

The
A T L A N T I C
Philanthropies

Prevention and Early Intervention in Ireland and Northern Ireland:

Making a Real Difference in the
Lives of Children and Young People

May 2015



Summary

Children in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland can face daunting obstacles on their way to becoming healthy and contributing adults.

From 2004 to 2013, The Atlantic Philanthropies invested \$164 million with the goal of transforming the way that children and young people receive services on the island of Ireland. Atlantic's investments focused on prevention and early intervention approaches that were rigorously tested.

As a result of these investments, Atlantic and its grantees were able to:

- Confirm that a prevention and early intervention approach can be effective;
- Gain insights into what works to improve the lives of children and young adults;
- Establish an infrastructure that provides high-quality research that informs policy decisions and programme choices;
- Show that government and nongovernmental organisations can work together to change outcomes for children and young people.

The Situation

In 2004, resources for children and young people were skewed towards intervening when difficulties had already become complex and entrenched. Approaches tended to be reactive, punitive, costly and of doubtful value. Early intervention and prevention work was not a priority—despite research that it could yield lasting benefits and give a better return on investment.

Atlantic's Approach

The Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative

In 2004, Atlantic launched a prevention and early intervention initiative that aimed to change the course of children's lives and to alter the approach on the island of Ireland to working with some of its most vulnerable children and young people. Atlantic's initiative had three parts.

First, Atlantic funded a range of prevention and early intervention services to **demonstrate the way of working that it was advocating**.

In order to be credible advocates for change, it was necessary to build a track record of effective prevention and early intervention services. Atlantic focused on a limited number of services that it believed could achieve promising results and, through intermediaries, helped plan, implement and evaluate the work.

Second, Atlantic invested in **research and technical infrastructure**. Rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of programmes and disseminating the results were crucial to improving services. However, many of these competencies were in short supply on the island of Ireland in the children and family field.

Third, Atlantic looked to **build its relationship with government** to increase the chances of sustainability. Engagement with government was a key strategy to ensure that the prevention and early intervention approach was mainstreamed.

In all, the initiative funded 39 interventions to deliver 52 evidence-based services to children and young people in Ireland. Almost all of these programmes have been evaluated positively – under demanding testing. The number of interventions will expand with new co-funding arrangements with governments in Ireland.

Outcomes

To track the progress of the initiative, Atlantic commissioned Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. to carry out evaluations in 2008 and 2011. It concluded that the initiative “demonstrated the real difference that a comprehensive approach to prevention and early intervention services can make in the lives of children.”¹

Effective Implementation of Prevention and Early Intervention Services

The prevention and early intervention initiative has had a direct impact on significant numbers of children and young people, their families and those who work in children’s services. The Centre for Effective Services estimates that between 2004 and 2013, 90,000 children and young people, 24,000 parents and caregivers and 4,000 professionals benefitted from the programmes.

Atlantic, in conjunction with two government departments in the Republic of Ireland, launched the Centre for Effective Services (CES) in 2009. CES helps children, youth and community services to make better use of evidence of what works so they can deliver more effective services. CES also synthesises learnings from the initiative and elsewhere to support policy makers and organisations with effective implementation.

New Approach to Designing Services for Children and Young People

The prevention and early intervention initiative introduced a new way of thinking about how to identify needs, design services and improve the work of service providers. A crucial aspect of the new approach was a reliance on evidence during all phases of a programme – during planning, design and implementation.

In the planning phase, for instance, organisations assessed how children and young people were faring in their communities by asking them, their parents and others to complete questionnaires. They decided which services to provide based on what they learned from these comprehensive needs assessments and local consultations.

Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) researched and then put into place programmes that had outcomes backed by evidence. If they could not find such programmes, they developed ones based on effective interventions from the research literature. Grantees also gained substantial experience implementing evidence-based prevention and early intervention programmes in real-world settings.

Grantees Gain Expertise in Evaluation

Atlantic required grantees to use evaluation methods such as randomised controlled trials or quasi-experimental designs. Each grant had its own evaluation budget and support from expert advisory committees. Through this work, Atlantic’s grantees learned an entirely new set of skills: how to develop evaluation tenders, negotiate contracts and monitor the work of an evaluator. Children and young people’s organisations also used evaluations to improve and sometimes even stop programmes that were not effective.

New Networks of NGOs to Improve Practice and Share Evidence

Atlantic grantees felt it was vital to come to the government with an organised, singular voice on how prevention and early intervention can improve outcomes for children. To help, Atlantic funded grantee networks in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Through these networks, service providers and advocates meet regularly with key government officials, sharing the results of evaluations with those who can make policy changes.

Government Buy-in to Prevention and Early Intervention

Atlantic secured co-funding with the two governments for a range of projects. In the Republic of Ireland, it was the rollout of large-scale demonstration programmes known as the **Prevention and Early Intervention Programme** (2006-2013) in the Greater Dublin region and the **Centre for Effective Services**.

Further, the Republic of Ireland government and Atlantic co-funded the **Area Based Childhood Programme** to continue evidence-informed interventions to improve the long-term outcomes for children and families living in areas of disadvantage. The total investment is almost \$38 million between 2013 and 2016.

Atlantic also made a \$13.7 million grant to Galway University Foundation to transform child and family services in Ireland by embedding prevention and early intervention into the culture and operation of the new national family support system. In addition, Atlantic provided a \$13.5 million grant to the Katharine Howard Foundation to support the strategic reform of universal health and well-being services for infants and their families.

In Northern Ireland, the government announced in 2014 the **Early Intervention Transformation Programme**. This programme is a \$57 million co-investment between five government departments and Atlantic, with a \$16.1 million investment from Atlantic. It seeks to transform how children's services are designed, planned and implemented to improve outcomes for children. The programme will run until 2017.

Conclusion

Atlantic's investments are helping to transform the approach to serving all children in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Service organisations have new skills in planning, choosing, implementing and evaluating evidence-based programmes. An infrastructure of strong research centres is in place. Governments, combined, have committed over \$100 million to date in order to institutionalise the most effective programmes.

As Atlantic concludes its grantmaking, it is working with grantees to help them achieve their ultimate goal: making a lasting differences in the lives of children and young people.

For More Information

¹ <http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/learning/evaluation-prevention-and-early-intervention-programme-ireland-and-northern-ireland>.

To learn more about Atlantic's investments and learning in prevention and early intervention services for children, see the Centre for Effective Services' report "Ten Years of Learning" at <http://bit.ly/TenYearsCES>.

Services supported by The Atlantic Philanthropies’ Children & Youth Programme on the island of Ireland

Service Name	Intervention Target	Settings for Delivery	Developmental Stage
Giving children the best start			
3, 4, 5 Learning Years youngballymun, ROI	Manager Teacher	Centre-based	Early Years
Eager and Able to Learn Early Years (The Organisation for Young Children), NI	Child, ages 2 and 3	Centre-based	Early Years
Early Childhood Care and Education Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative (CDI), ROI	Child, ages 3 and 4	Centre-based	Early Years
Tús Maith Barnardos, ROI	Child, ages 3 to 5	Centre-based	Early Years
National Early Years Access Initiative Pobal, ROI	Child Practitioner	Centre-based	Early Years
Colin Neighbourhood Partnership, NI The Colin Early Intervention Programme	Child Parent Practitioner Community	Home Centre-based Community-based	Early Years Primary School Youth
Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Differences Programme Early Years (The Organisation for Young Children), NI	Child, ages 3 and 4	Centre-based In-school	Early Years
Getting the most out of school and education			
Incredible Years—Classroom Management Archways (Clondalkin Behavioral Initiative Ltd. T/A), ROI youngballymun, ROI	Teacher	In-school	Primary School
Doodle Den Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative (CDI), ROI	Child, ages 5 and 6	After-school	Primary School
Ready to Learn Barnardos, NI	Child	After-school	Primary School
Rialto Learning Community Rialto Development Association (formerly Fatima Regeneration Board), ROI	Child, ages 11 to 14	In-school After-school	Primary School Youth
Time to Read Business in the Community, NI	Child, ages 8 and 9	In-school	Primary School
Wizard of Words Barnardos, ROI	Child, ages 6 and 7	In-school	Primary School
Write Minded youngballymun, ROI	Child Teacher	In-school	Primary School Youth
Literacivic youngballymun, ROI	Community	Community-based	Youth Young Adult Adult
Supporting parents on their journey			
Lifestart Parenting Programme Lifestart Foundation Ltd, NI	Child, birth to 5	Home	Early Years
Preparing for Life Northside Partnership, ROI	Child, neonatal to 5	Home	Early Years
Ready, Steady, Grow youngballymun, ROI	Child, neonatal to 5	Home Centre-based	Early Years
Incredible Years—Parenting Archways (Clondalkin Behavioral Initiative Ltd. T/A), ROI and youngballymun, ROI	Parent	Community-based	Primary School
Advocacy and Parenting Teens Programme Parenting NI, NI	Parent	Centre-based	Youth

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<i>Supporting parents on their journey</i>			
Triple P Parenting Programme Longford & Westmeath Parenting Partnership (now Midlands Area Parenting Partnership), ROI	Parent	Community-based	Early Years Primary School Youth
Partnership with Parents Barnardos, ROI	Parent	Community-based	Early Years Primary School Youth
Incredible Years—For Children Experiencing Hyperkinetic Disorder (ADHD) Archways (Clondalkin Behavioral Initiative Ltd T/A), ROI	Parent	Community-based	Early Years
<i>Strengthening wellbeing among children and young people</i>			
Friendship Group Barnardos, ROI	Child, ages 8 and 9	Centre-based	Primary School
Functional Family Therapy Clondalkin Partnership, ROI	Child Parent	Community-based	Youth
Mate Tricks Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative (CDI), ROI	Child, ages 9 and 10	After-school	Primary School
PATHS (formerly Together 4 All Limited) Barnardos, NI	Child, ages 6 to 12	In-school	Primary School
Step Belong BELONG (South Tyrone Empowerment Programme), NI	Child	In-school Centre-based	Primary School Youth
Big Brothers Big Sisters Foróige, ROI	Child, ages 10 to 18	Community-based	Youth
Mayo Consortium Children's Initiative Society of St. Vincent De Paul, ROI	Child, ages 8 to 17	In-school Community-based	Primary School Youth
Healthy Schools Programme Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative (CDI), ROI	Child, junior and senior	In-school	Primary School
Jigsaw youngballymun, ROI and Headstrong, ROI	Child, ages 12 to 15	Community-based	Youth Young Adult
Reachout.com in Ireland Inspire Ireland Foundation, ROI	Child, ages 12 to 15	Online	Youth Young Adult
Community Safety Initiative Tallaght West Childhood Initiative (CDI), ROI	Community	Community-based	Primary School Youth Young Adult Adult
Renewal and Regeneration across the Lifecourse in Limerick City University of Limerick Foundation, ROI	Child	Community-based	Early Years Primary School Youth Young Adult Adult
Sexual Health Clinics in Belfast and Coleraine Brook Belfast, NI	Child	Centre-based	Youth Young Adult

ROI=Republic of Ireland, NI=Northern Ireland.

Programme Organisational Contacts

Archways www.archways.ie

Functional Family Therapy
Incredible Years Programmes

Barnardos www.barnardos.ie

Friendship Group
Partnership with Parents
Tús Maith
Wizards of Words

Barnardos, NI www.barnardos.org.uk

PATHS
Ready to Learn

BELONG www.belongni.org

Step Belong

Brook Belfast

www.brook.org.uk/brook-northern-ireland
Sexual Health Clinics in Belfast and Coleraine

Business in the Community

www.bitc.org.uk/northern_ireland
Time to Read

Colin Neighbourhood Partnership, NI

www.newcolin.com
The Colin Early Intervention Programme

Early Years

www.early-years.org
Eager and Able to Learn
Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Differences Programme

Foróige www.foroige.ie

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Inspire Ireland www.inspireireland.ie

Reachout.com

Lifestart www.lifestartfoundation.org

Lifestart Parenting Programme

Longford Westmeath Parenting Partnership

www.mapp.ie

Triple P Parenting Programme

Northside Partnership

www.preparingforlife.ie

Preparing For Life

Parenting NI

www.parentingni.org

Advocacy and Parenting Teens Programme

Pobal

www.pobal.ie

National Early Years Access Initiative

Rialto Development Association

Rialto Learning Community

Society of St. Vincent De Paul

www.mciireland.ie

Mayo Consortium Children's Initiative

Tallaght West Childhood Initiative

www.twcdi.ie

Community Safety Initiative

Doodle Den

Early Childhood Care and Education

Healthy Schools Programme

Mate Tricks

University of Limerick Foundation

www.ulfoundation.ie

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youngballymun

www.youngballymun.org

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Incredible Years Programmes

Jigsaw

Literacivic

Ready, Steady, Grow

Write Minded
