



**Keeping you informed**

**About the programme**

The programme 'Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People' aims to achieve a national unified approach to delivering disability health services, so that there is a clear pathway to the services they need for all children regardless of where they live, what school they go to or the nature of their disability or delay.

Children should receive the health services they need as close to their home and school as possible. Some children may have their needs met by their local Primary Care services. An early intervention and a school age team will look after all children with more complex needs in a defined geographic network area, regardless of the nature of their disability. These teams will be supported by specialist services when a high level of expertise is required.

The programme also involves our partners in the education sector to ensure we are working together to achieve the best possible outcomes for children.

The Health Service as a whole has to operate within the funding available to it and this is a major challenge for all stakeholders, including the HSE, voluntary service providers, services users and their families. We need to make the best possible use of the resources we have, and if we work to get the structure right we will have strong foundations to build on.

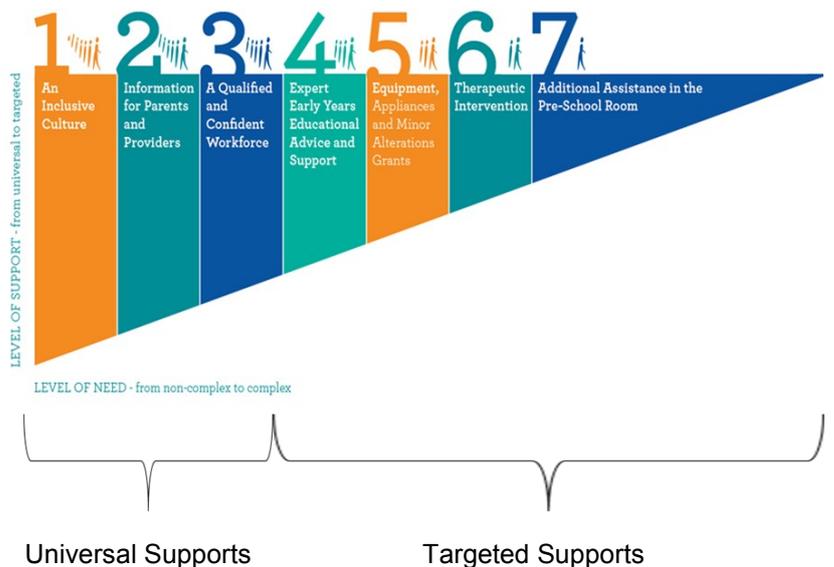
**AIM (Access & Inclusion Model)**



The Better Start **Access and Inclusion Model** (AIM) is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. Its goal is to empower service providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience, ensuring that every eligible child can fully participate in the ECCE programme and reap the benefits of quality early years care and education.

AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, from universal (Levels 1 – 3) to targeted (Levels 4-7), based on the needs of the child and the service provider. For many children, universal supports offered under the model will be sufficient. For others, a particular discrete support may be required to enable participation in pre-school, such as access to a piece of specialised equipment. For a small number, a suite of different services and supports may be necessary. The model is designed to be responsive to the needs of each individual child in the context of their pre-school setting, offering tailored, practical supports based on need and will not require a formal diagnosis of disability.

A Model to Support Access to the Free Pre-School Year for Children with a Disability.



Levels 1-3: A higher education programme *Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC)* will commence in Sept 2016 with the first 900 preschool staff graduating in Sept 2017. City/County Childcare Committees will roll out *Equality and Diversity* training for all Early Years settings (contd p2)

In the interest of the environment, please print this bulletin in black and white.

(Contd from p1) from September 2016. Level 4: 50 expert Early Years Educational Advice and Support Specialists (EYIS) have been appointed under Better Start, DCYA as key links between preschool service providers, parents, HSE/HSE funded services, Visiting Teachers and Pobal Administrators. Preschools wishing to avail of any of the supports to enable children to access their ECCE programme can complete the Access and Inclusion Profile application online with parents consent and input.

Level 5: Equipment, appliances and minor alterations will be funded for eligible children up to €7,000 including VAT and professional fees. For level 5 supports, input on the relevant section of the brief Capital Report Template may be required by the relevant Health Professional.

Level 6: Health Service Supports Working Group has developed a *definition of health service supports critical to enable a child with a disability to access their ECCE* (whilst remaining on their waiting list for other therapy supports), Protocols for working with Levels 4, 5 and 7 and a presentation on AIM with particular emphasis on the role of health service staff which is being delivered to LIGs and Early Intervention Teams/Services across the country. The working group is also working on identifying the support needs of children with a disability and medically complex condition to ensure a consistent approach is available to all children with a disability.

Level 7 Additional assistance: it is anticipated, this may be required by 1-1.5% of children with the highest level of need. This is not an SNA model.

For further information, [www.preschoolaccess.ie](http://www.preschoolaccess.ie)

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## The critical role relationships play in our ability to cope with challenges

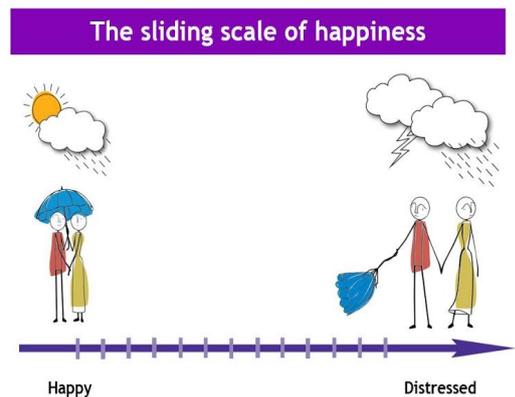
Considerable evidence shows that positive relationships with friends, family members and / or partners are fundamental to our health and wellbeing. These relationships enhance our lives and sustain us through challenging times. The corollary of course is also true, relationship difficulties adversely affect the quality of our lives and diminish our ability to cope with life's other challenges

Professionals working with families where one child, or more has a disability, understand the profound impact that this can have on family life and family relationships. The effects, in many cases, can be positive, for example, family perceptions around disability versus ability are often revisited and broadened, family priorities are recalibrated and usually for the better and family cohesion can often be improved.

Research however has also shown that "...parents of children with chronic illnesses or disabilities face multiple pressures which combine to leave them with little time for themselves, other siblings or their relationship, and therefore, can have a detrimental impact on themselves and their children." [Glenn, F & Braybrook, D. (2015). *Growing together or drifting apart? Updated Synopsis. The International Journal of Birth and Parent Education, 2015, Vol 2 Issue 3*]

For couples with a child with a disability, a supportive relationship is an important buffer against increased risks of depression and parenting stress. [a sub study of 2000 parents in the UK who had a child with a disability (2003) *Contact A Family*]

With that understanding a Cork based, not for profit training organisation, Ag Eisteacht, delivers an evidence based training programme called Brief Encounters® for professionals and multi-disciplinary teams, working in the disability sector. The three day programme is designed to equip healthcare professionals to support parents by adopting a relational approach, as a routine part of their practice. Ag Eisteacht's licensed trainers bring participants through a three staged model which is specifically formulated to deliver practical support to parents / those in a parenting role, whilst taking cognisance of the considerable time pressure under which healthcare professionals work. Early, competent and time-bound interventions by those trained to use the Brief Encounters® model, deliver tangible benefits for individuals, couples and families as a whole. The programme is recognised by the Irish Association of Social Workers, Social Care Ireland and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland for CPD and CEUs purposes respectively. It is also evaluated by participants on an ongoing basis and feedback is independently analysed for quality assurance purposes. (contd p3)



The services manager at Enable Ireland, Wicklow, Ms. Frances Fitzell whose team recently completed the programme commented that " *All of the course content was so relevant and adds such value to the ongoing work we do with children and families. I would like to especially mention the two trainers who were fantastic. This is not just my own opinion but shared amongst many staff who gave me feedback after. Many thanks for an excellent course.* "

Maeve Hurley founder and CEO of Ag Eisteacht training said " *Having worked for many years as a GP I was increasingly struck by the absence of research and subsequently the absence of attention given to the relational aspect of our health and wellbeing. I am delighted now to hear the conversation being aired more and to see much greater research being conducted into the issue of how our family and other relationships effect the quality of our lives, our ability to cope with adversity and the impact of those relationships on the outcomes for childrens' health and wellbeing. We are privileged to deliver training to public health nurses, social workers, social care workers, speech and language therapists and many other professionals working in multi-disciplinary teams, particularly in the disability sector. By imparting new knowledge and new skills to health care professionals through our training, we're enabling them to 'make every contact count' in terms of their service users relational wellbeing*".

To celebrate fifteen years as a training service provider Ag Eisteacht is delighted to offer **two free places** on its next open course in Cork on September 13th, 28th and 29th and **two free places** on its next open course in Dublin on September 20th, October 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested in putting your name forward for these places please email [admin@ageisteacht.com](mailto:admin@ageisteacht.com) on or before August 31st with your contact details and put either Cork or Dublin in the subject line of your email to indicate your preferred location. Alternatively inquiries about commissioned, multidisciplinary team courses can be directed to [therese@ageisteacht.com](mailto:therese@ageisteacht.com).



Maeve Hurley, CEO of Ag Eisteacht far left, with a recent group of Brief Encounters® training participants in Cork.

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### North Kildare NDT—Cycling group for children

Cycling is a great way to get around, to have fun and to keep physically and mentally fit. Many children with special needs find it challenging to coordinate their two legs and balance for cycling.

Our occupational therapist and physiotherapist in partnership with the cycling safety school, Celbridge successfully organized its second cycling group. Parents had identified cycling as one of the goals for their child. Eight children between the ages of 4 to 12 enrolled for the group. There were five weekly sessions of one hour. Parents participated actively with their children during the group. It was great experience for the children and very satisfying & emotional for the parents to see their children improve from balance bike to pedaling to riding on their own.



We are thankful to GAA Clane for providing the venue free of cost. We would like to thank Kildare sport partnership who partly funded the cost of running the group and will continue to work in partnership with them in future.

The clinical team at North Kildare NDT is committed to provide services to children and help them learn functional skills to participate with in their community. We are hoping to run more such groups in future.

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## **Dublin South West - Information sharing for staff**

When children's disability services in an area are reconfigured into Children's Disability Network Teams, staff will in many cases be moving from working with children with a specific diagnosis or category of disability ( e.g. intellectual disability or physical disability) to working with children with a wide range of needs. One aspect of the reconfiguration process is encouraging and helping staff to broaden their knowledge and skills in advance of the move. This may be through sharing information with each other, shadowing staff in another service, identifying the specific knowledge and skills they need and in some cases attending relevant training courses.

In Dublin South West staff in the existing services (HSE, Beechpark, Cheeverstown, Menni and Enable Ireland) have been meeting for the past year. They have got to know each other and found out about 'a day in the life' for people working in a different service. They have met in professional discipline groups (e.g. all the occupational therapists), visited each other's services to find out more and shared sources of information.

In June 2016 Enable Ireland Tallaght hosted a workshop on the needs of children with physical disability. There was keen interest from all the other services and the workshop was over-subscribed with over 35 participants squeezed into a relatively small room on a very hot day!

The Enable Ireland team (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, psychology, early education and social work) went through the objectives of service for children with physical disability, specific assessments and interventions, best practice in treatment and monitoring and other issues that may be different for children with a physical disability and their families, such as using equipment and accessing the community.

The participants viewed typical equipment, such as wheelchairs, seating and standers, and useful books and leaflets. They then met in discipline groups to look at specific areas of interest. Each participant was given a folder with written information for them to keep and add to.

Feedback on the workshop has been very positive and it is hoped other services in the area will organise a similar day in the coming months to share their particular experience, skills and expertise.

## **Workshops for Local Leads**

Every Local Implementation Group (LIG) around the country for the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People programme has a Local Lead who has a major role in the implementation of this programme. The Local Lead may be the Disability Services Manager, or a therapy manager either in the HSE or one of the non-statutory organisations. The Leads from around the country get together every few months for a day to hear about any relevant new developments, to share experiences and in particular to learn from those who have already formed their Children's Disability Network Teams about what went well and what could have been done better with the benefit of hindsight.

Previous workshops have had speakers on topics such as family centred practice, ensuring governance structures and facilitating parent representation on LIGs. There is always an update on national guidance and issues and the participants in the workshop have opportunities for focussed discussion in small groups.

At the most recent workshop in May topics included were:

- The new national policy on access to services for children with disability or developmental delay. After hearing about the policy and plans for its phased implementation, the group looked at two sample referrals and whether a Primary Care or a disability service would be more appropriate to meet the child's needs. This gave everyone an idea of how the process will work.
- A presentation on specialist supports and discussion with the whole group about planning for these. It was very useful to get contributions from those whose area has already reconfigured as to what was working well.
- Feedback on a survey regarding training needs for staff in children's disability services.
- A short presentation by a psychologist about her survey of teams and what makes a team work well. The most important factor was seen to be relationships with colleagues. Identity for the children's disability teams also came up and in the discussion which followed the presentation, there was general agreement that all teams should have one name that would become a recognisable national 'brand' similar to Tusla and CAMHS. This idea is being further looked into at national level.



## Vision and visual impairment in children with additional needs



**Thursday, 13th October, 2016 Presenter: Dr. J. Margaret Woodhouse, Cardiff University, Wales**

*Maggie is an Optometrist and Senior Lecturer at Cardiff University, with a research, teaching and clinical interest in eye and vision problems in children with additional needs. She specialises in children with Down's syndrome, but has experience with all forms of disability. Her approach to training is very informal and she welcomes questions and active discussion throughout her presentation.*

**Registration Fee:** €60 per person

**Early Bird Rate:** €50 (if booked before Friday September 16<sup>th</sup> 2016). **Student Rate:** €40

The above rate includes a light lunch on the day

**Booking Form** : <https://childvision.ie/site/whats-on/conferences/>

### 1<sup>st</sup> session (1 hour): How our eyes work and what glasses are for

Maggie will provide an overview of eyes and vision including demonstrations of how eyes work and what short or long-sight and visual impairment is like

### 2<sup>nd</sup> session (1.5 hours): How eyes and vision develop in typical children and those with additional needs

The different development and prevalence of eye problems in children with additional needs, including cerebral visual impairment

### 3<sup>rd</sup> session (1 hour): How we test eyes and vision in children

Adults can describe their problems and answer questions during an eye test. For children, especially those with additional needs, we have to use different approaches. Maggie will explain how vision testing is possible in a patient who cannot communicate in the usual way

### 4<sup>th</sup> session (1.5 hours): What can we do? How can we help?

EVENT TIMETABLE			
9.00am - 9.30am	Registration and Welcome	12.00 noon - 1.00pm	<b>Session 3</b>
9.30am - 10.30am	<b>Session 1</b>	1.00pm - 2.00pm	Lunch
10.30am - 11.00am	Morning Coffee	2.00pm - 3.30pm	<b>Session 4</b>
11.00am - 12.00 noon	<b>Session 2</b>	Close	

**ChildVision, National Education Centre for Blind Children,  
Grace Park Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9**