhood Programme. The focus of the Nurture Programme is on enabling the HSE to develop a universal integrated approach to evidence based service planning and delivery with a view to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for infants and their families from pregnancy to the child's third birthday.

The learning from the Parenting Support Initiative informed the planning of the Nurture Programme and highlighted the importance of supporting parents through prevention and early intervention initiatives and approaches involving inter-agency engagement and delivery of a range of parenting supports.



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