The Story So Far

CDI’s progress towards improving outcomes for children and families in Tallaght West.
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening Remarks: Mary Doyle, Director General, OMCYA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Care and Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doodle Den Afterschool Programme</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate-Tricks Afterschool Programme</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Schools Programme</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Safety Initiative</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Evaluation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome for the President of Ireland:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian Quinn, CEO, CDI</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Tawyodh, Parent</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Maguire, Parent</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address by President Mary McAleese</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response from: Noelle Spring, Chair, CDI Board</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Remarks: Adrian Charles, Chair, CDI’s Implementation Support Group</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Childhood Development Initiative
August 2011
Introduction:

This report has been developed with the purpose of sharing the learning from the ‘Story So Far’ seminar held in Tallaght Stadium on September 29th 2010, in which the Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) provided an opportunity to consider an overview of our five programmes, and six independent evaluations, discussion of the key issues, learning from the implementation of such programmes, and comment and reflection from expert panellists and participants.

Objectives for the Day:

- To provide a brief overview of baseline and process findings from CDI’s six independent evaluations;
- To identify areas of key learning so far;
- To consider the findings within current policy and practice contexts;
- To highlight the next steps for CDI.

Overview

The six programme focused sessions each included presentations from a relevant CDI team member, and the independent evaluation team. Reflections from the invited panellists allowed space to highlight key factors and issues for further consideration, whilst questions and comments from the audience offered opportunity for clarification, greater detail and possibilities for transferring the learning. CDI was delighted to welcome President Mary McAleese to close the afternoon event, as we were joined by over 400 people, many of whom were families whose children receive CDI services. The audience viewed a five minute DVD outlining CDI services that included interviews with key stakeholders, residents and parents.

Summary of Overarching Themes:

- Parental support is necessary in order to ensure positive outcomes for children, but this can be challenging to establish;
- Strong governance and leadership and clear lines of accountability across children’s services can support quality delivery;
- How individuals and organisations do their work is equally important as what they do;
- Rigorous evaluations take considerable time, planning and lots of energy;
- How do we begin to replicate services which are proven to be effective, particularly given the lack of resources? This needs to be progressed with a commitment to fidelity and quality assurance;
- Is there a need for longitudinal follow-up, to ascertain whether children and families sustain positive developments?

“if we want our communities to be strong, if we want our families to be strong, we have to have strong kids, who turn into strong adults – problem solvers, not problems.”

President Mary McAleese
Mary Doyle, Director General,
Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

Mary Doyle, Director General of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA), formally opened the seminars. She spoke of her interest in the work of CDI in Tallaght West, from the very early stages of securing funding for the initiative and also shared her vision for the future.

“We know what you're doing here is important, we know that for children who are disadvantaged by background or family circumstances, that those very early years are extremely important and that positive supports are impacting on their life chances and promote their physical and emotional development. I know this is at the forefront of all the development of policy and implementation in this area.

“There are three projects funded by the OMCYA: CDI, the Preparing for Life programme at the Northside communities of Belcamp, Darndale and Moatview and Young Ballymun. What we have been trying to do in each of these projects is deliver a range of targeted interventions which help to support children's emotional and physical development.

“I think what's particularly exciting about this project is that it gives us the opportunity to develop very high quality, targeted interventions at key points of childhood and onwards and it allows us to assess the impact that has on the ground and in relation to individual life chances. That's why the OMCYA is proud to be supporting the programme. It gives us a good sense of the issues that need to be addressed and the different approaches that are possible; a systematic approach to learning and evaluation is one of the great attractions of what is being done here.

“Part of the really difficult implementation approach was how to get the local service providers who traditionally had operated quite apart from each other, working and mobilised in an integrated way in terms of service provision. I know there's been very strong leadership on the ground here by a range of people in the statutory and non-statutory sectors and I suspect that without that strong leadership and ability to almost place themselves above their organisation and to lead their organisation in a particular direction, the success that you’ve had to date would not have been possible.

“Which is why the learning from this project is of particular interest in a wider context. We are great in Ireland at talking about evidence based policy making, but very often the evidence is thin on the ground. We have to, as a country, be much smarter at how we use our resources, not just money, but certainly, the scarcest resource of all is good people and we haven’t been particularly good over the years in leading and mobilising people around a shared agenda.

“In terms of the public service, what we envisage is to deepen the link between the CDI and the Children’s Services Committees and the County Childcare Committees. There’s the risk of having too many structures in place, so we need to be much smarter about what we have that connects at the local and national level to ensure we have streamlined resilient structures and mechanisms to take us forward. We have to be looking very critically at the return on investment for the Irish taxpayer. We need to make sure results are fed into policy in public, private and not for profit sectors.

“There’s been a huge commitment from a number of stakeholders including, The Atlantic Philanthropies and the OMCYA, but it could only have happened on the ground with the effort and leadership of people in the community. I’d say we have a medium term job of work to do to get the learning from this phase, to mainstream it and to make sure the experience and best policies which are possible in support of our children are put in place.

“I think it’s been a fantastic achievement to come from where this project started to where it is today, the calibre and quality are superb. It's very significant. Looking this evening at the approach you’ve taken - the workshop approach and the excellent range of speakers that have come here, that people do understand that this is a high quality, very important project and it’s an indication of the high regard in which the project is held.

“I look forward to working with many of you in the room on a shared agenda over the coming months.”
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):

The Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE) is a two year service for preschool children, with integrated health care, wrap-around supports and professional development elements.

**Target Group/Criteria:**
- Children living in one of the four communities of Tallaght West (Brookfield, Fettercairn, Jobstown or Killinarden).
- Aged between two and a half years to three years and one month at the time of enrolment in September.
- Not currently attending another preschool service.
- Available to attend the service when it is in session over a two-year period (the child will enter primary school at 5 years).

**Intended Outcomes:**
The Early Childhood Care and Education programme seeks to strengthen children’s positive dispositions to learning through enjoyable, challenging and enriching opportunities within the family, education and care facilities and community to enhance their well-being, identity and participation. Specifically, it seeks to make pre-school children more ready for the transition to school by achieving moderate improvements in relation to the following: (i) *The child* – all domains of the child’s development, including physical well-being, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and emergent literacy; (ii) *The child’s family* – parent psychological health, as well as the quality of parents’ relationships with the child and their parenting skills; and (iii) *The child’s environment* – social relations in the home, school and community. The focus is on improving outcomes for the child, with attention to the child’s family and environment seen as the means of achieving those ends. Underpinning all of this is a desire for children to enjoy learning, to develop their creative, spiritual and moral capacities and to feel a sense of belonging and pride in Tallaght West; the service is concerned with children’s being as well as their becoming.

Gráinne Smith (CDI) opened the session with a brief presentation on the nature of CDI’s ECCE service, highlighting the focus on quality delivery through continued practitioner training and support and parental supports. One of the strengths of the ECCE service is the successful integration of the Speech and Language Therapy service. Siobhan Keegan (DIT) from the evaluation team provided a detailed overview of the research methodology, highlighting the key findings from the literature, as well as presenting some baseline and process data. The following is a summary of key process findings so far.

**Key issues/learning points were:**
- The importance and value of the parental components/supports;
- Staff valued the training/supports which impacted on the quality of service delivery;
- A two year early intervention programme is more favorable to improving children’s outcomes than a one-year programme;
- The services have a clear focus on the engagement/interaction of practitioners with children;
- Programmes with a language focus are beneficial in enabling developmental attainment;
- Use of conflict resolution techniques is of great support to practitioners and children;
- Parents valued and welcomed the home visits as a way to learn more about the programme and their child’s development.

The panel members were invited to reflect on the content of the presentations as well as their own experiences and learning in relation to early years to date. What followed was a valuable discussion, key points of which are summarised below:

Catherine Hynes, Early Years Policy Unity noted, “*Existing studies show that if you put in the interventions at an early enough age you save on reading remediation, speech and language therapies and other therapies at a later age when it is more difficult and more expensive to intervene in a child’s life. With the evidence and research coming from CDI we will be able to make a very convincing case moving forward.*”
Heino Schonfeld, (Centre for Effective Services), stated, “I am very confident that we will find a positive impact because the intervention was designed very strongly based on evidence. How do we ensure that the learning is mainstreamed, that it influences mainstreaming policy - benefiting all of our children not just the selected few that have participated? The concern will be that the temptation is always very strong for policy makers to say “that we only do half of it” - i.e. decrease the dosage of the programme delivery - but we cannot be sure that we will see any benefits this way. If we want to have significant benefits the big issue is how are we going to make the case to finance that and how do we make that argument.”

Other points made during the discussion:
- Having representation from local authorities, schools, juvenile justice and so on in one room at the design stage of the programme ensured the inclusion of all those working in Tallaght West;
- CDI’s programmes encompass components which should be universally available;
- Having terms such as ‘education and early learning’ used in the design of children’s services supports the professionalisation of the sector;
- How do we make the case to finance the roll out of the programme /intervention?
- Important that elements of the programme are not diluted during the mainstreaming process as this may impact on positive outcomes for children;
- It is likely that the evaluation will have a positive message, as the programme was designed on strong evidence. However, while the impact may be positive, it will be important to consider the size of that impact. The larger the impact, the more likely it will have an influence on policy;
- Given the design of the programme, services will need ongoing supports to deliver it with quality, including training, communities of practice, and reflective practice;
- Is there a need for a longitudinal study to look at the longer term outcomes for children?
- Optimism does exist as policy makers are interested in interventions that have strong design and supports;
- Need to consider the readiness of professions / professionals to continue to support the work.

There was also some discussion with audience members which raised the following points:
- There is a requirement to consider the range of needs and provision within communities like Tallaght West and other communities in Ireland – there is not one service that meets the needs of children and families;
- There is interest in the potential and possibly significant impact staff qualifications may have on outcomes for children. This is something the evaluation team is already examining;
- There was a general consensus that there is a need to ensure the early year’s workforce development plan incorporates the need for evidenced-based interventions for children and families.

Existing studies show that if you put in the interventions at an early enough age you save on reading remediation, speech and language therapies.”

Catherine Hynes
(Early Years Policy Unit)
Doodle Den Literacy Programme:

The Doodle Den Programme for senior infant pupils, provides intensive support aimed at improving children’s literacy.

Target Group/Criteria:

- Children who live in one of the four communities of Tallaght West (Brookfield, Fettercairn, Jobstown or Killinarden).
- Children commencing senior infant class in the September of programme delivery.
- Children who have been identified by their teacher as benefiting from support with one or more of the following: letter identification; writing vocabulary; phonics awareness; and text comprehension.

Intended Outcomes:

- Moderate improvements in children’s literacy.
- Improvements in children’s regular school attendance.
- Advancements in children’s broader engagement in learning outside the school through improved literacy, increased confidence and improved home environment relating to literacy;
- Enhanced relationships between the child and their family and peers, for example, through increased parent/carers involvement in supporting their child’s literacy development and increased family use of library services.

Panellists:

- Catherine Byrne, (Chair) Special Advisor to the Senior Vice-President, The Atlantic Philanthropies;
- Gene Meighan, Principal Lecturer with Responsibility for Literacy, Marino Institute;
- John Stewart, National Adult Literacy Coordinator, (National Adult Literacy Agency, (NALA);
- Dr. Andy Biggart, Queens University Belfast;
- Aileen Murphy, Quality Specialist (CDI).

Aileen Murphy, Quality Specialist (CDI), gave a brief presentation about the nature of the Doodle Den Programme, which focuses on high quality teaching of literacy through interactive and varied methods, and supporting parental involvement through parent and family sessions. Dr. Andy Biggart (QUB) of the evaluation team then gave an overview of the evaluation process. The evaluation team are not currently in a position to provide data on outcome results for Doodle Den due to the research design. However, Dr. Biggart did provide some process information on the children’s perspective of the programme collected through a client satisfaction questionnaire. The children’s views were extremely positive, with 81% being very satisfied with the programme and 76% would recommend the programme to a friend. Interestingly, 48% of children found the work difficult but, it was suggested by the evaluation team that this may not be a negative thing as the children may be being appropriately challenged.

The panel posed some thought provoking questions and observations about literacy in Ireland, including the following.

There was a discussion on the lack of progress in improving literacy levels over the past 25 years. It was highlighted that while there is agreement that we need literacy interventions, we need to question why schools are not able to provide all of the literacy instruction required. The need for a more co-ordinated approach to literacy between schools and other interventions was also noted.

Gene Meighan, Marino Institute responded, “We need these initiatives as in reality children are presenting themselves with difficulties in reading and writing. I’d like to applaud that fact that writing has been a part of the Doodle Den programme. Is it because our curriculum doesn’t explicitly outline the teaching of phonics as being a necessary part or the curriculum, if so, we have to go elsewhere to find other interventions?”

John Stewart (NALA) remarked “10% of our children leave school with literacy difficulties. That rises to 30% in areas of disadvantage. The lowest 20% in terms of standards in performance is populated by children in disadvantage areas. Programmes like Doodle Den do work; one of the reasons is the family engagement. The biggest impact of education from a demographical point of view is parental involvement. Not social class, not parental education, it’s actually parental involvement. Moderate gains in literacy can have very significant impacts on a person life.”

The discussion emphasised the following:

- It was highlighted that it is difficult to assess the richness of children’s literacy skills and noted that some methods of assessing literacy fail to capture all the elements of emergent literacy such as invented spelling, children’s writings and drawings.
Doodle Den Literacy Programme:

- Literacy is a rich process including children’s oral language, illustrations, narration of stories, and attitudes to reading and writing;
- CDI was commended for a number of elements of the Doodle Den programme, including having a manual with a structured curriculum, involving parents and having youth workers and teachers delivering the programme.

A discussion followed which highlighted some important issues in relation to literacy development in Ireland.

Gene Meighan suggested that “Parents should be interested in Doodle Den as a programme they want their children to take part in for their children’s success. Also policy makers and principals of schools should ask themselves If I have a whole school plan for literacy, what underpins it? Is it the curriculum? Or professional development of my teachers?”

Other comments made:

- It was suggested that ‘more of the same’ in terms of existing school approaches to literacy is not enough to change current literacy levels;
- The structure of the Doodle Den programme provides a model of delivering a fun literacy curriculum;
- It was agreed that high quality teaching is important in supporting literacy;
- The methods of working with parents and informing parents about their children’s learning is an important part of the Doodle Den programme;
- Mary Kelly (Literacy Expert), commented that, “The professional development with the group of teachers and youth workers has been fantastic. They have now become reflective practitioners; they come to each session ready to share their knowledge and swap ideas, ready to stand up and present their ideas, which I think in the teaching profession doesn’t happen very often. When we talk about working in disadvantaged areas, as I did myself, the quality of teaching is one of the key aspects of actually making improvements.”

How will we know if Doodle Den has a lasting impact?

- It was highlighted that there is a need for longitudinal research on the long-term benefits of the Doodle Den programme:
- Schools are working to improve literacy levels and Doodle Den consolidates this work;
- Supporting parents to become more involved in their children’s literacy will have a long lasting effect;
- Changes to children’s attitudes to learning may be the legacy of Doodle Den;
- CDI’s focus on ongoing professional development with processes such as reviewing videos of delivery and reflective practice, support improved teaching;
- Doodle Den could inform the education system on how to make improvements in children’s literacy in terms of teacher training and ongoing methods of supporting quality delivery.

Policy Context:

- It is clear from the session that the Doodle Den programme could potentially make a significant contribution to policy and practice. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) are currently reviewing the infant curriculum starting with the literacy component. As highlighted above, there are lessons to learn from Doodle Den such as having a fun literacy curriculum and methods of supporting quality delivery. A representative from the NCCA noted that there are possible gaps in the primary school curriculum around teaching methods for literacy, such as in relation to phonics and writing.

“Programmes like Doodle Den do work; one of the reasons is the family engagement. The biggest impact of education from a demographical point of view is parental involvement.”

John Stewart
(National Adult Literacy Coordinator, NALA)
The Mate-Tricks programme offers fourth class pupils (aged 9 and 10) a twice weekly afterschool programme for one academic year, aimed at enhancing pro-social skills.

**Target Group/Criteria:**
- Children who live in one of the four communities of Tallaght West (Brookfield, Fettercairn, Jobstown or Killinarden);
- Children commencing fourth class in the September of programme delivery;
- Children who have been identified as benefiting from support with skills such as self regulation, perspective taking, and problem solving.

**Intended Outcomes:**
CDI has the following programme outcomes for Mate-Tricks:
- Improvements in children’s social skills;
- A reduction in bullying in schools;
- Enhanced relationships between the child and their family and peers, for example through enabling parents to have an improved understanding of social skills and their importance.

The presentation on the programme components of Mate-Tricks highlighted the focus on sequential teaching of skills to support pro-social behaviour and linking with parents and school staff.

Dr. Andy Biggart (QUB) of the evaluation team gave an overview of the evaluation process. The evaluation team was not in a position to provide data on outcome results for Mate-Tricks due to the research design, but did provide some process information on the children’s perspective of the programme collected through a client satisfaction questionnaire. The children's views were extremely positive, with between 80 to 90% very satisfied with the programme. Children also reported that the Mate-Tricks facilitators were friendly, helpful and fair.

The panel highlighted some key questions and items for consideration in relation to the Mate-Tricks Programme and supporting pro-social behaviour:

There was a discussion on whether the Mate-Tricks programme is essentially a targeted intervention for children with specific needs, or potentially a universal service. Mate-Tricks is currently provided to children who have been identified as benefiting from the skills it teaches such as communication, anger management and peer refusal skills. In the current delivery of the Mate-Tricks programme there is a mix of children, with some having externalised behaviours and others with internalised behaviours. It was suggested that the profile of needs within the group was very important, and involving children from along this continuum allows for the modelling of target behaviours within the cohort.

Nuala Doherty (NEWB) commented “I have worked most of my professional life with children who are absolutely on the margins and it’s always felt like too little, too late. They are really at the out of control end and how hard it is for children to come back from that place. So it’s positive do be doing it before they start exhibiting things that are going to cause them too much difficulty.”

Dr. Maurice Devlin (NUIM) noted the challenges associated with youth workers and teachers working alongside each other saying “In incidences where youth workers work jointly with teachers often there have been a lot of tensions because the style, approach and relationships can be different. The training is often different for the two groups.

It was suggested that the link between youth work and formal education needs to be explored further. There were questions about whether Mate-Tricks could be delivered in schools, which raised questions about the role of youth work and how it...
It was highlighted that there is a need to measure the lasting impacts of the Mate-Tricks programme in order to fully understand its potential benefits. In the current evaluation design, outcomes are measured at the end of the programme. The subjective nature of measuring some of the target outcomes could lead to bias in the results.

The issue of the marginalisation of men was raised by an audience member. It was suggested that primary school is a very supportive environment for girls, but not particularly for boys, who are more active learners. It was noted that Mate-Tricks facilitators look at individual differences within the group, including gender, and seek to respond to these as appropriate, such as having different rewards and holding group activities.

The issue of how the programme can be sustained and incorporated into mainstream provision was discussed. The Mate-Tricks programme should be viewed as one which supports positive mental health, as well as pro-social behaviour.

compliments and could potentially enhance the work of the education system. The comments provoked questions about what areas are best explored in the educational setting and which are mostly appropriately delivered in a community setting.

It was noted that the skills taught in Mate Tricks, such as communication skills, empathy and perspective taking, support positive mental health and self-esteem.

The parent component of the programme was acknowledged as being an important element of the intervention.

With regard to children’s experience of the programme, it was noted that the ‘client satisfaction’ questionnaires used in the Mate-Tricks evaluation could be used in schools as a helpful way of giving children and parents a voice. It was suggested that while the idea of asking a child what he or she thought of a class may seem alien, there is a lot to be learnt from the process. It was also highlighted that Third Level education provides a good model of seeking student feedback and acting on the feedback that is received.

There was a discussion on the challenges of being faithful to a programme manual while also using professional and creative skills. It was identified that internationally there are ongoing debates about how to marry professional skills with a manualised approach. This was particularly queried in relation to youth work, where so much of the practice is based on developing positive relationships with the young person, and where these interactive skills are so highly valued. Within the context of Mate-Tricks it was found that a great deal of creativity was required to deliver the manual in order to engage the children and achieve the learning outcomes. CDI has learnt a great deal about balancing manual fidelity with responding to the needs of the group.

“In incidences where youth workers work jointly with teachers often there have been a lot of tensions because the style, approach and relationships can be different.”

Dr. Maurice Devlin

(National University of Ireland Maynooth)
Healthy Schools Programme

The Healthy Schools Programme is a whole school approach to health promotion supported by two Healthy Schools Coordinators.

Target Group:
Two school campuses in Tallaght West, incorporating five schools, with over 1,100 children, were selected to deliver the Healthy Schools Programme.

Intended Outcomes:
The Healthy Schools Programme intends to strengthen links with the community, ensure access to local health provision and improve health outcomes for children.

Panellists:
- **Dr. Sinead Hanafin** (Chair) Head of Research, Department of Health and Children;
- **Marguerite Hanratty**, Quality Services Officer, CDI;
- **Prof. Catherine Comiskey**, Director of Research, Associate Prof. of Healthcare Statistics, Trinity College Dublin (TCD);
- **Karin O’Sullivan**, Trinity College Dublin (TCD);
- **Fergus Finlay** Chief Executive of Barnardos;
- **Iggy Keane**, Assistant National Coordinator, School Completion Programme.

Marguerite Hanratty, Quality Services Officer, CDI gave a brief presentation about the nature/focus of the service, highlighting the methods and challenges inherent in delivering a process driven programme. The need to develop and maintain trusting relationships is vital, with strong leadership being an essential part of the process. Professor Catherine Comiskey and Karin O’Sullivan, both from (TCD), of the evaluation team then gave an overview of the evaluation process, which included a background to Health Promoting Schools, the evaluation’s aims, objectives and methods, and some baseline findings.

Key issues/learning points were:
- A manualised programme is more complex when delivering a process-driven initiative as compared with a curriculum based programme;
- It is important to recognise that the development of the programme is a process and requires time for trust and relationships to evolve;
- Coming to a common understanding of targets, and the methods to achieve them, takes time;
- There is also a need for strong governance and leadership and clear lines of accountability.

Panelist’s reflections included:
- Iggy Keane (SCP) noted “Schools are very busy places and for schools to embrace the Healthy Schools Programme is quite challenging. The fun element of the programme was evident in the comments from children and parents in the video. There is a lot of learning for the School Completion Programme (which funds breakfast clubs and lunch clubs) to take on board from the evaluation of the Healthy Schools Programme. Especially taking on the holistic approach. The role of the Healthy Schools Coordinator, in working with schools and linking with parents, services and other organizations, was seen as crucial and should be taken forward and mainstreamed.”
- Fergus Finlay (Barnardos) reflected as follows: “The most significant aspect of the Healthy Schools Programme evaluation is the process evaluation and the recognition that change is slow and difficult to achieve no matter what the environment and particularly for schools with all the demands currently placed upon them. The cultural changes that are necessary to turn a school into a school where health and wellbeing is critical, a core part of the curriculum, will involve significant cultural shifts. The evidence will be critical in terms of persuading the powers that be that the Healthy Schools Coordinators need to be on the national agenda. If the evidence proves it, then CDI will have provided a significant bit of leadership.”

A discussion followed which highlighted some important topics in children’s health issues:
- Concern about undernourished and underweight children was raised as an issue for schools and other service providers. The evaluation focus on obesity does not reflect the reality in disadvantaged areas. It was explained that this is an area that the evaluation team is aware of, and will be looking at as part of the overall evaluation;
- It was also clarified that the matter of school absenteeism is being considered by the evaluation team, both in terms of collecting information on how many children there are to avail of the healthy schools programme, and also to see if there is an improvement in attendance rates.
Community Safety Initiative (CSI)

The Community Safety Initiative is actively implementing a new approach to building community safety through residents, Gardaí, local authority and other stakeholders, developing and implementing community safety agreements and activities that identify and address the factors that negatively impact on the community’s experience of safety. It aims to build on and integrate current Garda initiatives; ensure that community residents are actively involved in guiding its focus; use participatory methodologies to develop the contract; and implement activities that improve community safety. Through this co-operative initiative, it is expected that strong community engagement will both improve residents’ perceptions of safety and help to reduce the high levels of anti-social behaviour and crime that currently exist in the local neighbourhoods.

Initial findings from the evaluation team include:

- Safety is a major concern for people living in Tallaght West.
- The CSI shows early signs of both inter-agency collaboration between stakeholders and of building community spirit on the pilot sites.
- The importance of clear roles and responsibilities for Steering Committee members, an agreed Action Plan, and full representation at meetings from an early stage were highlighted as key elements of an effective intervention.
- The pilot site approach appears to be good for building support for the goals of the CSI.
- The effective engagement of the community is and will be crucial to the success or otherwise of the CSI and to it’s sustainability into the future.

Panellists:

- Jane Forman (Chair), Programme Executive, The Atlantic Philanthropies;
- Professor Tony Fahey, Head of the School of Applied Social Science, UCD;
- Chief Superintendent Annemarie McMahon, Garda Síochána;
- Claire Casey, Community Engagement Coordinator, CDI;
- John Reddy and Dr Noreen Kearns, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG).

Claire Casey (CDI) gave a brief presentation about the nature and focus of the Community Safety Initiative, explaining CSI’s aim as being to improve perceptions of safety through the development of a community agreement by establishing connections and trust between residents and statutory stakeholders. The CSI has been operating in two pilot sites of approximately 100 households each which have been targeted for considerable supports and activities. Currently, provision of Restorative Practice training is being prioritised as this approach to collective working offers a potential framework for the development and implementation of a community safety agreement.

Dr. Noreen Kearns and Mr. John Reddy, both from (NUIG) of the evaluation team then gave an overview of the evaluation process. They outlined that the CSI is an area based social intervention, based on a partnership response to addressing local safety issues in Brookfield, Fettercairn, Killinarden and Jobstown. It was explained that the overall aims of the CSI are to improve people’s perceptions of safety in the home, school and wider community, to improve neighbour relations and enhance a sense of belonging in the area, thus promoting a safe and healthy environment for children. NUIG are taking a predominantly qualitative approach to the evaluation of the CSI, presenting an analysis of the narrative and experiential accounts of those living and working in Tallaght West. Data is being gathered using a variety of methods, including interviews, focus groups, observation, documentary analysis, and surveys.

“The involvement of local people in devising solutions to safety issues is encouraging because it is everybody’s responsibility to counter crime.”

Chief Superintendent McMahon

(Garda Síochána)
Community Safety Initiative (CSI)

Key Learning:

- The discussions held at the end of the seminar with participants and the panelists gave CDI an opportunity to gain expert insights on a number of key issues and challenges faced in the implementation of the CSI.

- One of the key challenges discussed by the panel was that community engagement is a slow process and takes time to build and maintain relationships. According to Chief Superintendent Annemarie McMahon, “from a broad spectrum of responsibilities, of course, crime is the garda’s job, but by the time it becomes an issue for us, it is very often too late to intervene. From a policing point of view, the importance of trust in building relationships is vital because without trust it is very difficult to build or even maintain relationships.”

- CDI noted that having the active support of, and engagement by, individual local champions who have wide credibility in their community, is crucially important in developing the work. Chief Superintendent McMahon stated that “the fact that you are engaging with people and looking at other aspects, the social aspect and environmental aspect, all of these things contribute hugely to solving the crime issue, and, of course, the fear of crime”. She went on to compliment CDI on the initiative saying, “the involvement of local people in devising solutions to safety issues is encouraging because it is everybody’s responsibility to counter crime. The idea of a community safety agreement is very interesting, I have not seen or heard of one in operation before, and I’m keen to see how the work would progress.”

Members of the audience echoed Chief Superintendent McMahon in saying that they found the concept of a local community safety agreement to be a very exciting one and that they were hugely interested to see how this work proceeds.

CDI also stated that small, local incidents can significantly impact on progress. Early disappointments can severely impact on people’s confidence and willingness to engage. Therefore, managing expectations and achieving early successes are crucially important to the development of longer-term strategies. Professor Tony Fahey (UCD) stated, “identifying clear outcomes that can be measured is very important. In a sense, ‘pilot projects’ are doomed to succeed in that they normally mean that substantial new resources are invested over a short period of time and usually in line with well-thought out plans. It is a big challenge to find mechanisms for sustaining successful interventions. Even though you may have a high percentage (80%, or even 90%) of people engaged, getting to the people you really need to engage with, what techniques you have around engaging that 10%, would be useful for people to know.”

Claire Casey (CDI) responded to this point, saying that CDI has found that targeting the children of isolated families, through, for example, the CSI Good Behaviour Awards, offers a mechanism for engaging with their parents.

CDI discussed the difficulties associated with developing a manual for a process-driven initiative. It is a complex matter and difficult to set out a process that is not overly proscriptive, and therefore, constricting.

Members of the audience were enthused by the idea of having a manual to guide the work, and said that the production of the manual for the CSI will be very welcome as it could be of real and practical benefit to other organisations working at local community level. There was some discussion about what targets a CSI could realistically have and the workshop was informed by Maria Donoghue, South Dublin Children’s Services Coordinator, that the Committee has agreed targets for community safety, which could be used in monitoring a community safety initiative.

Over the coming months, CDI will be working on:

- The expansion of the CSI to further pilot sites;
- The development of local agreements using a Restorative Practice framework for the resolution of neighbourhood disputes;
- The agreement by the CSI Steering Committee of a coordinated action plan including concrete targets;
- The finalisation of a manual for the CSI.

“Targeting the children of isolated families, through, for example, the CSI Good Behaviour Awards, offers a mechanism for engaging with their parents.”

Claire Casey
(Childhood Development Initiative)
Process Evaluation

The process evaluation is different from the service evaluations in it examines the development and implementation of the CDI strategy. The process evaluation will have two dimensions: (1) it will tell the ‘story’ of CDI; and (2) it will examine and analyse key aspects of CDI’s work. It will determine and explain how the strategy was shaped by its vision and principles, or why it was not. It will complement, enhance and help the interpretation of the service evaluations, each of which have process elements.

Panellists:

- **Dr. Katherine Zappone** (Chair), Director, the Centre for Progressive Change;
- **Professor Mary Corcoran** (NUI Maynooth);
- **Dr. Helga Sneddon**, Centre for Effective Services;
- **Dr. John Canavan** and **Jessica Ozan** (NUI, Galway);
- **Dr. Tara Murphy**, Research and Evaluation Officer CDI.

A significant function of the Process Evaluation is to capture the richness and vibrancy of learning arising from both implementing the CDI strategy and the five individual evaluations. The complexity of the task and the potential to gather very potent information was certainly reflected in the panel’s discussion. In a brief introduction to the process evaluation by Dr. Tara Murphy (CDI), she noted that each of the five services evaluations have process elements, as well as the overall process evaluation of CDI itself. These process evaluations are looking at not only what we are doing, but equally importantly, how we are doing our work, what challenges we are facing and what learning has occurred from those challenges. Dr. John Canavan (NUIG) than delivered a presentation on the purpose, methodology and key findings from the evaluation so far. The evaluation is thematically aligned to CDI’s key principles which are as follows: John presented findings in relation to the first two principles i.e. (i) the origins and development of the CDI strategy and (ii) interagency working and service integration. The latter theme is particularly important given its relevance to the work of the Children's Services Committee, of which CDI is a member.

The panel were offered an opportunity to comment on the findings from the evaluation which led to a very stimulating albeit brief discussion in the room. Several questions and comments were proposed by both panel and audience members including:

- CDI’s community engagement methods need to consider the management and extent of client / volunteer ‘fatigue’?
- With these types of complex, community-based initiatives, local ‘champions’ emerge that strive to improve the lives of children and families in the area. Will the evaluation identify ways or processes of affirming, supporting and mainstreaming the local champions beyond the life of CDI, so that their work and all they have achieved is recognised into the future?
- Tallaght West shares similar characteristics with other disadvantaged communities. However, Professor Corcoran (NUIM) stated “There are certainly some elements of the work here in Tallaght that can be replicated somewhere else but there are always particularistic factors, issues that are specific to the local context, which alter the dynamics, things like a sense of place. We are here in a beautiful stadium just a stone’s throw from Tallaght West community. Does a stadium with a team with the reputation of Shamrock Rovers create a certain type of dynamic, an energy, a sense of place that has the potential to lift the local community? If you don’t have that resource in another place I think it is very hard to talk about transferring a particular type of model. In light of this, to what extent will the models developed as a result of CDI’s work be sustainable in other jurisdictions?”
- Mary went on to suggest: “It is evident from the DVD that there is a predominance of women (mothers) in early intervention, which is something that is to be celebrated. However, it also demonstrates the lack of men or fathers participating, which may reflect the growing marginality of men within the community. Local champions tend to be women; how do we find mechanisms to support men to take on these roles?”
- At what point does one need to stop revising or reflecting on the original goals or strategy and become more outcome focused? How has / is CDI managing that tension between flexibility and being community led while at the same time, focusing on outcomes?

“How we do our work is equally important to what we do.”

Katherine Zappone,

*(Director, the Centre for Progressive Change)*
Process Evaluation

- Process evaluations may have different meanings for different people or groups, such as an historical documentation of what is completed, documentation of fidelity, methods and so on. This has implications for how the learning arising from the evaluation is shared with specific audiences (e.g. practitioners, policymakers, service users, academics, etc).
- “The current economic climate may dissuade some from raising the significant issues of sustainability and mainstreaming. However, this makes what CDI is trying to do even more important not only for the Tallaght West community but also for society and Ireland. It would be interesting to capture in the process evaluation the economic benefits of this investment in tandem with the social benefits of the work on a longer term scale, “said Francis Chance (Barnardos).

In conclusion, the process evaluation may be considered the ‘bedrock’ of the CDI evaluations where key themes such as interagency working, training and support, and sustainability are critically examined. CDI is committed to sharing the learning arising from this as well as the other evaluations so that we might better understand those processes that underlie our work and everything we aim to achieve.

Katherine Zappone (Chair and Director, the Centre for Progressive Change), stated, “How we do our work is equally important to what we do. What comes across while viewing the DVD, is the extraordinary positive images, the support people feel, the genuine interagency work that’s going on, the self-confidence and happiness that people feel, the rich minute of individuals involved from parents to children, teachers, gardai, service providers. In particular, the parent who stated that ‘I think my kids will do alright here, its’ not going to let them down’. “

Prof. Mary Corcoran, National University of Ireland, Maynooth; Dr Helga Sneddon, Senior Fellow, Research and Evidence, Centre for Effective Services; Dr Katherine Zappone (Chair) Director, the Centre for Progressive Change; Jessica Ozan, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG); Dr John Canavan, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG).
Welcome for the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese

Marian Quinn, CEO, CDI welcomed all those who took part in the afternoon seminars, and the 400 local people who attended the Tallaght Stadium to meet the President of Ireland. She noted that this was a wonderful occasion for all of Tallaght.

Marian explained the inception of CDI - the coming together of a committed group of people who wanted more for the community of Tallaght West and whose vision was shared and supported by the commitment and generosity of our funders: The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

"Working towards this vision has involved the creation of 175 new early years places, over 300 children have participated in Doodle Den; over 300 children are participating in Mate-Tricks; 1100 children are benefiting from the healthy schools initiative; the Community Safety Initiative is working with over 200 households, over 250 parents have taken part in some form of formal parent education, whilst 120 practitioners have received significant training and ongoing support and 54 full time and part time jobs have been created." In summing up, Marian said the CDI Story "is an important story to tell, a critical story to hear, and most importantly, an essential story for us all to learn from."

Sharon Tawyodh: Parent

"I have two children - Lorrie who is six and Pauline who is eight. Lorrie hated reading and wouldn’t write for me. It was just a complete nightmare when it came to homework. Pauline hated writing and one day when she came in from school she told me she had just done an exam in school and although she knew the answers she couldn’t spell the words. She was so angry and frustrated it broke my heart.

“When we were invited into Doodle Den it changed our lives, homework is now a pleasure. I look forward to it now, instead of dreading it. Pauline is writing and loves making her words. Pauline sat her ST10’s exams and scored an 8, it is just brilliant.

“Lorrie will grab a book and bring it up stairs and read to the cat and the dog, she is even singing the words off the page. The immense difference Doodle Den has made is enormous. I only wish it was available to me when I was younger.

“I think we have to make good decisions for our children and backing CDI and Doodle Den will lead to a positive future for our children and nation as a whole.”

John Maguire: Parent

“I have a four year old son Calumn, and a ten year old daughter Emily who have both gone to playschool. Playschool helped them to prepare for school, improved their ability to interact and communicate with other children and adults and builds authentic relationships and trust for the future.

“Preschool strengthens learning by teaching children to work things out themselves, improves their ability to listen and understand speech and encourages a problem solving approach to conflict. Whereas children need to be ready for school, but schools may also need to be ready for children.”
“Today is a celebration of community at its absolute best, we are here with the real premier league, this is a special day for Tallaght.

“My grandmother always had a saying what’s learned in childhood is engraved in stone. We as parents get one go around, so the sooner we intervene in a child’s life as parents, as engravers, as community, as teachers, as professionals coming together from a place of how to engrave well, being really skilled engravers, the sooner we can be sure that our kids’ lives are going to blossom, to blossom as they are intended to blossom.

“The statistics are telling us about what happens in people’s lives when you get the intensity of focus on rearing children in the best environment that CDI offers, that is what this is all about. The depth and sheer strength of change that occurs is fantastic. Society relies on our good decisions and sometimes we need information, and skill and professional help to make those good decisions because our kids turn into the adults that turn into community that turns into this thing we call society and if we want our communities to be strong, if we want our families to be strong, we have to have strong kids, who turn into strong adults – problem solvers, not problems.

“What happens when you live in a community where every single unique child is their responsibility collectively and individually to help them flourish and blossom? The focus on that one child that you are helping to introduce to their best strongest self, actually that investment is not an investment in that one human person, it is an investment in every single one of us. This is what CDI is investing in and this investment flows through to the child, the community and the country.

“That’s what you want; kids that know their place in the world, in the sense that they know that their place cares for them, they have pride, confidence and ambitions for themselves. They are given a pathway to their own potential.”

President Mary McAleese
President Mary McAleese:

“How do we judge whether you’re doing a good job or not? It’s really simple, we judge by the outcomes. A healthy child, that magic word, a confident child. A child who has self belief, a happy child, a child who is encouraged to believe in themselves and not discouraged by all the obstacles around it to its own advancement. A child helped to be able to believe that if there is an obstacle they can get over it; they have the skills and it’s not the end of the world; a child who is encouraged to reach his or her potential because if you get it wrong the consequences of getting it wrong are just awful.

“That’s what you want; kids that know their place in the world, in the sense that they know that their place cares for them, they have pride, confidence and ambitions for themselves. They are given a pathway to their own potential.

That is why this project and the services they provided are absolutely so important. Between us we have this amazing jigsaw of skills and information, that’s why CDI is so important and I think why the evaluations are so important. We constantly have to question what we are doing to ensure that we do it well, that we allow ourselves to see things differently, more fully, to know what we need to do next, where to go from here., Also the evaluation helps us, to put on the table good expert independent guidelines, to place all the pieces of the jigsaw together.

The very fact that you are doing that here shows me what kind of people we are dealing with, people who are not afraid to be told that you could do things differently, that means that the services provided by CDI will get better and better and better and that is something wonderful to look forward to.

Just watch out Tallaght West as these dividends make this place really rock!
Noelle Spring, Chair, CDI Board
Response to Presidents’ Address.

“Thank you President for such warm and encouraging words. Your presence with us this evening is a huge source of motivation for all of us who believe we have a story to tell about our experiences in Tallaght West. As you have heard from Sharon and John, there are indeed, many stories for us to share. Stories about children having fun and learning at the same time; stories about parents feeling supported and better equipped to enable their children to reach their full potential. There are many more stories about those of us who work with children and families and how the training, support and resources provided through CDI over the last three years has enabled us to offer a more comprehensive response to identified needs and an increased capacity to facilitate improved outcomes for children and families.

“We have yet to hear the full story of ‘what works’ and are eager for the next chapter of our learning. Just like the children in this community, we want to continue to learn and reach our full potential.

“The community of Tallaght West has its own unique story, which is rich with people and personalities, tragedies and triumphs, energy and humour. The spirit of the community is something we all cherish and need to nurture, and today is about doing just that.

“Thank you President, for offering us all the opportunity to refuel our energy and motivation in our work in this very special community. In difficult times, it can be all the more challenging to focus on the positives, to hold onto the opportunities. And yet, the creativity and commitment in Tallaght West will undoubtedly ensure that however the story unfolds, and whatever the future may bring, we will indeed combine our efforts to ensure, as Tarynn said in the DVD, that this community does not let our children down.

“We have high hopes for the future of the Childhood Development Initiative and the potential for this initiative to continue to go from strength to strength. We thank you all for your support and hard work and we look to the future, the future of our children and the future of Tallaght West, which is looking very bright”.

Closing Remarks, Adrian Charles, HSE:

“As part of my work, I chair CDI’s Implementation Support Group, which is made up of a number of key organisations working in the Tallaght West area with children and families. Drawn from the voluntary, statutory and community sectors, the Implementation Support Group has been an important source of support to CDI as the team began the implementation of services in the community.

“We believe we are living proof of the value of inter agency collaboration, and over the last three years, alongside the wider Children Services Committee, we have prevented the duplication of activities, brought key skills and knowledge together for the planning of local services, and developed our thinking and strategies in relation to improved local delivery.”

Adrian thanked everyone involved in such a wonderful celebration of CDI’s work with special thanks given to the staff and management of Tallaght Stadium, which was a fantastic setting for the occasion, alongside the staff and management at Sacred Heart Senior School, for facilitating the very impressive Jai Ho and most importantly, the children whose performance was such a fitting end to a very special afternoon.
About CDI:

CDI began its work in late 2003 in order to develop a solutions-based 10 year strategy to improve the health, safety and learning of the children of the area and to increase their sense of belonging to their community. Support for the work has been drawn from the children, parents and community members in Tallaght West along with statutory and community-based providers, regional agencies, national institutions and experts.

Childhood Development Initiative is an innovative, community based response to a comprehensive consultation process undertaken in Tallaght West. Working with a wide range of locally established service providers CDI is delivering services to children and families which meet identified needs. Each of these is being rigorously evaluated, and considerable attention is being given to quality assurance, promotion of reflective practice, and professional training and support.

Our Mission

We who live and work in Tallaght West have high expectations for all children living in our communities. We want our children to love who they are and to be cherished irrespective of social background, cultural differences and country of origin. We see every child and every family being provided with support, opportunities and choices to meet these expectations. We see the whole community owning responsibility for the quality, beauty and safety of the local environment. We see children encouraged and cherished by the whole community.

Childhood Development Initiative
St Mark's Youth and Family Centre
Cookstown Lane
Fettercairn
Tallaght
Dublin 24
Tel: (+353-1) 494 0030
Fax: (+353-1) 462 7329
Email: info@twcdi.ie

www.twcdi.ie