

Embedding evidence based approaches into mainstream systems to improve child outcomes.



Preparing for Life - Background

- **Preparing for Life** is an early intervention/prevention programme established in 2007 to improve outcomes for children and families.
- Planned using a Bottom-up approach: Community designed initiative involving 28 community groups, service providers, & local representatives to develop tailored activities to improve school readiness
- Funded by Irish Government Department of Children and Youth Affairs & the Atlantic Philanthropies under the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme PEIP (2008-2013)
- 5 year experimental home visiting programme (actually became closer to a 7/8 year programme)



Why this approach?

- Research conducted in 2004 showed that over 50% of children starting school in our communities were not ready for school.
- ***Main areas of weakness were Language and Communication.***
- We see parents as the key architects of their children's development.
- Remediation programmes have been used for decades with minimal effect
- We believed that a **prevention and early intervention model** that supports families **to achieve better outcomes** was more likely to improve outcomes.



What is Preparing for Life?

- Experimental Home visiting programme designed to support parents in the areas of child development and parenting.
- Programme is delivered by skilled home visitors who meet parents either in their homes or other community settings.
- PFL has a set Curriculum we follow with all families and is supported by an Implementation Guide
- Being researched using a community based Random Control Trial



PFL Evaluation

- Aim: Measure outcomes in the following domains

CHILD HEALTH

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

PARENTING

MATERNAL HEALTH &
WELLBEING

SOCIAL SUPPORT

HOME
ENVIRONMENT

HOUSEHOLD FACTORS &
SES

CHILDCARE &
SERVICE USE



Summary of 36 month results

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Stronger cognitive development and problem solving skills

Fewer externalising behaviour problems

Less somatic complaints, sleep problems, and aggressive behaviour

CHILD HEALTH

Less accidents and hospital visits

Less likely to have a diagnosed chronic illness

Healthy diet, meeting dietary guidelines

PARENTING

Less likely to engage in punitive and hostile parenting

Less time spent watching TV

Less likely to watch TV alone

MATERNAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Better scores on measures of depression and emotional wellbeing

Consumed less alcohol and reduced cigarette smoking

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Child maintenance paid regularly

HOME ENVIRONMENT

More likely to demonstrate an established family routine, safe environment, use of community supports, and acceptance of child behaviours

Exposed to less cigarette smoke

HOUSEHOLD FACTORS & SES

More stay-at-home mothers

Fathers more likely to be unemployed

Improvement in household finances

More likely to be experiencing difficulty with a past or present partner

From Prevention and Early Intervention Programme to the Area Based Childhood Programme

PEIP → ABC



Area Based Childhood Programme

- ABC was announced in budget 2013
- Aims to build on evidence based good practice and learning from PEIP.
- Co-funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and Government
- 6 Government Departments involved led by Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Department of an Tánaiste
- 13 sites selected to participate



Preparing for Life Plan

- Our ABC plan supports the implementation of a set of approaches (all evidence based or evidence informed) to support better outcomes for children and families from Pre-birth to age 12 with a particular focus on language and communications.

These approaches involve:

- ▶ Parents and extended families
- ▶ Health staff – Maternity Hospitals, PHNs, SLTs etc.
- ▶ Early Years Settings
- ▶ Schools

Plan is to embed evidence based approaches into existing mainstream services



Key Features

- We have developed a plan that offers wrap around supports to parents & children from pregnancy to age 12 with a focus on addressing the primary areas of concern especially language & communications.
- We have aligned our actions to national policy areas
- We are supporting families, health professionals, early years professionals and teachers to adopt and implement evidence based & evidence informed approaches to improve child outcomes.
- We are providing on-site coaching to support implementation



Alignment with National Policy

Our Plan responds to the following national policy priorities:

Improving Literacy Skills;

Implementing the Aistear Curriculum Framework for 0-6 Year Olds;

Improving Quality of Early Years Services;

Improving Child Health and Combating Obesity.

Implementation of the National Early Years Strategy



Implementation What Works?



Performance Assessment (fidelity)



Mainstreaming

- We work with existing service providers to embed evidence based practices
- We have seconded health, early years and school staff to help implement our programmes
- We have embedded coaching as a key implementation driver.
- We are up-skilling existing staff so that the good practice will be sustained post ABC
- We are identifying and training leaders within organisations who will take responsibility for sustaining the programmes post ABC



PFL – ABC INTERVENTIONS

**Completion of Random
Control Trial (RCT)**

**Delivering Ante-Natal Care
and Education in the
Community**

**Home Visiting Programme
to support Child
Development and
Parenting**

**Early Years Practice
Programme – Developing
Quality through Curriculum
Approaches and Practice
Development**

**Schools Programme
Literacy, Play and Self-
Regulation**

**Triple-P Parenting
Programme**



Pregnancy



Antenatal care and education is vital for good birth outcomes.

We are working with our partners the Rotunda Hospital and the HSE providing antenatal care and education services in local health and community settings.

WHAT WE PROVIDE

- Antenatal clinics
- Antenatal classes
- Baby Massage
- Bosom Buddies Group

0 – 4 years: At Home



Our family mentors work alongside parents from pregnancy to when the child starts school.

We visit families in their homes and give them information on child development and parenting, with the aim of improving child outcomes including school readiness.

WHAT WE PROVIDE

- Monthly home visits
- Tip sheets



We offer the Triple P Positive Parenting Programme to all parents of children aged 2 – 12 living in our target area.

WHAT WE PROVIDE

- Triple P Seminar Series
- Triple P Group Programme

0 – 4 years: In Early Childhood Education



We train and mentor early childhood educators, to deliver the best outcomes for children. Using a reflective practice approach, we support practitioners individually and in groups, to focus on children's needs and interests; to enhance learning and language opportunities and to facilitate their smooth transition to school.

WHAT WE PROVIDE

- Aistear /Síolta Practice Guide
- 'Language for Life'
- Leadership for Learning

4 – 12 years: In School



Our Schools Programme works to improve learning outcomes for children and to equip them with life skills that will help them to achieve their full potential.

We do this by providing on-site, customised professional development and mentoring for teachers in proven play, literacy and self-regulation programmes.

WHAT WE PROVIDE

- Write to Read
- Play to Learn
- Good Behaviour Game



Preparing for Life

SCHOOLS PROGRAMME



A Northside Partnership project, funded under the Area Based Childhood Programme 2013 - 2016

Preparing for Life Schools Programme

Professional development for teachers in three programmes:

- Write to Read
- Play to Learn
- PAX Good Behaviour Game.



Professional Development – Our Approach

- On-site, sustained coaching for teachers.
- Practising teachers with the required expertise are released to mentor their peers in other schools.
- Credibility of peer mentors and practical support they provide is crucial.



Write to Read

- Literacy model developed by Dr Eithne Kennedy of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.
- Encourages children to see themselves as readers, writers and thinkers.
- Supports teacher to deliver high quality literacy programmes that are holistic, evidence based and matched to children's particular needs.
- Teachers are supported to establish a daily 90 minute block of literacy instruction that includes a Writing Workshop, Reading Workshop and Word Work.



Write to Read Research

- Award winning research published by Dr Kennedy in 2011 on original pilot with 1st & 2nd class in a DEIS Band 1 school showed number of children reading at or below 10th percentile reduced by 75%, 20% of children improved to reading at the highest level (none above 70th percentile at start of study) and showed increased levels of motivation, engagement and participation.
- Currently the subject of an expanded piece of research in eight Dublin DEIS schools as well as further research into four schools engaged in Write to Read through Preparing for Life Schools Programme.



Write to Read Mentoring

Schools receive fortnightly visits from a Write to Read mentor.

Support provided includes:

- Provision of professional readings
- Video
- Powerpoint presentations
- Demonstration lessons
- Non-evaluative observations of teaching
- Regular opportunities for debate and reflection



Play to Learn

- Model that helps Junior and Senior Infants teachers to teach through play and implement the Aistear play based curriculum framework for 0 – 6 year olds.
- Helps the teacher to provide child-centred, contextualised learning that promotes the development of oral language and life skills.



Play to Learn Mentoring

- To date, 12 teachers in 3 schools have received professional development impacting on 226 pupils.
- Teachers receive fortnightly visits from a Play to Learn mentor released from a local school.
- Professional development combines in-class visits to individual teachers and group professional development in the last hour of the school day.
- Teacher manual developed.
- Cluster group brings infant teachers from all partner schools together once per term to share expertise and learning.



PAX Good Behaviour Game

- Classroom based game that helps teach children vital self-regulation skills in a fun way to help them both today and in later life.
- International research extending over 30 years has shown PAX GBG is one of the most effective evidence based school programmes, generating significant child outcomes in the areas of self-control, self-management and self-regulation.



PAX GBG – Irish Pilot

- 21 first and second class teachers took part in 12-week pilot in early 2015.
- Evaluation showed a 43% reduction in off-task behaviours across the 21 participating classrooms.
- Highly significant reductions in the incidence of hyperactivity and emotional symptoms for children and a highly significant increase in pro-social behaviours (SDQ).



PAX GBG – Irish Pilot

- Almost one third of children reported as displaying challenging behaviours at the start of the study were reported as showing behaviours within the normal range after 12 weeks.
- Qualitative feedback demonstrated the positivity generated by PAX GBG in classrooms.
- Classrooms have become calmer, children are taking positive control of their behaviour and teacher / pupil relationships have been positively impacted.



PAX GBG Mentoring

- To date, 61 teachers trained in Dublin and Midlands schools.
- 2 days training followed by three in-class visits from a PAX GBG mentor.
- Mentors are recently retired teachers or practicing teachers released from partner schools.



Questions?

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