

# The Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) Process Evaluation Thematic Report No. 6: Mainstreaming, Dissemination and Sustainability

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## Mainstreaming, Dissemination and Sustainability

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The authors are responsible for the choice and presentation of views expressed in this report and for opinions expressed herein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organisation.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

In 2008 the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (CFRC) was contracted by the Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) to undertake a process evaluation of its work. The evaluation consists of a series of six thematic-focussed reports and an overall final report. This report is the sixth in the series.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the evaluation was to examine the role of sustainability, mainstreaming, and dissemination in the work of CDI. Following consultation with CDI, the main questions that informed the research for this report were agreed as follows:

1. What has been the strategy regarding informing Government thinking, policy making, and specifically curriculum development?
2. How aware is the Irish Government of CDI learning emanating from the interim evaluation reports, final evaluation reports, and the overall experience of CDI as it was being implemented?
3. What did CDI do to ensure learning was heard at policy level in the period before the finalisation of service evaluation reports, and in the absence of outcome data or interim process findings?
4. What has CDI done in the period since the finalisation of these reports?
5. What has CDI done to promote the mainstreaming of its experience?
6. What plans have been put in place to ensure sustainability [in the short and long term]?

## METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The report adopted a multi-method qualitative approach. The following methods were used:

- Literature review examining relevant material on the use of research in policy, terminology, models of policy-research interaction, mechanisms to disseminate research evidence, and challenges encountered in undertaking such work;
- Extensive documentary analysis of a range of CDI documents, including strategic planning documents, newsletters, and minutes of pertinent CDI structures, including the Board, communications subcommittee and the Implementation Support Group (ISG);
- 31 individual and group interviews with a range of key informants, including CDI team members, Board members, ISG members, as well external individuals, were undertaken at two different time points.

The main limitation in this report is the absence of particular voices in the qualitative data. Despite numerous attempts by the research team, representatives from the Department of Education and Skills declined to participate in the research. These included one official from the Early Years Unit, and three current officials and one former official from the Social Inclusion Unit. In addition, a senior official from the Department of Health, a senior official from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and one philanthropic representative declined to participate in the research.

## KEY FINDINGS

CDI had a strategic focus on mainstreaming from early in its implementation phase. As this phase progressed, the Initiative's understanding of the term evolved and broadened to include other terms such as replication and sustainability. Definitions of these terms are contested by participants. There is more agreement, however, on the meaning of the term dissemination, its central place in the work of CDI, and the importance of trying to impact policy and practice with its learning.



CDI used existing and new structures to progress its mainstreaming and sustainability work throughout its implementation. The CDI Board particularly, as well as the ISG, have been engaged in various aspects of the mainstreaming work since 2007, as have members of the CDI Team. New structures have also been developed, especially as service evaluations moved towards completion, to prepare strategically for the next phase of work, as well as operationally.

CDI formulated a number of plans and processes to guide its mainstreaming and sustainability work as service evaluations moved towards conclusion. Beginning with a broad consultation document, and a funding proposal, these plans and processes became more focussed and detailed, and central to its work, as epitomised in the Initiative's operational or business plans for 2012 and 2013. These plans were accompanied by focused team processes and a keen awareness of multiple audiences.

CDI undertook a range of actions in implementing its mainstreaming plans. Prominent amongst these was engaging strategically with numerous organisations, individuals and audiences, both prior to the release of evaluation findings in preparing the ground, as well as afterwards, to both share the learning and sustain proven elements of CDI services. It has sought to share its experience and expertise with other organisations, as well as the Tallaght West community, by way of a consistent set of messages delivered through a variety of mechanisms.

There is divergence of opinion in the findings regarding the sustainability of CDI services in Tallaght West beyond 2011, the value of sustainability within the work of CDI, and the long-term impact of the CDI investment in the locality. Notwithstanding such contestation, CDI endeavoured to sustain elements of all services post summer 2011, and beyond where evaluation findings have supported such moves.

A number of aspects of CDI's mainstreaming and sustainability activities were identified positively by participants. These included networking and connecting with people; developing strategic relationships; clarity and transparency regarding evaluation messages, and the mechanisms through which they were evaluated; and particular elements of services mainstreamed into existing structures and services.

A number of challenges to CDI's mainstreaming and sustainability activities were also identified by participants. These included the changing economic context in the country; the difficulty in engaging some key stakeholders; the alignment of evaluation conclusions and mainstreaming activities; and the complexity of the research messages to be communicated.

## DISCUSSION

It is clear that CDI strategically planned for mainstreaming and dissemination from the beginning. At both Board and Team levels, there was clear evidence that implementing the evaluation strand of the strategy, and mainstreaming the evidence and broader learning arising from it occupied a central place in the Initiative's work. As the evaluations progressed, the data indicated that the Board focused more on the mainstreaming aspect of its work. At the team level, it was also clear that evaluation and mainstreaming adopted a central aspect of its work. A number of documents were prepared throughout the implementation period, and a range of events planned and delivered as the evaluations moved towards conclusion, accompanied by a keen awareness of different audiences. Important in this work also was the role of the EAC, fulfilling its anticipated role in the strategy in supporting the evaluation process. However, the data also suggest that what each term meant shifted throughout the period of implementation. Mainstreaming is a case in point, where CDI documentation contains different, possibly evolving definitions of the term. Interview participants' definitions of mainstreaming encompassed a range of different actions, from sustaining services, to rolling out programmes nationally, to replicating particular aspects of specific programmes.

CDI adopted different roles across different phases of its work in implementing this aspect of its strategy: consumer of research; commissioner of research; a generator of evidence and evidence-based practices; and disseminator of these practices. The adoption of multiple roles by CDI over the course of implementation is characteristic of a dynamic organisation. As it progressed through each of the phases outlined, and moved into different roles, it adapted its internal structures and processes and modified its strategies and plans. This is potentially most clearly seen in the shift of personnel, especially from a research and evaluation manager to a research and policy manager, and the hiring of additional personnel for communication and dissemination functions as the evaluations concluded. It developed new

plans and established new structures to support its work in different phases. There is little doubt that, when the range of activities and accompanying roles adopted by CDI are examined, the centrality of mainstreaming and dissemination as set out in its strategy was matched by a similar centrality in its implementation.

Internally, CDI has established effective structures, processes and actions over the course of its lifetime as an organisation. These structures have brought together a range of experienced and committed voices to provide good governance across CDI's research and evaluation activities. CDI has also developed a healthy model of communication internally. The hiring of a communications coordinator and the establishing of a Communications Sub-committee to drive the dissemination phase of the work, with accompanying planning processes, is indicative of an increased, sharper organisational focus, especially as evaluation findings emerged. This has also been reflected in the increasing position of mainstreaming and dissemination within its internal processes, such as business plans, and accompanying action plans, which outline how a variety of media can be used to disseminate its messages. It has been critically aware of the administrative, political and economic context in which it now operates. It has sought to build relationships with emerging governmental structures and policy developments, hone its messages in response to administrative and government developments, and emphasise the high quality, credibility and applicability of its evidence and broader learning. It has engaged with key players prior to its evidence being finalised, in order to create receptiveness when the evaluations began to emerge. At the level of mechanisms, it is apparent that the Initiative has used a wide range of specific mechanisms to disseminate its messages, displaying an understanding of different audiences with different needs and desires, and targeting them appropriately.

The data in this report highlight challenges to CDI's work regarding sustainability. At the core of the interview evidence is the same tension which is at the heart of the work of CDI, in balancing a local focus with a national one. It striving to generate evidence and learning for consumption and utilisation at a national level, CDI was always – and continues to be – required to look beyond the boundaries of Tallaght West. In so doing, the tension between such a position and local desires regarding service provision sustainability remains for the moment largely unresolved.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the points set out above, the evaluation team makes two sets of recommendations.

The evaluation team recommends:

- CDI brings clarity to its work through defining and developing a shared understanding with its stakeholders of the terms mainstreaming, dissemination and, especially, sustainability, for its future activities.
- The CDI Board reconsiders its local goals regarding sustainability in the context of its national work towards implementation and replication of evidence-based and evidence-informed practices.
- CDI brings the failure of particular government departments/sections of government departments to engage with it to the attention of relevant politicians.
- CDI maintains its focus on mainstreaming and dissemination, particularly in light of the Government's commitment to implement area-based responses to child poverty between now and 2016.

Furthermore, the evaluation team recommends that other organisations interested in undertaking similar activities:

- Recognise that mainstreaming and dissemination is a key function of an organisational leader, and should be prioritised at the highest levels of, as well as throughout, the organisation.
- Give attention to the key issues involved in mainstreaming and dissemination, strategically, structurally and operationally, as CDI has done.
- Be resolute in being faithful to what the evidence says, and the resulting decisions required around decommissioning services.

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In 2008 the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (CFRC) was contracted by the Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) to undertake a process evaluation of its work. The evaluation consists of a series of six thematic-focussed reports and an overall final report. This report is the sixth in the series. The list of reports is as follows:

1. Review of the Origins and Strategy Development of CDI;
2. Working Together and Service Integration aspects of CDI;
3. CDI Experience Impacting on Training and Support of Managers and Practitioners;
4. CDI's Organisational Processes and Relationships;
5. CDI and Community Engagement;
6. CDI, Mainstreaming, Dissemination and Sustainability.

## 1.2 AIM AND OVERARCHING EVALUATION QUESTIONS

As with all elements of the process evaluation, CFRC liaised with CDI in January 2012 to clarify the precise scope of work for this theme and assess the appropriateness of the proposed evaluation questions. This occurred in January 2012. As a result, the following aim was identified as key to the research for this report:

- To examine the role of sustainability, mainstreaming, and dissemination in the work of CDI.

Further to this aim, the main questions that inform the research for this report were agreed as follows:

1. What has been the strategy regarding informing Government thinking, policy making, and specifically curriculum development?
2. How aware is the Irish Government of CDI learning emanating from the interim evaluation reports, final evaluation reports, and the overall experience of CDI as it was being implemented?
3. What did CDI do to ensure learning was heard at policy level in the period before the finalisation of service evaluation reports, and in the absence of outcome data or interim process findings?
4. What has CDI done in the period since the finalisation of these reports?
5. What has CDI done to promote the mainstreaming of its experience?
6. What plans have been put in place to ensure sustainability [in the short and long term]?

These questions were agreed with CDI in January 2012, with the period being examined by the research team being from mid-2007 – March 2013.

## 1.3. METHODOLOGY

The report adopts what Hesse-Biber (2010, p.3) has called a multi-method approach, described as “the mixing of methods by combining two or more qualitative methods in a single research study [...] or by using two or more quantitative methods in a single research study”. Here, a multi-method qualitative approach has been deployed. Each particular method is outlined below:

### *Literature Review: Mainstreaming, Dissemination and Sustainability*

The summary of the literature review briefly outlines the context in which evidence-based policy and practice emerged before outlining definitions of key terminology relating to this evaluation theme. It proceeds to present different models of policy-research relationships existing in the literature, as well as specific mechanisms used to disseminate evidence and learning. It concludes by identifying constraining and facilitating factors regarding research use.

### *Documentary analysis*

All documents identified as pertinent by the process evaluation team, with the support of CDI, were reviewed. These documents are outlined in Appendix Four.

### Interviews

The evaluation team initially proposed to undertake twenty-two interviews for this report, resulting in 18 interviews in February and March of 2012 (four individuals declined requests for interview). A second round of interviews was conducted in February 2013, which took into account the finalisation of a number of service reports and related dissemination activities, and additional funding being secured by CDI. In total, 29 individual and two group interviews were conducted over the two rounds of data collection, involving 27 different participants (see Table 1 below). One individual was interviewed three times, with four other individuals participating twice. Interview data is given great weight in the report, as interviewees are key stakeholders in the CDI process, with the vast majority of them having sustained, direct experience in advising and/or shaping the course of CDI's activities regarding mainstreaming, dissemination and sustainability, or in these areas more generally.

**Table 1: Numbers of Staff/Stakeholders interviewed**

	No. Of Interviewees across both rounds of data collection
Funders	4 members
CDI Team	10 members
CDI Board	4 members
Implementation Support Group	5 members
Consortium	1 member
CES	3 members

### Data Analysis

Analysis of both documents and interviews was thematic in nature (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Bryman, 2008), and utilised both inductive and deductive techniques (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Some of the themes searched for in the data were pre-determined by literature relating to the focus of the research, while others emerged from the data itself on further interrogation. Such a process permitted patterns of data to be identified through reading and re-reading of text, allowing both descriptive and analytical accounts of CDI activities to be developed.

### Presentation of Findings

It should be noted that, given the small pool of potential research participants and the report's audience, quotes are not assigned to categories of interview participants (e.g. Board interviewee 1, Team interviewee 3 and so on) so as to protect the identity of participants. Where the evaluation team felt that particular quotes would result in a particular participant being identified, no attribution was ascribed to the quote.

## 1.4 ISSUES AND LIMITATIONS

The main limitation in this report is the absence of particular voices in the qualitative data. Despite numerous attempts by the research team, representatives from the Department of Education and Skills declined to participate in the research. These included one official from the Early Years Unit, and three current officials and one former official from the Social Inclusion Unit. In addition, a senior official from the Department of Health, a senior official from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and one philanthropic representative declined to participate in the research. These decisions not to participate somewhat impeded the evaluation team's ability to gather as wide a set of perspectives on CDI's mainstreaming and dissemination activities as initially desired, particularly from a set of people with more remote involvement in CDI. In this regard, while there is external data pertaining to CDI's activities, the report is largely reliant on internal data and is thus mainly an internal report.

## 1.5 OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

Following this introduction, Chapter Two provides a short summary of the main concepts pertaining to the theme of the report drawn from the literature review. Chapter Three is the first of two data chapters and details findings relating to perspectives on terminology, and CDI's strategic activities and processes relating to mainstreaming and dissemination. Chapter Four presents findings relating to CDI's specific mainstreaming actions, sustainability and the strengths and challenges encountered in its work. Finally, Chapter Five presents a discussion and recommendations for consideration.



**Chapter 2:**  
**SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW**

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The need for policy and practice to be informed by high quality evidence has been widely recognised in recent years (Little *et al*, 2005 cited in Arney *et al*, 2009). However, the ‘delivery’ of such evidence to the policy and practice spheres goes much deeper than simply the dissemination of research, and can often require a strong focus on implementation mechanisms to produce the best outcomes for children and families (Eccles, 2009). Indeed, the way in which research, policy and practice can interact with each other has the potential to shape efforts to improve outcomes (Best & Holmes, 2010). Moreover, proof of the extent of the effectiveness of the work of complex sets of interventions, such as Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs), has the ability to impact on the functioning of such initiatives, their funding, services, programmes, and projects, as well as extended into broader national policy concerning children, families and communities.

## 2.2 CONTEXT

Born in the health sciences and adopted by social science, researchers and policy makers have become concerned with generating evidence to improve policy and practice (MacDonald, 1999 cited in Canavan *et al*, 2009). This is no different in Ireland, especially regarding policies and services for children and young people. The *National Strategy for Data and Research on Children’s Lives 2011 – 2016* aims to work towards the development of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the collection, compilation and dissemination of research and data on children and young people. An explicit objective of this strategy is to support and promote maximum use of existing information. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) is recognised as an important infrastructure through which evidence can be at the centre of policy and practice around children’s lives (DCYA, 2011).

## 2.3 WHY USE RESEARCH IN POLICY MAKING

Sanderson (2002) highlights that in policy making, research evidence can be used in two different ways. Firstly, it can promote accountability through providing information on the performance of government or government funded services, as well as providing a rationale for future roll out (Dynarski, 2007). Secondly, it can “promote improvement through more effective policies and programmes – evidence of how well such policies and programmes ‘work’ in different circumstances” (Sanderson, 2002, p.3).

Boaz and Nutley (2009) identify four particular ways in which research can be used:

- To design and develop public policies;
- To assess the impact of policy interventions;
- To improve policy implementation; and
- To identify tomorrow’s issues.

## 2.4 TERMINOLOGY

### 2.4.1 EVIDENCE

Evidence is a contested term. The growing interest in the role of evidence in the policy process prompts consideration of what is meant by the term ‘evidence’. It can take the form of any piece of information drawn from any one of a range of different sources (Nutley and Webb, 2000). However, a narrower definition emerges when discussing the use of evidence in policy, namely that which is research-based, statistical, evaluative, expert-driven and empirical (i.e. in the form of research findings) (Martson and Watts, 2003, p. 145; Culyer and Lomas, 2006, cited in Nutley *et al*, 2007).

The related term knowledge can also lack clarity. For some (Martson and Watts, 2003), knowledge is merely the act of interpreting evidence. Nutley *et al* (2007) posit that knowledge is something which can be empirical (often derived from quantitative and qualitative research studies); theoretical, informed by informal or intuitive thinking (and sometimes but not always informed by research); or experiential (craft or tacit knowledge built up from experience), and often a combination of some or all three. In this regard, then, knowledge is something greater than simply research evidence. It implies incorporation of forms of evidence in a process of interpretation, imbued with politics and power, under a guise of rationality in determining decisions arrived at.



## 2.4.2 DISSEMINATION

Viewed as a key element in the knowledge translation continuum, Wilson *et al* (2010, p.2) define dissemination “as a planned process that involves consideration of target audiences and the settings in which research findings are to be received, and where appropriate, communicating and interacting with wider policy and health service audiences in ways that will facilitate research uptake in decision-making processes and practice”. Similarly, Kiefer *et al* (2005, p.14) describe dissemination as “an active and strategically planned process whereby new and existing knowledge, interventions or practices are spread”. However, Nutley *et al* (2007, p. 132) simply describe it as “circulating or presenting research findings to potential users, in formats that may be more or less tailored to their target audience”.

## 2.4.3. MAINSTREAMING

A definition of mainstreaming, which is consistent with CDI’s mainstreaming activities over the course of its implementation as observed by the evaluation team, is that devised by Area Development Management (ADM). It defines mainstreaming as “the transfer of learning from a pilot initiative into government policy, practices, processes or funding of programmes” (cited in Pobal, 2006, p. 99; see also Flatley, 1999). It was adopted by Pobal in 2006 to inform the work of RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning Investment and Development) and community-based initiatives involved in service integration partnerships, hence the evaluation team feels this is an appropriate definition to use in the analysis of findings and drawing of conclusions for this report. It is also important to note that it is similar to DCYA’s recently published definition, which defines mainstreaming as “the process of integrating individual programmes and practices into existing (universal) services in education, health, social services etc,” (2013, p. 4).

## 2.4.4. IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE

Increased awareness of the potential of evidence-informed and evidence-based policies and practices has been accompanied in recent years with a renewed interest in *how* such policies and practices are put into action, or *implemented*. Implementation research is thus defined as the “scientific study of methods to promote systematic uptake of research findings and other evidence-based practices into routine practice, and, hence, to improve the quality and effectiveness of health services” (Eccles and Mittman 2007, p. 1). It is concerned with identifying what is required to “transmit” proven practices to a range of services in a number of sectors (Fixsen *et al*, 2009). It is linked with quality improvement, defined as “systematic, data-guided activities designed to bring about immediate improvement” (Lynn *et al*, 2007), but is distinct in that implementation research is concerned with producing generalisable knowledge rather than locally applicable knowledge (Madon *et al*, 2007; Bhattacharyya, Reeves and Zwarenstein 2009).

## 2.5 MODELLING RESEARCH-POLICY RELATIONSHIPS

There has been a significant amount of scholarship in recent years which has sought to explore the relationship between research and policy (Nutley and Webb, 2000). The characteristics of three different models are outlined in the table below, with more details on each provided in the appendix.

**Table 2: Models of Research – Policy of Relationships**

Models	Language	Key assumptions
<b>Linear</b>	Dissemination	Knowledge is a product
	Diffusion	The key process is a handoff from research producers to research users
	Knowledge transfer	Knowledge is generalisable across contexts
	Knowledge uptake	Degree of use is a function of effective packaging
Models	Language	Key assumptions
<b>Relationship</b>	Knowledge exchange	Knowledge comes from multiple sources—research, theory, and practice
		The key process is interpersonal, involving social relationships—networks of research producers and research consumers who collaborate throughout the knowledge production-synthesis-integration cycle
		Degree of use is a function of effective relationships and processes
Models	Language	Key assumptions
<b>Systems</b>	Knowledge integration	The knowledge cycle is tightly woven within priorities, culture, and context
		Explicit and tacit knowledge need to be integrated to inform decision-making and policy
		Relationships mediate throughout the cycle, and must be understood from a systems perspective, in the context of the organisation and its strategic processes
		Degree of use is a function of effective integration with the organisation(s) and its systems

Best *et al*, 2008.

In **linear models**, evidence is understood to inform decision-making in a one way process: research is handed over. This suggests that researchers produce research that is disseminated to policy makers and then incorporated into policy. The research is seen as a product generalisable across contexts and its use depends on how it is packaged (Best *et al*, 2008, cited in Best & Holmes, 2010, p. 146). **Relational models** emphasise the interpersonal relationships between producers and users of evidence. Research use is dependent on the quality and function of these relationships. These models incorporate linear models' principles for dissemination and diffusion and then focus on interactions, sharing the knowledge and developing partnerships and networks (Graham *et al*, 2006; Lomas, 2007 cited in Best & Holmes, 2010, p. 147). Finally, in **systems models**, research use is viewed as a dynamic process. Systems models recognise the structures and systems that shape the interactions in the research-policy relationship. This approach acknowledges that diffusion and dissemination processes and relationships are shaped, embedded and organised through structures that influence the interactions (Best & Holmes, 2010). Lomas (1997; 2000) re-conceptualises research and policy as processes rather than products, where several opportunities for mutual influence can occur and the environment and contexts also have a bearing on this (Nutley *et al*, 2007).

## 2.6 SPECIFIC MECHANISMS TO ENHANCE RESEARCH UTILISATION

Nutley *et al* (2007; 2009), refining earlier work by Walter *et al* (2003) from the ESRC-sponsored Research Unit for Research Utilisation (RURU), developed a five-fold taxonomy of research use interventions in order to identify particular mechanisms which organisations can use when trying to ensure research use. For these authors, dissemination only forms one element of this taxonomy, with other activities being ascribed to different elements. The five elements are:

- Dissemination: circulating or presenting research findings to potential users in formats tailored to audiences;
- Interaction: developing stronger links between the research, policy and practice communities;
- Social influence: relying on influential others, like experts or peers, to inform individuals about research and to persuade them of its value;
- Facilitation: enabling the use of research through technical, financial, organisational and emotional support; and
- Incentives and reinforcements: using rewards and other forms of control to reinforce appropriate behaviour.

Table 3 below outlines the various mechanisms under each element which can be deployed to potentially enhance the use of research evidence (Nutley *et al*, 2007, pp.132-150):

**Table 3: Mechanisms to enhance research use**

Category	Characteristics	Mechanisms	Benefits
<b>Dissemination</b>	Assumes passive, one-way flow of information; consumers as relatively passive recipients. Closely aligned to rational-linear models of research utilisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written materials, such as reports, leaflets, guidelines, as well as audiotapes, video, interactive CD-ROMs;</li> <li>• Presentations at conferences, workshops and seminars.</li> </ul>	Dissemination alone is not effective in promoting uptake, but can increase awareness and knowledge of research. Discursive-type approaches can have more impact.
<b>Interaction</b>	Two-way flows of information between researchers and users. Better understanding, knowledge and access to research, and to users, is gained. Research is negotiated and adapted to context. Closely aligned with relationship models of research utilisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of research-user partnerships, with on-going linkages and the co-production of knowledge;</li> <li>• Research users undertaking elements of the research themselves.</li> </ul>	Gains in skills, knowledge, and understanding are reported. However, significant amounts of time, energy and finance expended.
<b>Social influence</b>	Key influencers in practice mainly, but also policy, such as colleagues, opinion leaders, role models and champions, who can convince others of the merits of research utilisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice meetings, with the chance for colleagues to discuss findings' impact for practice;</li> <li>• Interactive and participatory teaching approaches;</li> <li>• Guidance and feedback on practice development;</li> <li>• Informal learning opportunities;</li> <li>• Engaging with service users directly to influence practice (e.g. patient mediated interventions or representative associations).</li> </ul>	Show promise, in that they understand the importance of internal processes in organisations (peer-to-peer support for example).

Category	Characteristics	Mechanisms	Benefits
<b>Facilitation</b>	Providing a range of supports to improve uptake of research. These supports can be technical, financial, organisational and/or emotional. They emphasise the importance of change management processes, and align with systems models of research utilisation. More closely aligned with systems model of research utilisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional Development opportunities aimed at enhancing skills and motivation to access, interpret and apply research, making individuals more receptive to linear dissemination activities;</li> <li>Educational interventions informing of new practices (e.g. local workshops, development of practice guidelines, briefs, frameworks and tools);</li> <li>More generally, investment in training and support by organisations.</li> </ul>	Direct changes in practice have been observed as a result of some of these mechanisms; changes at the policy level have not been as widely assessed.
<b>Incentives and reinforcement</b>	Strategies involving use of incentives for research utilisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit, feedback and reminders of evidence-based practice;</li> <li>Funding incentives for organisations;</li> <li>Making use of research explicit in job descriptions and performance management regimes.</li> </ul>	Evidence is mixed regarding the positive impact of incentive and enforcement strategies on research use.

## 2.7 FACILITATING AND CONSTRAINING FACTORS IN RESEARCH USE

A range of factors are identifiable in the literature regarding what facilitates and constrains research use in policy and practice. These factors are outlined below.

### 2.7.1 FIT-FOR-PURPOSE STRATEGIES

Being cognisant of dissemination needs and undertaking appropriate planning and resourcing has been cited as an important consideration in publicising research findings (APRE, 2010; CARE, n.d.; Mitton *et al*, 2007). Further to this, carefully designed strategies that reflect an understanding of the research and policy processes are necessary to engender research use. The quality, user friendliness and presentation of research can impact either positively or negatively on its subsequent use. This reflects the importance of the communication mechanism and the 'fit' between evidence and the identified policy issues (Nutley *et al*, 2007).

### 2.7.2 EDUCATING PRACTITIONERS AND POLICY ACTORS

Increasing skills of relevant actors supports the dissemination process and the use of research. Offering support, such as organisational, technical, financial and practical assistance, can improve the uptake of research as users become more enabled in their efforts. One way of doing this is through seminars or workshops that enable some discussion with potential users and skill enhancement, or which adopt a more collaborative approach, as they seem to be the most effective methods of dissemination for both policy makers and practitioners (for example, Shanley *et al*, 1996; Bogenschneider and Corbett, 2010; Norman, 2004, cited in Nutley *et al*, 2007).

### 2.7.3 RECOGNISING THE COSTS

The issue of costs, both in human and financial terms, cannot be ignored. Building relationships, developing plans and reaching agreements imposes costs on each party (Canavan *et al*, 2009).

### 2.7.4 INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL MINDSETS

Mind-sets also play a role. Factors that appeared to encourage research use by individuals are personal interest and motivation. Conversely, a sense that decision making is best based on individual professional judgement can also have a bearing (Hughes *et al*, 2000; Buckley & Whelan, 2009).

### 2.7.5 TIMELY AND RELEVANT FOR POLICY MAKERS

For research to be effective it needs to be timely and relevant (Leviton and Hughes, 1981; Innvær *et al*, 2002; Lyall *et al*, 2004; Ritter, 2009; Bogenschneider and Corbett, 2010). It needs to be framed in a manner which anticipates what the policymakers want and need, as policy makers work to quite rigid timescales and need relevant information at short notice. The research must be easily accessible and at the fingertips of the policymakers (Lavis *et al*, 2005 cited in Nutley *et al*, 2007).

### 2.7.6 POWER AND POLITICS

The policy process is an inherently political process, often in conflict with rational policymaking. As O'Connor (1995) states, "no matter how rigorous the scientific method, evaluative evidence will play only a limited – and sometimes unpredictable – role in determining the political fate of social programmes. In the past, decisions about community-based initiatives – or about welfare reform, for that matter – have been driven not, primarily by science but by the values, ideologies, and political interests of the major constituencies involved" (p.57-58). An appreciation of the role of particular stakeholders, and the power (im)balances between them, is required.

### 2.7.7 VALIDITY AND CREDIBILITY OF RESEARCH

In line with the challenges of mainstreaming, the unit of research informing policy should rarely be the single study but should be the summary and synthesis of knowledge across the entire spectrum of stages in the process (Lomas, 2000). Thus, in approaching the policy making field, the knowledge requirements for effective social policy and effective service organisation go far wider than just 'what works' (Ebklom, 2002 cited in Davies & Powell, 2010). Research must be set in context, verified and built on.

### 2.7.8 LEADERSHIP

Picciotto (2001) identified a lack of leadership as a major obstacle to mainstreaming (cited in Williams & Hawkes, 2003). Leaders provide motivation, influence, reach out and provide links. Nominating key personnel to lead, plan and implement strategies to expose research creates obligations and responsibility.

### 2.7.9 TARGET-APPROPRIATE DISSEMINATION MECHANISMS

There is a need to ensure that research is delivered in a credible, relevant way. Dissemination can occur via a number of formats such as written reports, articles and summaries; audio tapes and oral presentations at conferences, workshops and seminars; visual posters and DVD's; and through the utilisation of new technologies (Watson *et al*, 2012). Oral presentations have been shown to have a small additive impact on practice change in the healthcare settings (Freemantle *et al*, 2002 cited in Nutley *et al*, 2007). Walter *et al* (2004) recommend active dissemination along with enabling discussions about the meaning and application of findings (cited in Buckley & Whelan, 2009). Hence, the interpretation of research should be guided.

## 2.8 SUMMARY

As has been outlined in this summary, terminology associated with the use of research in policy is not clear and often contested. Potentially mirroring such contestation, there are different ways in which the policy-research relationship can be conceptualised, with a range of potential mechanisms available to disseminate evidence and knowledge into the policy process. In addition, it is clear that this work is not without its challenges, which can serve to impede the use of evidence in policy and practice. As shall be seen in the following two Chapters, such contestation regarding terminology, the use of different mechanisms to disseminate evidence, and the challenges in using evidence, all resonate with CDI's experience.



## **Chapter 3:**

**PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS ON TERMINOLOGY DEFINITIONS,  
CDI STRUCTURES AND ROLES, AND MAINSTREAMING AND  
SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES AND PROCESSES**

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the first of two which presents integrated findings from documentary analysis and interviews undertaken, as outlined in the methodology section of chapter one. It begins with evidence on participants' understandings of various terms relating to the evaluation theme being examined. It then proceeds to describe and evidence the roles of particular CDI structures in its mainstreaming and dissemination work, before detailing the specific strategies developed and processes adopted by CDI in sharing its experience. The chapter concludes with a short summary.

### 3.2 MAIN TERMS

CDI has had a strategic focus on mainstreaming from early in its implementation phase. As this phase progressed, the Initiative's understanding of the term evolved and broadened to include other terms such as replication and sustainability. Definitions of these terms are contested by participants. There is more agreement, however, on the meaning of the term dissemination, its central place in the work of CDI, and the importance of trying to impact policy and practice with its learning.

In the course of the research a number of key terms were regularly used by interviewees: mainstreaming, sustainability, replication and dissemination. These terms have oriented the activities and strategic planning of CDI over the organisation's lifetime and are outlined below.

#### 3.2.1 MAINSTREAMING

Mainstreaming has been part of CDI's agenda from the beginning (Interviewees 4, 14, 17). As identified in CDI's strategy (2005) and the AP funding proposal (2011), CDI's plan for mainstreaming involved:

*"Identifying structures, mechanisms and practice tools which enable the extended delivery of CDI programmes beyond Tallaght West, in other locations which have identified relevant needs [...] Maximising opportunities through which to influence and shape policy, curriculum development and professional training and support,"*

(Funding proposal to the Atlantic Philanthropies, April 2011, p.8).

CDI's Communication Strategy (2010) was developed to cover the period from June 2010 to December 2011. The primary objectives were to secure the support and funding for the bridging phase (2012) and secure funding for the second phase of CDI's work, which focused on mainstreaming. Its secondary objectives were to inform and engage all stakeholders, share the learning, and influence policy, curriculum and service delivery. In this document, mainstreaming is defined as "sustaining the current level of provision in Tallaght West, extending this provision to other appropriate locations, and integrate the learning into policy, practice and curriculum" (p.8).

In CDI's 2011 Annual Report, the term mainstreaming refers to the following activities:

- Ensuring the sustainability of those services established by CDI in Tallaght West, which appear to be effectively meeting a need;
- Maximising opportunities through which to influence and shape policy, curriculum development and professional training and support;
- Identifying structures, mechanisms and practice tools which enable the extended delivery of CDI programmes beyond Tallaght West, into other disadvantaged locations which have identified relevant needs.

It is clear from interview findings that there are nuances, as well as clear differences, in the term "mainstreaming" as used by different stakeholders. In addition to finding a home for the service elements, interviewees believe that mainstreaming is concerned with changing "business as usual" (interviewee 24), sharing learning from its research activities with statutory and other organisations (interview 1), and incorporating such learning into "mainstream" programme and service provision, in Tallaght and elsewhere (interviewee 3).



In addition, mainstreaming is broadly used in interviews to refer to: sustaining programmes in Tallaght West, rolling entire programmes out nationally, replicating only those aspects of the programmes proven independently to be effective, or rolling out learning from the programmes that can inform current best practice and impact on the delivery of successful outcomes for children and families. Interviewees generally refer to mainstreaming to indicate the full range of activities, plans and strategies undertaken to “stitch” (Interviewee 28) or “dock” (interviewee 22) service elements that have been shown to produce positive outcomes for children into existing mainstream service provision, government policy and strategies.

For others again, mainstreaming is an umbrella term that includes others, such as sustainability and replication, defined below. Mainstreaming also has a strategic aspect of informing policy and practice in general as well as promoting a collaborative approach to mainstreaming activities (interviewees 24, 27). Thus in practice mainstreaming and dissemination are not easily separated (interviewee 25).

*“I try and avoid using the word mainstreaming because I think there is a lack of clarity about what it means and I think sometimes people think that it means that, for example, every school in the country will have this programme so that it becomes a core part of what we deliver to children. And I think that’s very scary for civil servants or people in the public sector ... so I try and avoid using that. So that’s why we talk about sustainability and replication”*

(interviewee 4)

**Sustainability** refers to an “on-going commitment from the agencies to working in the new way” (interviewee 19), changing business as usual (interviewee 23), or about how to continue funding (interviewee 21), or the “long-term delivery of a programme” (interviewee 22) “without the original energies and resources” of CDI (interviewee 24). For some participants, sustainability is clearly linked to mainstreaming, in that the latter involves sustaining services in Tallaght West (interviewee 2, interviewee 1), while for others it is about “structures that are put into place in a programme [enable] it to continue after the mother organisation has pulled out” (interviewee 20).

**Replication** is an aspect of mainstreaming that funders and CDI both see as important. Following the implementation phase of the services, CDI has focussed on evaluations being finalised, launched, discussed among stakeholders and disseminated. Before CDI is able to move into the broader mainstreaming phase, establishing its “wider footprint” (interviewee 4), the opportunity exists to replicate some of their work in other areas, “to learn how the programmes of the service offerings work in different situations” (interviewee 13). For CDI, therefore, replication involves documenting its experience and locating a space to use this experience to work in a “supportive or mentoring type role” (interviewee 20). The “replicability” of service elements can further prove the evidence base for mainstreaming “I think you can see in some evaluations an issue with replicability in the sense that you just wouldn’t find this effect again” (Interviewee 16). In this respect, the opportunities to roll out Doodle Den in Limerick and the 2012 budgetary allocation for the new area-based responses to child poverty are timely for CDI to establish and test the steps for replication of service elements and the broader learning involved in change management, changing business as usual with a focus on making change evidence-based and faithful to the “philosophy” of CDI (interviewee 27).

### 3.2.2 DISSEMINATION

Interviewees refer broadly to “communications” to bring together a number of dissemination activities that effect a “deliberate sharing of information, done with a plan” (interviewee 6). Communications is considered to be a distinct set of activities, for instance involved in fostering a broader awareness of CDI or related to two-way communications activities (interviewee 24). Dissemination then is understood to be concerned with identifying and targeting key audiences to share information by sending “well-crafted briefs”, “identifying channels of communication” (interviewee 20), and ‘sharing the learning” (interviewee 16), “what works, what doesn’t work. Getting that into the wider arena both for impact in policy and impact service delivery” (interviewee 27). Spreading the learning also involves influencing curricula, for instance in in-service training for teachers (interviewee 19). It also involves understanding that for CDI an Internet presence, through websites, and a social media presence is important in dissemination via podcasts, Facebook and Twitter (interviewee 20, 21).

### 3.3 CDI STRUCTURES AND THEIR ROLE IN MAINSTREAMING

CDI has used existing and new structures to progress its mainstreaming and sustainability work throughout its implementation. The CDI Board particularly, as well as the ISG, have been engaged in various aspects of the mainstreaming work since 2007, as have members of the CDI Team. New structures have also been developed, especially as service evaluations moved towards completion, to prepare strategically for the next phase of work, as well as operationally.

This section details the key structures that have helped to drive CDI's mainstreaming and dissemination agenda following a broadly chronological approach. This section discusses the Board, the ISG, the EAC and the CDI Team, which have been important throughout the implementation phase. More recently formed structures, the Management Team and the Communications Sub-committee, have come into being as CDI has moved into a new iteration of its work and are subsequently discussed. Other advisory committees have been organised to support CDI's agenda around the promotion of some service elements and are included in the last part of this section.

#### 3.3.1 BOARD

The Board of CDI has a number of representatives from academic, voluntary and statutory sectors, community representatives from Tallaght West and a communications consultant (see Report 2) and has been a key driver of CDI's mainstreaming agenda during the implementation phase. Mainstreaming was discussed in Board meetings from November 2007 when Board members identified the lack of a mainstreaming strategy from the OMCYA and the need to address that matter with other PEIP sites. CDI invited the funders to meet with service providers in relation to mainstreaming. In December 2008, the Board noted that one challenge of that year had pertained to questions regarding mainstreaming and continuing services beyond the life of the project. The Board acknowledged that CDI needed to identify what to mainstream in terms of policy, training, supports, service provision and working in a different way. Board members discussed the extent to which CDI needed to wait for evaluation findings before starting promotion/mainstreaming. It was also noted that CDI needed to maximise opportunities for learning from the process evaluation aspects through journal articles and presentations.

The Board examined and discussed various issues relating to dissemination to stakeholders and its potential impact from very early on (Board report, September 2009). The service evaluations were understood to be key to CDI's work, and much reflection went into how to disseminate the evaluation results, and how to manage negative findings or publicity. Sustainability of services was also discussed during Board meetings from as early as 2009 (Board meeting, April 2009). Considerations were given to CDI's role if services were to continue, the ability of these services to stand alone, and the available local support to help them do so. Board members also reflected on maintaining quality services without CDI's support.

Mainstreaming was a key focus in the November 2009 meeting between the Board, ISG, and CDI team regarding the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) Consultation document (see below) and AP Proposal produced by CDI. Topics discussed included:

- Identifying key contacts and increasing awareness of CDI's work;
- Ensuring more combined activity between CDI and other service providers in Phase II;
- The importance of incorporating the learning across the three demonstration sites into Government policy;
- The need for CDI to reach into statutory organisations about their plans and strategies;
- The funders' commitment/lack of commitment to long-term goals and financial support; and
- Questions relating to what to do next, who to engage with, how to move forward.

Board meetings throughout 2010 addressed strategic plan development for Phase II. In February 2011, the Board questioned CDI's capacity to extend services beyond Tallaght West with local services facing major funding challenges. It recognised that while comprehensive services are ideal, context (e.g. needs) might require targeted delivery. CDI also prepared a document for, and discussed it with, the OMCYA to obtain their commitment to support sustainability (Board Report, September 2011).

A major challenge discussed during a Board meeting in July 2010 was the gap between the timing of evaluation findings and the requirements for the Initiative's mainstreaming and dissemination work. Another challenge discussed during this meeting and an ISG meeting in September was collaboration among PEIP sites. The Board noted the mismatch of timelines across PEIP sites (December 2011). From November 2011, the Centre for Effective Services (CES) was identified as having a key role supporting collaboration between PEIP sites regarding communications and dissemination.

In 2011, CDI focussed on maintaining a level of provision in Tallaght West, with the support of Atlantic Philanthropies. Board members (Board meeting, February 2011) mentioned CDI's responsibility towards the community and service providers to maintain some services until evaluation results were received. CDI's commitment to inform policy was also highlighted. CDI started preparing a budget proposal allowing for a minimum of services. Numerous discussions in the Board examined the level of community need, potential reduction of services and the subsequent impact on the community.

In November 2011, a representative of Start Strong attended the Board meeting in order to share expertise in relation to influencing policy. Members discussed identifying policy makers, supporters, and other audiences, ways to develop a relevant communication strategy, the importance of linking CDI's work/findings to national policy such as the comprehensive spending review, as well as highlighting local learning and linking it with international research. In December 2011, it was decided that the Board's efforts would be more effective if it focused on one or two key issues. The Board chose to discuss the funders' role regarding sustainability and the community survey. More specifically, concerns were raised regarding developing sustainability plans with the DCYA and their commitment to doing so.

In January 2012, the CEO report identified possible links with the CES Capturing the Learning project and the Dissemination Initiative on Prevention and Early Intervention (DIPEI). With the launching of several evaluation results, the Board began to switch its focus more on the future of mainstreaming and learning emerging from the evaluations. The Board devoted time to strategic planning, and worked in facilitated sessions with funders, for instance, to set the "priorities and key objectives" for CDI over 2012 and for 2013.

The Board kept a focus on finalising reports and process evaluations throughout 2012, working to identify suitable replication sites for the services and noting longitudinal studies being planned for service elements. A number of Implementation Guides have been developed for services, which will support replication. A continued emphasis was placed on consolidating communications activities and agreeing key messages relating to winding down of services, including reviewing policy briefs emerging from evaluation findings. Emerging messages were housed in the communications and dissemination plan (see below), which was reviewed at every meeting. The Board was kept aware of a number of representations and meetings between government departments, organisations, local politicians and CDI. The Board and CDI have explored opportunities to locate service elements such as Doodle Den, the SLT and the PCF in other services.

### **3.3.2. THE IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT GROUP (ISG)**

The ISG discussed the sustaining of elements of CDI programmes deemed effective during 2011, while it discussed mainstreaming with the Board at the 2011 AGM. The ISG's Terms of Reference were amended in line with Phase II<sup>1</sup>. As presented during the September 2011 ISG meeting, Phase II has two elements: one year of reduced service delivery and two years to receive, interpret and disseminate evaluation reports, influence policy, and replicate services. The ISG comprised a new role "to support the learning, implementation and dissemination of the CDI strategy in order to deliver sustainable responses to identified needs which promote positive outcomes for children and families, and the community" (ISG TOR, 2011). Other changes emphasised a stronger focus on CDI's evaluation learning and the dissemination of the strategy in Tallaght West and beyond.

Factors impacting service mainstreaming and sustainability were highlighted during the ISG meeting in December 2011 and included: findings from evaluations, the role of the Children Services Committee (CSC), the role of CDI funders in supporting these discussions with key stakeholders, the link between the ISG and the CDI Board and how to maximise the support and local experience.

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<sup>1</sup> CDI documentation indicates that Phase II denotes one year of reduced service provision and two years of mainstreaming, dissemination and replication.

### 3.3.3 CDI TEAM

A central structure for the promotion of CDI's messages is the CDI team itself. The team is led by the Management Team, which was established in 2011 (see Appendix Five for the Management Team's Terms of Reference). The Management Team is composed of the CEO, the Research and Policy Manager and the Strategy and Corporate Services Manager. It looks at overall issues arising, addresses team communication and examines new procedures or policies. The Management Team also addresses challenges such as staff turnover, morale and funding issues (interviewee 24). Members meet regularly to discuss mainstreaming and dissemination issues and sit on other structures, e.g. CDI Board, the website working group and the Communications Sub-Committee (interviewee 25).

Interviewees have identified the lack of a continuous communications person within CDI throughout the implementation phase as an issue affecting the organisation's ability to maximise communication activities. One interviewee contrasted Young Ballymun's approach to communication, with consistent communications resourcing, resulting in Young Ballymun's inclusion in the 2011 Programme for Government. Losing the research officer as evaluation findings were emerging and the overall loss of "corporate" or "common" memory are understood by CDI to represent challenges for the organisation. The establishment of the Communications Sub-Committee, hiring a communications co-ordinator and the finalisation of the Communications Action Plan have all helped to ameliorate these issues. The Communications Coordinator has been employed since March 2012 and has driven the public profile of the organisation, both for policy audiences and for broader media presence. The position's responsibility is also to develop CDI's online presence, and with other members develop the Communications Action Plan that informs the activities of the Communications Sub-Committee.

### 3.3.4 COMMUNICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

The predecessor of the Communications Sub-Committee, the Communications Working Group, was responsible for implementing CDI's Communication Strategy, meeting regularly to discuss influencing the Programme for Government (January 2011), working on press releases and identifying PR opportunities. In 2012 the Communications Working Group became established as a Communications Sub-Committee having hired a communications coordinator. This Sub-Committee met four times in 2012, focussing on developing CDI's online presence, through a website and social media, and has written a comprehensive Communications Action Plan. As each evaluation has been finalised, the Communications Sub Committee draws on the Action Plan to identify the policy context for the evaluation, and the key dissemination activities, including primary and secondary audiences. Communications Sub-Committee meetings were perceived by one interviewee to be quite focussed, promoting "lucid communication" to support actions and strategies set at each meeting.

The primary role of the Communications Sub-Committee is outlined below:

- Advise and guide CDI's contracted communications support;
- Oversee the implementation of a communications strategy;
- Review the action plan monthly;
- Advise on progressing the actions;
- Identify potential barriers and solutions;
- Identify and maximise PR opportunities; and
- Encourage collaboration with the two other PEIP sites.

### 3.3.5 OTHER COMMITTEES

#### **The Expert Advisory Committee (EAC)**

The EAC draws together national and international academic expertise to comment upon and guide the research and evaluation strand of CDI. Specifically, its functions include undertaking oversight of all of CDI's evaluation programme, ensuring rigorous standards and high quality through advice and support to CDI, review of results as they are provided to the Initiative, and advice on changes to or adjustment of its research and evaluation programmes. It works to support the CEO around specific evaluations, and reviews reports, evaluations and policy briefs. The EAC takes care to focus on the research, its methodology and implications, paying attention to accuracy and clarity for instance (interviewee 16).

### Other Advisory Committees

- Doodle Den Advisory Committee
- Parent Support in Early Years Advisory Committee
- Speech and Language Therapy Advisory Committee

These advisory committees were put in place in late 2012 to inform the strategic planning of the programmes, and to share learning and developments that would assist each programme's mainstreaming and sustainability as CDI was preparing to wind down its implementation phase and continue its work in a reduced replication phase (Board report October 2012). Each committee had representatives from a range of agency experts and funders. The task of the committee was to review models of best practice for each programme and seek opportunities to share the learning. Each advisory committee met once in December 2012. The terms of reference were still being finalised, however, when CDI decided to put the advisory committees on hold following a proposal by its funders to do so. CDI's involvement in the government's area-based responses to childhood poverty allowed the organisation to reprioritise, focussing on an expanded replication of service elements and mentoring role (Board Minutes December 2012). CDI was informed that a proposed interdepartmental project team, which would have oversight of the area-based responses, would address the intended functions of its own advisory committees. CDI felt that this would streamline oversight while retaining a strategic oversight mechanism to maximise sustainability and mainstreaming. Further, the existence of an interdepartmental project team positioned the responsibility for oversight with an appropriate organisational structure outside of CDI. At the time of writing, CDI is putting in place plans to re-establish the Advisory Committees, as the national structures have not yet begun to consider some of the service specific issues.

### 3.3.6 THE STRATEGIC WORKING GROUP

Initially mooted at a joint Board-ISG meeting in August 2010, the Strategic Working Group (SWG) was established in October 2010 with the aim of discussing, guiding and informing the development of a strategic plan for the post-implementation phase of CDI's work, including the mainstreaming and sustainability activities (Joint ISG-Board Meeting Minutes, August 2010; Annual Report 2010). The SWG was populated by Board, ISG and CDI Team members, with other occasional inputs by external individuals, and met on three occasions between November 2010 and January 2011. The SWG meetings were independently facilitated. Work was undertaken by CDI team members to support the work of the Group. This work, and that of the group, concluded in the development of a strategic planning document submitted to the Board in February 2011 for its consideration. Elements of the document were used as part of the submission to AP for additional funding later in 2011.

## 3.4 CDI STRATEGIES AND PROCESSES

CDI formulated a number of plans and processes to guide its mainstreaming and sustainability work as service evaluations moved towards conclusion. Beginning with a broad consultation document, and a funding proposal, these plans and processes became more focussed and detailed, and central to its work, as epitomised in the Initiative's operational or business plans for 2012 and 2013. These plans were accompanied by focused team processes and a keen awareness of multiple audiences.

Over the course of its work, CDI has guided its strategic work by developing several important documents; the IPA consultation document and AP proposal, the Communications Strategy and Communications Action Plan, Dissemination Plan and, Annual Business Plans. These plans are outlined below as they demonstrate the nature of the strategies adopted by CDI in its mainstreaming, dissemination and sustainability work. Following that, CDI key processes to support its team, drive its mainstreaming agenda and enhance internal communication, and identify relevant audiences for its messages are summarised.

### 3.4.1 STRATEGIES

#### IPA Consultation Document and AP Proposal

The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) provided a Phase II Consultation Report, as described in previous reports (see Appendix 4). This report was used by CDI to develop a proposal for Atlantic Philanthropies (AP). The AP funding proposal comprised a bridging phase (September 2011 to August 2012) and a mainstreaming phase (September 2011 to August 2013). The bridging phase proposed a reduced level of service delivery to sustain existing services, professional expertise and relationships while receiving and interpreting the evaluation results. The mainstreaming phase focused on “extending through existing structures ... CDI programmes which prove effective in and beyond Tallaght West and informing policy and curriculum development and professional training” (AP funding proposal, April 2011, p.8 (see Appendix 7)). In light of the 2012 government budget allocation for area-based responses to childhood poverty, this mainstreaming phase has had an impact on CDI’s original timeline, allowing CDI to repeat programme elements. The budget under this strand was allocated in 2013.

#### Communications Strategy and the Communications Action Plan

The requirement for a communication plan was identified early in CDI’s organisational life and a draft began in January 2008 and proceeded through 2009 and 2010. Board Reports throughout 2008 and 2009 indicate that the preparation and dissemination of monthly newsletters, along with engagement with local media outlets occurred alongside the development of the Communications Strategy. In March 2010, the Public Communications Centre was commissioned to develop and implement a communications strategy, including video case studies. The company undertook a consultation with CDI staff and stakeholders and site visits prior to filming case studies, produced a corporate brochure for CDI and provided media training to CDI staff.

As detailed in Report 5, CDI’s Communication Strategy has had the objective of informing and engaging all stakeholders, to share learning, influence policy curriculum and service delivery (see Appendix 5). It provided a number of recommendations, including the development of four distinct phases with one major event in each, establishing a communication team; developing staff presentation and media skills, an information pack for all key influential audiences; media profile of spokesperson; a new CDI website, DVDs, and improved readability and readership of the newsletters and Annual Reports.

The Communication Strategy was directed at local and policy level. Locally, newsletters and information sessions, evaluation feedback sessions, summer barbeques and volleyball all acted to communicate the presence and activity of CDI:

*“And aligned with the Communication Strategy that they have backed up with the newsletters, the seminars, keep telling people what we are doing what we are trying to achieve and a whole PR and media campaign at the back of that, [...] people are now saying, “yeah, CDI I’ve heard of them and I know what they do”. You have to continue that work. And I think that is going to increase the participation levels as well,”*

(interviewee 8)

In 2012 a Communications Action Plan was drafted to identify communications activities throughout 2012 to Spring 2013. The Communications Sub-Committee drives the Communications Action Plan. The plan evolved over 2012, and is constantly reviewed as policy contexts, and the communication profile and dissemination activities of CDI, change.

The plan identifies policy briefs as a key tool in the dissemination of CDI’s learning from specific evaluation findings. It outlines four broad audience categories to be targeted with the policy briefs and the wider palette of communications tools that CDI has been developing and honing over the last year. These audience categories are: policy, research, community and professional. The plan further elaborates in great detail those individuals and organisations to be addressed and engaged as part of the dissemination plan. The wide range of communication tools at CDI’s disposal, and that fall under the Communications Sub-Committee to oversee and manage, include collaborative efforts within the wider grantee network and presenting and hosting roundtable events. Independent communications include various events and presentations to targeted audiences. The plan highlights the importance of a website, social media and podcast channels of communications as well as engaging traditional media outlets, recruiting ambassadors and keeping in touch with developing policy contexts for their messages.

Members of the Communications Sub-Committee constantly refer back to the Communications Action Plan to help keep them focussed on actionable items (interviewee 21). The weekly team meetings also reference the action plan to monitor targets. The communications action plan is linked back to the Business Plan to ensure the whole team is focussed on the objectives of their day-to-day work (interviewee 22).

### **Dissemination**

The Communications Action Plan includes a comprehensive dissemination timeline that guides CDI's activities and planning. In it, all dissemination activities for 2012 are detailed, including meetings with individual politicians, progress on internet and social media presence, all engagements with potentially important organisations and committees and mentions in media outlets as well as local audiences. Key actions for each evaluation are also outlined: policy context, key activities and audiences. The timeline continued into spring of 2013, outlining opportunities for influencing policy and identifying new targeted audiences.

### **Business plans, 2012 and 2013**

CDI's business plan for 2012 involved maximising the learning from evaluations, preparing to wind down some service elements and secure funding for some elements and positioning other elements in other organisations. The plan was task-oriented and drew from the dissemination timeline to set a comprehensive agenda for replication and dissemination activities.

The 2013 business plan takes into account the increased government funding to develop CDI's thinking around area-based responses to child poverty. As an element to support mainstreaming activities, it guides each team member's action plan (interviewee 24), as well as the development of implementation guides, advisory committees, and accreditation processes. It is regularly referenced at Team and Board meetings to ensure that work is proceeding as planned (Interviewee 28) and guides a number of other plans to ensure that work is progressing. As such, the business plan and communications plan help to maintain a clear line of communication between the CDI team members regarding individual and collective duties (Interviewee 22), while also ensuring that a focus on local sustainability is maintained.

The 2013 plan supports a complete documentation of the CDI experience, to develop key advisory committees for service elements, to develop Implementation Guides and accreditation where appropriate, and to keep a focus on local sustainability. The business plan also looks to developing policy pathways through a variety of communications tools.

## **3.4.2 INTERNAL CDI PROCESSES**

Internal communication is an important part of the CDI experience for the team. CDI incorporates reflective practice into their way of working. Each individual team member has his or her own action plan, which is reviewed regularly and feeds in to the broader Dissemination Plan. The team meets every Monday to ensure that all planned actions are being carried out, that resources are being used and that any issues or problems arising are heard and addressed quickly. This ensures a good and timely information sharing process among team members. The meeting also coordinates communications to make sure that everyone knows CDI's key messages. There is also a weekly email covering the meetings and actionable items arising and the CEO sends regular internal emails providing information, feedback and progress from governance and other meetings.. As well as the weekly meetings, monthly action planning meetings are held. Occasionally there are subgroups or sub meetings that arise to accomplish specific tasks. Individual team members have supervision from the management team to keep on top of how action plans are progressing. The CEO has her own external supervisor as well. CDI has run two residential meetings in 2012 that interviewees report as being of great benefit to them.

## **3.4.3 AUDIENCES**

The Communication Strategy identified key audiences regarding funding and policy that are categorised, in order of priority, as follows: funders (Atlantic Philanthropies, DCYA); key Ministers and advisors; government departments; other priorities (i.e. other Ministers); key policy politicians; other key figures (i.e. academics, media, CES, trade unions); and other possible funders. Other categories of stakeholders to be informed include: political, community, CDI governance and internal, healthcare professionals, and statutory organisations. For the various audiences, the document identifies insights (negatives and positives) and messages.

While the original strategy identified general audiences, the specificity of the audiences emerges from the Communications Action Plan. The Action Plan identifies the audiences as funders, civil servants, sectoral/stakeholders, education, academic, politicians, Joint Oireachtas Committee for Health and Children, Select Oireachtas Sub-committee for Children and Youth Affairs, Joint Oireachtas Committee for Education and Social Protection, CDI Contacts and Local TDs, Political Party Advisors/Directors of Communications, Trade Unions and Social Organisations, Media and Internal [Tallaght West Community]. The Communications Plan further outlines the different approaches to maximise communication with each audience.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined documentary and interview data pertaining to CDI's mainstreaming strategies and processes, the structures and roles which support them, as well as the definitions and understandings of various terms relating to this work. It is clear from these findings that mainstreaming and dissemination has been a central part of the work of CDI since the beginning of its implementation phase. This centrality is reflected in its evolving strategies, structures and processes. However, the issue of the timing of evaluation findings being reported out is significant, as is the lack of agreement on core terminology relating to this work



**Chapter 4:**  
**PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS ON**  
**MAINSTREAMING ACTIONS, SUSTAINABILITY,**  
**STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES**

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to build on the previous one, which outlined CDI's structures, strategies and processes pertaining to mainstreaming and dissemination. It presents findings regarding the specific actions taken by CDI in its attempts to disseminate knowledge and learning from its experience and mainstream it in policy and practice. It then proceeds to outline the perceived identified strengths of the Initiative's activities and the challenges encountered, before data pertaining to CDI's sustainability activities are presented. The chapter concludes with a short summary.

## 4.2 ACTIONS TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING

CDI undertook a range of actions in implementing its mainstreaming plans. Prominent amongst these was engaging strategically with numerous organisations, individuals and audiences, both prior to the release of evaluation findings in preparing the ground, as well as afterwards, to both share the learning and sustain proven elements of CDI services. It has sought to share its experience and expertise with other organisations, as well as the Tallaght West community, by way of a consistent set of messages delivered through a variety of mechanisms.

CDI's work to advance mainstreaming and dissemination of its messages can be categorised as follows: developing strategic relationships with key audiences and partners; evaluation-based actions to promote mainstreaming; and general communications activities to maintain a high profile. This section outlines the audiences and activities in these three areas.

### 4.2.1 DEVELOPING STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS

#### 4.2.1.1 CES, PEIP AND DIPEI

While CDI works independently to disseminate its messages, it also works in collaboration with broader structures. CDI has worked with the other two PEIP sites to become more coordinated in their activities as a collective, for instance, to shape a pre-budgetary submission on area-based responses to child poverty. CDI is also part of DIPEI, an initiative seeking to share evidence for policy and practice from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative on outcomes for children (interviewee 11, interviewee 16). CDI also operates in the context of DIPEI with the CES to maximise dissemination of evaluation findings (interviewee 15), through the Capturing the Learning Project, which aims to:

*"make sense of the multiple messages from the prevention and early intervention sites as the programme draws to a close, and distil out key learning and overarching themes."*

(Capturing the Learning Project Reference)

#### 4.2.1.2 SUSTAINING SERVICE ELEMENTS

Of the seven services evaluated by CDI, one was discontinued, two were – or at time of writing are being – wound down, and elements of five others (i.e. Doodle Den, the SLT, the PCF, Restorative Practices and RAPID co-ordinators) are ones "that [CDI] absolutely [has] to hold on to" and maximise learning from. Doodle Den, for instance, is being run as part of a full menu of options through the School Completion Programme in Tallaght West and since September 2012 in Limerick, although CDI are funding the Limerick operation in the short term. Part of the learning from Doodle Den has focussed on 'replicability', including preparedness of the host community for implementation:

*"the people [in Limerick] who we were dealing with had gone through the Incredible Years, it was easier to do [Doodle Den] there, the starting point having been that. So one of the things that is really important to understand when you're trying to replicate the service is what stage are they at? When you're trying to do it, are they way back or are they on a scale?"*

(Interviewee 17)

CDI has begun moving some elements into existing structures at a local level. With respect to CSI, the RAPID coordinators who were previously embedded in CDI have returned to the local authority. The Speech and Language Therapists (SLT) model is being continued via the South Dublin County Childcare Committee (SDCCC) and the HSE (Board Report January 2013). The SDCCC has taken on a quality assurance role for the nine PCFs, who are to continue until at least August 2013 (Board report January 2013).

Embedding the programmes and ways of working in the services has been a priority:

*"it needs to be embedded and kept with the people who are actually providing the services. So again, even locally, they should be really thinking... they should nearly be saying to some of the providers, "If we walked away tomorrow, would you keep doing this?" Is it good enough that you'd say, "Well actually we somehow have to try and keep doing this?"*

(interviewee 15)

Other priorities include trying to "change the role of the frontline staff" (interviewee 17) and to compare and contrast literacy programmes already on offer (interviewee 2). As part of the evaluation finalisation process, CDI has involved key players in reflection groups, "core players from various agencies, community reps, various community leaders" to examine and reflect on the learning from the evaluations (interviewee 10).

#### 4.2.1.3 ENLISTING CHAMPIONS

CDI has long been aware that the success of its messages has not rested solely on the quality of the research findings. Champions have been needed to deliver those messages into the appropriate forums. Interviewees indicated that CDI has had good people able to generate networking opportunities, especially with the CEO and the Board of CDI working at those relationships. The CEO has, unsurprisingly, been a champion for CDI, representing CDI's vision to the wider audiences (CDI website, interviewee 16). There is widespread admiration for the CEO's "super" leadership and professionalism (interviewee 28), in playing "a lead role really in terms of the direct contact with those senior people" (interviewee 20). The CEO has met with politicians not immediately aware of Tallaght West and the context of CDI's interventions (Interviewee 21) and continues to meet both formally and informally with a range of key audiences to promote CDI's messages, shaping that message to the needs of the various audiences. The appointment of the recently retired County Manager as Chair of the CDI Board is seen as positive for cultivating a range of new relationships (Interviewee 14, Interviewee 6). Both the chair and the CEO are felt to be key assets in the mainstreaming phase of CDI's work (interviewee 19).

Beyond these roles, CDI requires a number of other champions to drive the agenda for better outcomes. The ISG and the EAC have both been seen as forums to recruit potential drivers at local and international levels respectively. There is a "substantial cohort of very committed people ... in Tallaght" (interviewee 19) who have been "crucial" for CDI in the early years, to set up the programmes and evaluations. National politicians who attend CDI events have been another potential source of champions (interviewee 16). Externally it is felt that CDI has deployed those champions well and built solid relationships over the period before results emerged and messages began to be clarified fully (interviewee 6).

#### 4.2.1.4 LOCAL AND NATIONAL DISSEMINATION EVENTS

CDI has put on or participated in a number of local, national and international events to bring people together, increase its profile and disseminate knowledge about its activities. Locally, it has had family days, barbeques, an annual Christmas event and other events to which political figures and other audiences have been invited to see its work in the locality. Nationally and internationally, it has organised and/or presented at numerous conferences and events (outlined in Appendix 9). For example, it has presented for two years at the INTO conference and the School Completion Programme in-service training. It staged *The Story So Far* conference in 2010 and restorative practice and primary care seminars in March of 2013. It has also organised launches and policy briefings for some of its evaluation reports in late 2012 and early 2013.

#### 4.2.1.5 ENGAGING POLITICAL AUDIENCES

CDI has engaged with key national politicians. For instance, then President Mary McAleese talked at *The Story So Far* conference organised by CDI in September 2010. CDI also engaged with the Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald,

while she was meeting the SDCSC and visiting the three PEIP sites in May 2011 and she presented to local services at the CDI Barbeque in June 2011. CDI has drawn together key policy makers, service deliverers and developers and practitioners at roundtable events to discuss research findings and shape the emerging messages. Roundtable events are not just about dissemination, but a more sophisticated effort to promote two-way communication among potential audiences for the work (interviewee 25):

*“it wasn’t just saying here’s what we found, it was asking very intentionally the question, what does this mean for you, how does this change what you’re doing, who do you think this information should be shared with and impacting on?”*

(interviewee 16)

There is an expectation that CDI can maximise its impact on policy as “a body of evidence” that can feed into new strategies and current political priorities regarding the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, and family support (interviewee 13), and can support the replication of CDI’s logic model in other contexts across Ireland (interviewee 4). CDI has presented to the Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children regarding the *How Are Our Families* study (interviewee 25). It is felt at CDI that there is an opportunity to capitalise on the Early Years Strategy and to influence policy to produce outcomes-oriented and evidence-based interventions (Interviewee 4). The 2012 budgetary allocation for area-based responses to childhood poverty has afforded CDI the opportunity to move into a mentoring role, providing guidance and support on manualised provision.

#### 4.2.1.6 EXTERNAL STRUCTURES AND ACTIONS

CDI engages with particular local and national structures in pursuing its mainstreaming and dissemination agenda. Locally, it engages with the Children’s Services Committee (CSC) and the County Development Board (CDB), while nationally engages with the National Children’s Strategy Implementation Group (NCSIG), as well as the All-Ireland Restorative Practice Strategic Forum, which it co-founded. Through engagement and participation in such structures, a number of interviewees believed that CDI can bring its experience to bear on future policy and practice developments, professional/ third-level training and curriculum development.

#### 4.2.1.7 BEING APPROACHED BY OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Interviewees report that CDI has been invited to speak at a number of fora by policy makers and other organisations:

- CDI’s work has been recognised in Northern Ireland, as in 2011, Colin Partnership, Belfast, invited CDI to join their Expert Advisory Committee (Board meeting, November 2011) to share their experience and expertise;
- CDI has been invited back to the Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children (interviewee 17);
- The opportunity to replicate Doodle Den in Limerick came after CDI presented at SCP in-service training (interviewee 4);
- The Strategy and Corporate Services Manager was contacted by an NGO to discuss CDI’s process for developing policy briefs;
- Generally in terms of research community networks, CDI are receiving more invitations to come and talk to different organisations (interviewees 6, 27);
- The Longford-Westmeath Parenting Partnership have contacted CDI to collaborate on developing Implementation Guides (Board report Nov 2012);
- CDI’s work was referenced in a national discussion on radio dealing with children’s services in Ireland (interviewee 20);
- Key policy makers and politicians are contacting CDI to set up meetings, consult and provide advice (interviewee 24); and

The Community Engagement Officer has been invited to make a number of presentations to workshops by local authorities and estate management staff regarding CSI.

## 4.2.2 EVALUATION-BASED ACTIONS

At time of writing, CDI has held four roundtable discussions, where a broad range of key audiences and stakeholders were invited to discuss the evaluations. Three report launches have occurred. CDI has disseminated evaluation findings in reflection groups, designed to inform and discuss the findings with local residents and other stakeholders. There are nine policy briefs available from CDI that summarise the learning from the evaluation findings (CDI website) with more policy briefs being designed (Business Plan 2013).

As documented in Report 4, the Research, Evaluation, Policy and Practice (REPP) is a working group, composed of DCYA staff, representatives from a number of service providers, and Third Level Academics, that was established to document the research experience through a set of papers or articles. The REPP project has gathered together a range of learning in the form of a book proposal currently with Routledge (interviewee 4, interviewee 16) in order to document the learning for academic audiences.

CDI is also devising implementation guides to accompany its programmes (SLT, RP, interagency collaboration, Doodle Den, PCF, CSI) and a referral guide for schools (Business Plan 2013). The CSI manual has been finalised, and the Doodle Den Manual and accompanying CD ROM updated.

## 4.2.3 GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

CDI has been working to develop communications activities directed at the community level in Tallaght West: at national level to engage with both policy and general audiences; at the professional level to inform and impact on practice with practitioners and trainers; and at research audiences (Communications Action Plan). In the past, team members have met with the CES and Carr Communications to consider how best to engage policy makers, drawing on both statistical and financial information, and also the "local passion" (Board meeting, August 2011).

CDI has maintained a local presence and profile in their communications activities:

*"I think what CDI has done very well as a team is that they have kept the regular area-based, you know, newsletters, the information sessions, I think because of the nature of the programmes there has to be a huge amount of information all of the time to users to say the participants, the families, the parents so that is all communication. The local Echo is a real supporter and is really good at looking into the opportunities and a very good local paper that sets out to try and have a positive sort of media influence and relationships they have been good and have worked very well,"*

(interviewee 14)

CDI communication tools have included various leaflets promoting CDI services at different stages, web-texting to promote CDI's events and to share information (started in May 2009), and a website, redesigned in 2011. Since October 2011, CDI's website comprises a section dedicated to policy documents such as a White Paper on Crime (July 2009); CDI Pre-Election Briefing Note (March 2011), and a Health Consultation Document (September 2011). In January 2012, it was decided that the newsletters would be quarterly instead of monthly. In February 2013, CDI launched an updated edition of the website. Documents available online include various evaluation and research reports, policy briefs, CDI's newsletter and Annual Report.

Interview data and documentary analysis identified a range of dissemination activities undertaken by CDI, including:

- attendance and/or participation at conferences and seminars;
- journal and workbook publications;
- evaluation reports and associated processes, such as roundtable discussions, reflection groups, and launches; and
- media engagements, such as press releases and appearances on regional and national radio programmes.

#### 4.2.4 CDI'S SERVICE EVALUATION AND ORGANISATIONAL MESSAGES

CDI's significant investment in evaluation in the past five years produced an extensive range of findings in relation to each of the services it commissioned. However, it also produced much knowledge and learning regarding the operation of CDI as an organisation, and the processes necessary to engage in this type of evidence-driven activity. Data highlights CDI's emphasis on a consistent set of messages which it feels is important to share:

- Using an evidence-based service approach;
- The benefit of quality assurance;
- Interagency collaboration;
- The value of manualised programmes;
- Outcomes-led intervention that can lead to mainstreaming;
- The importance of feedback and reflective practice; and
- Maximise the learning, both for negative evaluations and positive lessons.

### 4.3 LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY

There is divergence of opinion in the findings regarding the sustainability of CDI services in Tallaght West beyond 2011, the value of sustainability within the work of CDI, and the long-term impact of the CDI investment in the locality. Notwithstanding such contestation, CDI endeavoured to sustain elements of all services post summer 2011, and beyond where evaluation findings have supported such moves.

Sustainability of service provision has been contested in terms of what the original intentions of the interventions were understood to be. Local interviewees had felt that CDI was not rolling out a pilot scheme:

*"one thing that we raised over and over again was that we did not want this community to be used as a pilot project, to pilot something and then for that to disappear and that's what's where I almost feel we are"*

(Interviewee)

Other interviewees opined that no specific commitments had been agreed regarding sustaining services in Tallaght West while funders were clear that the commitment 'was never to the continuation of services in particular communities' (Interviewee), that the commitment was to improving universal service provision. Local stakeholders had concerns that mainstreaming has changed from developing new services to shifting service priorities and that services would be lost in Tallaght West (Interviewee). It is understood within CDI that sustainability, however, has not had as explicit an agenda in the organisation, and that sustainability and mainstreaming have competed for limited resources (Interviewee).

A number of interviewees felt that CDI had originally overinvested in Tallaght West:

*"[CDI] were overinvested if you could say it in that way and it wasn't sustainable, the hope that perhaps the wider subvention programmes be knocked into place. They were the opposite direction."*

(Interviewee)

*"CDI had you see, all the money that was being pumped into CDI other services didn't have that so there was a lot of bitterness and everything that was going on between services in the areas... If half the amount of money had been put into [it] than was actually put into it, it would have been more realistic."*

(Interviewee)

While CDI is clear that they were never in the position of being service providers, the organisation has been working tirelessly to ensure some level of continuation of key service components at the local level (Interviewee, interviewee, Interviewee), such as the parent carer facilitator and the speech and language therapist (Interviewee; Interviewee).

Below are some elements illustrating how CDI services were impacted by the reduced service delivery plan:

- ECCE: Due to the high cost of the ECCE services (high staff/child ratio, no contribution from parents), some were discontinued in 2010. Drawing on consultation with service managers, the evaluation team and anecdotal feedback, CDI decided to maintain the SLT and PCF components of the programme, embedding them in the County Childcare Committee.
- Doodle Den: Train the Trainer is considered key to service sustainability. In 2011, CDI hoped to reduce the number of service providers, through a tendering process. CDI secured funding in September 2012 for a further year and the School Completion Programme has been delivering the programme in six schools in Tallaght and three schools in Limerick via CDI funding.
- Mate-Tricks: In October 2010, CDI was developing a licence for Foróige to deliver Mate-Tricks. CDI was working towards implementing the programme beyond Tallaght. Following the evaluation results, the delivery of the Mate-Tricks Programme ceased the week beginning 9th January 2012. Delivery with participating children continued until the end of the contract with a more traditional afterschool service.
- Healthy Schools: Funding was committed for one coordinator rather than two, in the academic year 2011-2012, covering all five participating schools.
- The Safe and Healthy Place committee highly prioritised the re-opening and development of services in the MacUillium Estate since the Barnardo's centre was the only community facility in the area. It was agreed that Barnardo's would move their Lorien Centre from Fettercairn to MacUillium. Lorien Centre has been working with local organisations to provide a range of activities (e.g. Parents and Toddler groups, adult education course, drop-in health and estate management clinics).
- CSI: Funding for RAPID coordinators ceased in July 2012. Coordinators have returned to the SDCC.

#### 4.4 WHAT WORKED WELL?

In general, interviewees felt that CDI has worked well to develop key relationships, to make its key messages emerging from evaluations known and to develop a strong communications profile in 2012. Interviewees report that CDI's efforts to bring about a greater level of awareness of its work and build key relationships have been largely successful:

*"there's a huge amount of networking, I think [the CEO] has done a huge amount of that...there are a lot of conversations, there are very good relationships evolved there, the problem is the multiplicity of programmes and information"*

(interviewee 2)

*"CDI have done a very good job about making policy-makers and senior service managers aware of the work they've been doing, where they're currently at, where they see the future going ... CDI are very good at mixing the operational side ... and the planning side,"*

(interviewee 10)

There have been a number of important strategic relationships and networks targeted, from PEIP, DIPEI and CES, to other NGOs and politicians and policy makers that are aware of CDI's work. The research community is hearing of emerging evaluation results through papers, articles and conferences.

Interviewees report that interagency work has been enhanced, impacting on how people in Tallaght West work with each other and more open communication has been encouraged:

*"the collaborative nature of what they've managed to achieve. I mean I think that's been one of the really good things, you know? They have, for the communities in which they've been involved, they have managed to mobilise at local level."*

(interviewee 11)

The collaborative potential of the PEIP sites and the wider grantee network has avoided possible “turf wars” (interviewee 21) or silos, as complex messages were communicated with effectiveness and clarity. Target audiences and social media have been more productively engaged (interviewee 6), facilitated by the appointment of the Communications Officer, the establishment of a Communications Sub-committee and the finalisation of a Communications Action Plan as well as the finalisation of a number of evaluations.

While the range of programmes rolled out and evaluated has been ambitious, all freshly designed, none “off the shelf” (interviewee 4), CDI has remained cautious in how they have tried to promote the messages. CDI waited until the messages were clear to make their pitch, managing expectations better as a result (interviewee 28). Once the evaluation reports became available, interviewees positively assessed its work in disseminating them:

*“the calibre of people who come to their round table launches for the evaluations, they had really good attendance and representatives from all different sectors...the fact that they have something to shout about has really helped”*

(interviewee 6)

*“CDI are very good at disseminating reports and ... position papers”*

(interviewee 10)

*“it’s what’s actually changing what’s out there rather than self-promotion is the important thing to them you know”*

(interviewee 23)

Interviewees are impressed by CDI’s commitment to transparency in its communication of evaluation findings, particularly in communicating negative findings emerging from Mate Tricks (interviewee 4, 13, 17, 24):

*‘I think it was a very positive thing about them [CDI] and what they were doing because it shows that there was a focus on excellence and a focus on actual evidence as opposed to hearsay and so on. So that’s a lesson that’s perhaps raised the bar in the context of evidence programmes ... I’d be confident that they’ll be an important part of what’s happening in the future stage.’*

(interviewee 23)

Interviewees are also generally positive with regard to CDI’s broader communications activities:

*‘CDI would be good at all the social events, we’d a barbeque last summer and I would have seen some of the local ministers at it...there was stuff in the Tallaght Echo and the community so definitely I hope there’s a good awareness there from politicians,’*

(Interviewee 18)

*‘they’ve engaged quite heavily with politicians, policy makers, they’ve used the media way more,’*

(interviewee 6)

*‘mainstreaming is about developing relationships... about getting the correct information across to those that matter...about building a wealth of support...it’s a process that goes on over time and thankfully I think CDI are getting there,’*

(interviewee 28)



Training opportunities and seminars have been perceived positively as contributing to local capacity building (interviewee 3), with RP being cited as a case in point. RP has also been perceived to foster greater working together both locally between Gardai and schools (establishing Tallaght West as a restorative community was also cited as important), as well as nationally through CDI's co-founding of and participation in the All-Ireland RP Strategic Forum.

## 4.5 GENERAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

A number of challenges to CDI's mainstreaming and sustainability activities were also identified by participants. These included the changing economic context in the country; the difficulty in engaging some key stakeholders; the alignment of evaluation conclusions and mainstreaming activities; and the complexity of the research messages to be communicated.

This section outlines some of the general challenges that CDI has encountered in its mainstreaming and dissemination work.

### 4.5.1 MANAGING TIMELINES WITHIN CDI'S SERVICE EVALUATIONS

Interviewees highlighted the challenge inherent to CDI's dissemination and mainstreaming work in managing communications without evaluation data. This challenge has been felt throughout the governance structure of the organisation and is perceived to have impinged on its ability to plan ahead. (interviewee 16, 13 2, 9, 2, 11, 1, and 10). While CDI continued in the short-term to plan the day-to-day programmes (interviewee 3), it is perceived by some to have struggled to align its mainstreaming strategy with the evaluation timetable

*"I think the mainstreaming strategy got very influenced by the lack of synchronisation with the evaluation outputs. So the thinking about mainstreaming strategy was being thought about outside of the evaluation pieces, which isn't helpful,"*

(interviewee 9)

*"We really would have, from the very start tried to engage with the key decision makers right from the very beginning. It was very difficult because we didn't have any outcome data from the evaluations but we really started by trying to promote ourselves and trying to increase public awareness of CDI...to sell to [key decision makers] that 3 or 4 years down the line we would have all of this evidence and we would be coming back to them,"*

(interviewee 5)

### 4.5.2 THE CHANGED ECONOMIC CONTEXT IN IRELAND

Changed economic circumstances have "changed the conversation" (Interviewee 14) and with diminishing funding streams (interviewee 15) the case for policymakers to engage with CDI and the PEIP sites becomes harder to make (interviewee 10, interviewee 16). Nevertheless funding has become available, but the message remains that changing business as usual must occur within tight budgetary and fiscal constraints.

### 4.5.3 CHANGES / FLUX IN ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

Interviewees highlighted that audiences changed when the Department of Children and Youth Affairs came into being. Redrawing departmental boundaries has made it difficult to discern whom CDI ought to communicate with (interviewee 7, 10, and 8). In addition, internally, Interviewees felt that the initial lack of consistent communications personnel hampered CDI's communications activities, but that this was resolved by 2012.

### 4.5.4 NON-ENGAGEMENT BY SOME POTENTIAL KEY STAKEHOLDERS

CDI is seen to have brought many actors and agencies together to discuss the future of services in Tallaght West (interviewee 8, 10, and 18). The apparent disengagement of the Department of Education and Skills, however, is a

recurring theme (interviewee 10,9, 8, and17), which has presented difficulties regarding individual access to schools in the absence of intermediary structures between the Department of Education and Skills and the schools (interviewee 13). Further, the absence of representatives from the Department of Health and difficulties engaging and creating awareness amongst some sections of the DCYA continue to prove frustrating (interviewee 4).

CDI has struggled to engage the entire community of Tallaght West, but is perceived as well regarded within the DCYA and the Department of the Taoiseach (Interview 4, 11and 15), but less so, it is felt, in Education and Skills:

*"I think it would be fair to say that the experience of a lot of local projects is in every agency and in the context of interagency working and it's one of the huge challenges for interagency working in the Republic is I think Education doesn't engage,"*

(interviewee 13)

*"Education have dropped off but they've dropped off nationally, that's not just a local thing, they've pulled off everything regional and national which has left a huge deficit there and it's a problem and it's an on-going problem for everything that we do and particularly for CDI,"*

(interviewee 8)

*"I think they are on the radar of the DCYA because they are trying to talk to them all the time, now whether that is helpful is another question. I'm not sure what extent they are on the radar of other relevant departments. I suspect not as much."*

(interviewee 7)

#### 4.5.5 COMPLEXITY OF THE MESSAGES

CDI's evidence is, for some, not as compelling as had been hoped, given the investment and the project's ambitious scope, with expectations appearing to be too high (Interviewee 8). The complexity of CDI's programme of services makes mainstreaming more difficult:

*"a single organisation like CDI won't be able to achieve [mainstreaming] on its own, it will only do it in collaboration [with those] who are interested and supportive of that agenda be they within the system or be they the likes of Atlantic Philanthropies and other grantees from outside of the system,"*

(interviewee 13)

Interviewees identify the need to distil CDI's messages, to make a more forceful collective case to policy makers (interviewee 2, 14 and 16). There is a tension that evaluations will not produce clarity (interviewee 13) and that given the political desirability for shorter, cleaner results, CDI has had a longer battle to fight (interviewee 6). However, the funding that has become available through the budgetary allocation for area-based child poverty is viewed by interviewees as a clear indication that CDI's and the broader PEIP sites messages have been picked up at governmental level.

#### 4.5.6 SOME SERVICES NON-SUSTAINABLE / MANAGING NEGATIVE FINDINGS

When CDI was forced due to truncated funding to close some local services, the goodwill from residents and local service providers was depleted as expectations for the future of service provision had to be lowered. A number of interviewees worried about the loss of cultural capital for years to come (interviewee 8, interviewee 1).

Some interviewees expressed concern regarding services ending in Tallaght West, weakening the moral case for mainstreaming. Local service providers felt that they were assisting in developing Tallaght West services, and that the learning from those services that could benefit other areas nationally ought to continue to benefit Tallaght West directly (interviewee 2).

The CDI's high level of funding concerned interviewees, who stated that services "were never going to be sustainable" (interviewee 8). A shorter, more intense provision of services with considerable financial support did not provide a sustainable model for local services to consider how they might replicate such provision (interviewee 12).

## 4.6 CONCLUSIONS

This Chapter has presented findings on CDI's actions regarding its mainstreaming, dissemination and sustainability work, and the challenges it has encountered in doing so. The Initiative disseminated its learning and experience through building strategic relationships, engaging with the political and policy systems, and the use of specific mechanisms. It has been perceived to have undertaken its work well, and been faithful to the learning emanating from its evaluation studies. However, aligning the finalisation of evaluations with the its mainstreaming work was one of many challenges CDI experienced in undertaking this work, as was the changing economic context in which it operated. While it sought to sustain elements of services in the face of these challenges, tensions remain amongst interviewees regarding the extent to which sustainability was a central aspect of CDI's commitment to Tallaght West, and its place in its day-to-day work.



# **Chapter 5:**

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to document and assess CDI's activities to disseminate and mainstream its learning, and sustain services in the Tallaght West community. An aim and overarching set of questions have guided this report. The aim has been to examine the role of sustainability, mainstreaming and dissemination in the work of CDI. Further to this, the main questions guiding the research for this report were:

1. What has been the strategy regarding informing Government thinking, policy making, and specifically curriculum development?
2. How aware is the Irish Government of CDI learning emanating from the interim evaluation reports, final evaluation reports, and the overall experience of CDI as it was being implemented?
3. What did CDI do to ensure learning was heard at policy level in the period before the finalisation of service evaluation reports, and in the absence of outcome data or interim process findings?
4. What has CDI done in the period since the finalisation of these reports?
5. What has CDI done to promote the mainstreaming of its experience?
6. What plans have been put in place to ensure sustainability [in the short and long term]?

In drawing together the data gathered for this report to answer these questions, a number of themes emerge which frame this discussion. They are:

- The role of mainstreaming, dissemination and sustainability in the work of CDI;
- Different phases and shifting roles;
- CDI's programme of research: generating evidence for the process;
- Approaches to mainstreaming learning and mechanisms to do so; and
- Sustaining services.

These themes are now discussed in turn.

## 5.2 THE ROLE OF MAINSTREAMING, DISSEMINATION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE WORK OF CDI

CDI's strategy emphasises the importance of rigorous evaluation and the application of local learning to the national policy environment. As one of its six distinct activities for implementation, the strategy outlines the Initiative's aspiration to pair the delivery of high quality services for children with the undertaking of rigorous, independent evaluation examining the impact of services on child outcomes. It anticipates the evidence arising from these evaluations informing national policy as well as local and regional agencies' work. The strategy speaks of establishing a high-quality panel of experts, which will support the evaluation work, and contribute to the generation of high-quality evidence for sharing. In addressing the topic of sustainability, the strategy highlights the Initiative's willingness to withdraw services not contributing to the attainment of positive outcomes for children, as well as expecting newly commissioned services to "be expanded in Tallaght West and mainstreamed by the appropriate agencies in Ireland" (CDI, 2005, p. 23), subject to evaluation findings. The literature highlights the importance of preparation, planning, strategising, and having the right mind set in undertaking dissemination work and mainstreaming. It is clear that, despite its vastness, CDI strategically planned for this aspect of implementation from the beginning. At both Board and Team levels, there was clear evidence that implementing the evaluation strand of the strategy, and mainstreaming the evidence and broader learning arising from it occupied a central place in the Initiative's work. As the evaluations progressed, the data indicated that the Board focused more on the mainstreaming aspect of its work. At the team level, it was also clear that evaluation and mainstreaming were a central aspect of its work. A number of documents were prepared throughout the implementation period, and a range of events planned and delivered as the evaluations moved towards conclusion, accompanied by a keen awareness of different audiences. Important in this work also was the role of the EAC, fulfilling its anticipated role in the strategy in supporting the evaluation process. However, the data also suggest that what each term meant shifted throughout the period of implementation. Mainstreaming is a case in point, where CDI documentation contains different, possibly evolving definitions of the term. Interview participants' definitions of mainstreaming encompassed a range of different

actions, from sustaining services, to rolling out programmes nationally, to replicating particular aspects of particular programmes. These are defined as elements in a mainstreaming strategy.

### 5.3 DIFFERENT PHASES AND ROLES OF CDI'S WORK

CDI adopted different roles across different phases of its work in implementing this aspect of its strategy. Initially, CDI was primarily a consumer of external research. It developed a number of evidence-based interventions, which local organisations delivered for children and families in its community. Data here, and notably in the working together and service integration report, indicated the extensive process of research and development which occurred in the production of each of its services. As service delivery approached, CDI then became a commissioner of research, through issuing requests for tender for six evaluations initially, with another two subsequently. The conducting and finalisation of each of these evaluations served to implement a key aspect of its strategy and add to its dissemination agenda. The commitment to undertake rigorous evaluations was emphasised in the central role played by the Research and Evaluation Manager at this time and the EAC in supporting the evaluation process within CDI. In this regard, CDI also became a generator of evidence itself through the commissioning process.

When evaluations began to be finalised, CDI became both a producer of EBPs, as well as a consumer of the research on its own EBPs. The evaluations were examined in detail and key stakeholders were engaged to discern what the messages from the interventions were and what value and learning was emerging for the various stakeholders. Over 2012 and into 2013, CDI became a disseminator of EBPs as evaluation learnings were distilled with a broader range of communication channels being targeted. Supporting documentation was produced with a variety of audiences in mind, comprising local stakeholders, other NGOs, policy-makers, and academic audiences. In its current iteration in 2013, CDI is working to replicate service elements and the organisation's broader ethos.

The adoption of multiple roles by CDI over the course of implementation is characteristic of a dynamic organisation. As it progressed through each of the phases outlined, and moved into different roles, it adapted its internal structures and processes and modified its strategies and plans. This is potentially most clearly seen in the shift of personnel, especially from a research and evaluation manager to a research and policy manager, and the hiring of additional personnel for communication and dissemination functions as the evaluations concluded. It developed new plans and established new structures to support its work in different phases. Such constant attention to dissemination, through continually planning, refining and resourcing activities – even prior to research - is highlighted as important in both health-related literature (CARE, n.d.; Mitton, 2007) as well as in other sectors (APRE, 2010). There is little doubt that, when the range of activities and accompanying roles adopted by CDI are examined, the centrality of mainstreaming and dissemination as set out in its strategy was matched by a similar centrality in its implementation.

### 5.4 CDI SYSTEM'S APPROACH TO DISSEMINATING FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

As outlined in the literature review, there is a variety of models which can characterise the research-policy relationship. The relational model emphasises the interpersonal relationships between producers and users of evidence. Research use is dependent on the quality and function of these relationships. These models incorporate linear models' principles for dissemination and diffusion and then focus on interactions, sharing the knowledge and developing partnerships and networks (Graham *et al*, 2006; Lomas, 2007 cited in Best & Holmes, 2010, p. 147). The systems model of research use recognises the importance of relationships, as well as the variety of structures, systems and interactions shaping a dynamic policy process (Best and Holmes 2010). Research and policy are seen as processes, rather than products, with many opportunities to shape interactions over time (Lomas 1997). The political context for research, comprising a range of existing political structures and processes, and prevailing attitudes, require consideration, as well as the right window of opportunity to make the case for evidence-based practice (Nutley *et al* 2007).

The evidence compiled for this report suggests that CDI's activities and processes reflect characteristics of both relational and systems approaches to influencing policy and practice. Internally, it has established effective structures, processes and actions over the course of its lifetime as an organisation. These structures have brought together a range of experienced and committed voices to provide good governance across CDI's research and evaluation activities. Central here has

been the role of its Expert Advisory Committee (EAC), which throughout the implementation phase has fulfilled a crucial function in upholding the high standards of the research aspect of the Initiative, through advice, comment, review and critical appraisal. It has also supported the CDI Team, especially the role of Evaluation and the Research and Policy Manager, and the CEO, in undertaking this function on a day-to-day basis. CDI also established temporary structures, such as reflection groups, as part of the feedback loop on the research to evaluation teams and aid the final interpretation of findings. Involving key players in the process of shaping the research and its messages is important in fostering greater linkages as well as increasing the uptake of research by policy makers (Crewe and Young 2002).

CDI has also developed a healthy model of communication internally. The hiring of a communications coordinator and the establishing of a communications Sub-committee to drive the dissemination phase of the work, with accompanying planning processes, is indicative of an increased, sharper organisational focus, especially as evaluation findings emerged. This has also been reflected in the increasing position of mainstreaming and dissemination within its internal processes, such as business plans, and accompanying action plans, which outline how a variety of media can be used to disseminate its messages.

It has developed a capacity to engage externally with a variety of stakeholders at different points in time and at different levels (local and national) about its work. This has been done by CDI staff, through the CEO, the previous and present Board Chairs and the people who sit on the governance and advisory structures for CDI. These people have worked to champion CDI at specific events, and more generally they are producers and disseminators of CDI's messages. Data compiled for this report indicate that, through its launches and policy events, CDI has reached a significant amount of policy actors, informing them of its work. In addition, Ministers and politicians have visited CDI as one of the three PEIPsites as noted above. CDI has worked with the wider AP grantee network, DIPEI and the CES to disseminate its learning and knowledge in the broader context of changing prevailing attitudes to evidence based practice. CDI has developed a range of relationships through direct contact and presentations, inviting key stakeholders to events such as policy launches and roundtables. They have engaged practitioners and NGOs to foster a consensual approach to research in policy context. Such relationships are more amenable to the dynamic processes that facilitate research use at policy level.

In a systems-model manner, CDI has been critically aware of the administrative, political and economic context in which it now operates. It has sought to build relationships with emerging governmental structures and policy developments, for instance the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy and the Programme for Government focus on area-based responses to childhood poverty. It has sought to hone its messages in response to administrative and government developments, and emphasise the high quality, credibility and applicability of its evidence and broader learning. It has engaged with key players prior to its evidence being finalised, in order to create receptiveness when the evaluations began to emerge (Crewe and Young 2002). These interacting functions are key aspects of a solid systems-based approach to the work that CDI has been attempting to accomplish over the last years. While the challenges of recent years point to the potential limits of such work in influencing policy and practice, it has not stopped CDI from endeavouring to do so, in both a structural and relational manner.

## 5.5 ALIGNMENT WITH GOOD PRACTICES

The literature review highlighted a range of categories with specific mechanisms to enhance research utilisation. The categories included dissemination; interaction; social influence; facilitation; and education. Data in this report reveal that CDI used a number of mechanisms across most of these categories in engendering use of its research and learning. Within the dissemination category, it put on launches and developed policy briefs targeted at politicians and policy makers to increase awareness of its research. It has presented at a number of conferences, as well as hosted its own conferences to promote its work. Regarding 'interaction', it has engaged with users and relevant service providers through its local dissemination activities and specifically, in its use of reflection groups in the finalisation process of the evaluations. Regarding 'social influencing', it has again engaged with local providers and policy makers in encouraging take up of its research. It has utilised local champions to promote its messages and convince others of the merits of its work. Regarding facilitation, it has provided workshops and a range of supports to encourage research uptake in third-level institutions specifically. Across these categories, it has sought to make its research as accessible as possible. Its reports and policy briefs are all available on line, with hard copies sent to politicians and policy makers, organisational leaders and practitioners. In the production of policy briefs particularly, it has sought to make its research highly relevant to important



policy arenas, such as education and primary care. With the approaches outlined in the previous section, it is apparent that the Initiative has used a wide range of specific mechanisms to disseminate its messages, displaying an understanding of different audiences with different needs and desires, and targeting them appropriately.

## 5.6 SUSTAINABILITY

The evidence in both Chapters Three and Four of this report highlight challenges to CDI's work regarding sustainability. In Chapter Three, interviewees' differing and diverging interpretations of the term sustainability were outlined. In Chapter Four, a number of key informants queried the commitment of the Initiative to sustain services in Tallaght West. Although elements of some services were continued for a year and/or positioned in some local services after the evaluations concluded in 2011, other participants were unhappy with the extent of sustained service provision in the locality that this involved.

At the core of the interview evidence is the same tension which is at the heart of the work of CDI, in balancing a local focus with a national one. In striving to generate evidence and learning for consumption and utilisation at a national level, CDI was always – and continues to be – required to look beyond the boundaries of Tallaght West. In so doing, the tension between such a position and local desires regarding service provision sustainability remains for the moment largely unresolved.

## 5.7 SUMMARY

The purpose of this report has been to document and evaluate CDI's strategies, structures and processes in fulfilling the mainstreaming, dissemination and sustainability aspects of its strategy. Data from a number of key informants, alongside detailed documentary analysis have been instrumental in answering the set of evaluation questions outlined at the beginning of this report. It is clear from the analysis of this data that, in relation to mainstreaming and dissemination, the strategies, structures and processes are aligned with good practices as outlined in the literature. It generated high quality evidence for dissemination, displayed a keen awareness of its different audiences, targeted them appropriately, and in the face of numerous challenges, achieved much in sharing its learning and overall experience. Therefore, it can be said that CDI's processes were largely successful in relation to implementing this aspect of its strategy.

In relation to sustainability, there was a clear absence of a shared understanding amongst stakeholders about this aspect of CDI's work. The perceived lack of clarity, particularly after the finalisation of evaluation findings, served to negatively impact on perceptions of CDI's work in this area.

## 5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the points set out above, the evaluation team makes two sets of recommendations.

The evaluation team recommends:

- CDI brings clarity to its work through defining and developing a shared understanding with its stakeholders of the terms mainstreaming, dissemination and, especially, sustainability, for its future activities.
- The CDI Board reconsiders its local goals regarding sustainability in the context of its national work towards implementation and replication of evidence-based and evidence-informed practices.
- CDI brings the failure of particular government departments/sections of government departments to engage with it to the attention of relevant politicians.
- CDI maintains its focus on mainstreaming and dissemination, particularly in light of the Government's commitment to implement area-based responses to child poverty between now and 2016.
- Furthermore, the evaluation team recommends that other organisations interested in undertaking similar activities:
- Recognise that mainstreaming and dissemination is a key function of an organisational leader, and should be prioritised at the highest levels of, as well as throughout, the organisation.
- Give attention to the key issues involved in mainstreaming and dissemination, strategically, structurally and operationally, as CDI has done.
- Be resolute in being faithful to what the evidence says, and the resulting decisions required around decommissioning services.

## APPENDIX ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

The need for policy and practice to be informed by high quality evidence has been widely recognised in recent years (Little *et al*, 2005 cited in Arney *et al*, 2009). However, the 'delivery' of such evidence to the policy and practice spheres goes much deeper than simply the dissemination of research, and can often require a strong focus on implementation mechanisms to produce the best outcomes for children and families (Eccles, 2009). Indeed, the way in which research, policy and practice can interact with each other has the potential to shape efforts to improve outcomes (Best & Holmes, 2010). Moreover, proof of the extent of the effectiveness of the work of complex sets of interventions, such as Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs), has the ability to impact on the functioning of such initiatives, their funding, services, programmes, and projects, as well extend into broader national policy concerning children, families and communities.

It is with this potential impact of research in mind then, that this review outlines central elements of the growing literature on research use, policy and practice. Following this introduction, the second section outlines the context of evidence generation for policy, both internationally and in Ireland. The third section provides a short justification for the use of evidence in policy making. Following this, key terms relating to CDI's work in this area are discussed, before prevalent models of research-policy relationships are outlined. The sixth section details specific mechanisms for enhancing research utilisation before the seventh section identifies factors which can facilitate and constrain research use in policy and practice. The review concludes with a short summary.

### CONTEXT

Born in the health sciences and adopted by social science, researchers and policy makers have become concerned with evidenced-based workings (MacDonald, 1999 cited in Canavan *et al*, 2009), as research evidence can inform and improve policies, practice and services. Demand for increasing the quantity of social knowledge became prevalent after the Second World War. Groups such as 1960s US-based 'empirical practice movement' (Reid, 1994 cited in Chaskin, 2008, p.133), and an awareness of the importance of evaluation in the policy process generally (Palumbo, 1987; Parsons, 1995), contributed to the growing appreciation of the potential for research to contribute to the work of governments in determining and achieving social policy objectives (Janowitz, 1972 cited in Nutley *et al*, 2007). This was also mirrored in Ireland with the establishment of the Economic and Social Research Institute in 1963 and the subsequent setting-up of research-focused quasi-state organisations, including the National Economic and Social Council, the National Economic and Social Forum, the Combat Poverty Agency, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency the Family Support Agency, as well as commissioning elements of other bodies such as the Health Boards.

Despite the discontinuation of many of these organisations in recent times, other developments point to the increasing importance of research and evidence generation for evidence-informed policy and practice in Ireland (see for example NESF, 2005; Smyth and McCoy, 2011). Foremost in this regard are children and young people. The *National Strategy for Data and Research on Children's Lives 2011 – 2016* aims to work towards the development of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the collection, compilation and dissemination of research and data on their lives. An explicit objective of this strategy is to support and promote maximum use of existing information. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) is recognised as an important infrastructure through which evidence can be at the centre of policy and practice around children's lives (DCYA, 2011).

### WHY USE RESEARCH IN POLICY MAKING

Research impact 'forms a continuum from raising awareness of findings, through knowledge and understanding of their implications, to change in behaviour' (Nutley *et al*, 2003 cited in Canavan *et al*, 2009, p.169). Sanderson (2002) highlights that in policy making research evidence can be used in two different ways. Firstly, it can promote accountability through providing information on the performance of government or government funded services, as well as providing a rationale for future role out (Dynarski, 2007). Secondly, it can "promote improvement through more effective policies and programmes – evidence of how well such policies and programmes 'work' in different circumstances" (Sanderson, 2002, p.3).

Boaz and Nutley (2009) identify four particular ways in which it can be used:

- To design and develop public policies;
- To assess the impact of policy interventions;
- To improve policy implementation; and
- To identify tomorrow's issues.

In addition to feeding directly into decision-making, research can also be used to promote new ways of thinking, to mobilise support, and to challenge particular taken-for-granted positions, perceptions or courses of action (Weiss, 1998).

In this regard, researchers and those using research can take different stances in influencing policy:

- The consensual approach conveys a broad agreement among policy makers and researchers in addressing the main issues;
- Within the contentious approach research is not delivered directly, remaining on the margins and usually takes a critical stand; and
- The paradigm-challenging approach advocates a new departure as research confronts established policies, proposes new actions and hopes political support will follow (Nutley *et al*, 2007).

## KEY TERMS SECTION

This section outlines some of the main terms used in this literature review.

### *Evidence, Policy and Practice*

The growing interest in the role of evidence in the policy process prompts consideration of what is meant by the term 'evidence'. It can take the form of any piece of information drawn from any one of a range of different sources (Nutley and Webb, 2000). However, a narrower definition emerges when discussing the use of evidence in policy, namely that which is research-based, statistical, evaluative, expert-driven and empirical (i.e. in the form of research findings) (Martson and Watts, 2003, p. 145; Culyer and Lomas, 2006, cited in Nutley *et al*, 2007). Buckley and Whelan (2009) argue that, when this type of 'research' evidence is considered alone, another avenue of debate opens up regarding issues of validity, reliability and generalisability – in other words, the particular value of particular forms of research evidence. Systematic reviews of Randomised Control Trials (RCTs), individual RCTs and other experimental and quasi-experimental research designs are viewed as offering gold standard or higher-value forms of evidence than for example, pre and post design studies (see also McDonald, 2001). However, an appreciation of wider forms of research evidence has also been put forward in recent times:

*"Multiple types of research evidence [...] can serve as legitimate bases for establishing 'research evidence.' Because diverse research designs and methodologies address different types of questions, their inclusion in establishing 'evidence' will give a more fully informed picture of whether and how a given intervention works, for whom, and in what circumstances"*

(American Psychological Association Task Force on Evidence-Based Practice for Children and Adolescents, 2008, p.27)

Thus, as can be inferred from above, evidence in this research sense can be a contested term. Relatedly, the term knowledge can also lack clarity. For some (Martson and Watts, 2003), knowledge is merely the act of interpreting evidence. Nutley *et al* (2007) posit that knowledge is something which can be empirical (often derived from quantitative and qualitative research studies); theoretical, informed by informal or intuitive thinking (and sometimes but not always informed by research); or experiential (craft or tacit knowledge built up from experience), and often a combination of some or all three. In this regard, then, knowledge is something greater than simply 'research' evidence. It implies incorporation of forms of evidence in a process of interpretation, imbued with politics and power under a guise of rationality in determining decisions arrived at.

Within the policy world therefore, research, evidence and knowledge are aspects of the policy process. The (re-) emergence of evidence-based and evidence informed policy and practice in recent years has placed an increasing emphasis on the

role of research and analysis for policy rather than simply of policy (Parsons, 1995). In many ways, the shift more recently from evidence-based to evidence-informed (Buckley and Whelan, 2009) marks a greater appreciation of the role and value of other forms of knowledge and a methodological pluralism, which connects policy with the realities of practice (Petch, 2009). Terms such as evidence-inspired, evidence-aware and evidence-influenced have arisen as further corroboration of the need for more nuanced ideas about how to improve practice using research (Biesta, 2007; Classens, 2008). Instead of the term 'knowledge transfer', 'knowledge interaction' better describes the "messy engagement of multiple players with diverse sources of knowledge" in the policy process (Davies *et al*, 2008, p.190).

### *Dissemination*

Viewed as a key element in the knowledge translation continuum, Wilson *et al* (2010, p2) define dissemination "as a planned process that involves consideration of target audiences and the settings in which research findings are to be received, and where appropriate, communicating and interacting with wider policy and health service audiences in ways that will facilitate research uptake in decision-making processes and practice". Similarly, Kiefer *et al* (2005, p.14) describe dissemination as "an active and strategically planned process whereby new and existing knowledge, interventions or practices are spread". However, Nutley *et al* (2007, p. 132) simply describe it as "circulating or presenting research findings to potential users, in formats that may be more or less tailored to their target audience".

### *Mainstreaming*

The term mainstreaming first emerged in international and European conferences and debates on the Environment and gender equality in the 1970s (Halpern *et al*, 2008). Since then, it has been used in two policy areas mainly, gender, and Special Educational Needs (SEN), but with differing meanings and implications. In regard to the latter, mainstreaming generally means the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream education (Lambe and Bones, 2006a, 2006b; Lindsay, 2007), although in the Irish context this has been challenged as outdated and different from inclusion. For Meegan and MacPhail (2006), mainstreaming implies the integration of children with SEN on the mainstreams' terms, rather than inclusion and ultimately integration, which are both viewed as processes promoting the interests of each individual child.

Gender mainstreaming can be "a process to promote gender equality [...and] intended to improve the effectivity of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes" (Walby, 2005, p. 321). It can take the form of a tool, a policy instrument which is used to 'gender-proof' policies and practices emerging from governments. It is an approach which seeks to "institutionalise equality by embedding gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes and environment of public policy (Daly 2005, p.435). However, as reflected more generally in feminist theory debates, there are questions about whether gender mainstreaming should be about integrating women 'into' a mainstream, or changing what is the 'mainstream'. Similarly to SEN mainstreaming above, gender mainstreaming is a contested phrase (Walby, 2005).

The DCYA has recently defined mainstreaming as "the process of integrating individual programmes and practices into existing (universal) services in education, health, social services etc." (2013, p. 4). A similar definition of mainstreaming, which is consistent with CDI's mainstreaming activities over the course of its implementation as observed by the evaluation team, is that devised by Area Development Management (ADM). It defines mainstreaming as "the transfer of learning from a pilot initiative into government policy, practices, processes or funding of programmes" (cited in Pobal, 2006, p. 99; see also Flatley, 1999). It was adopted by Pobal in 2006 to inform the work of Rapid and community-based initiatives involved in service integration partnerships, hence the evaluation team feels this is an appropriate definition to use in the analysis of findings and drawing of conclusions for this report.

### *Implementation Science*

Increased awareness of the potential of evidence-informed and evidence-based policies and practices has been accompanied in recent years with a renewed interest in *how* such policies and practices are put into action, or *implemented*. Although researchers have been interested in the difference between stated policy intentions and achieved outcomes for many years<sup>2</sup>, the disparity between the known achievements of specific evidence-based interventions or programmes

<sup>2</sup> This difference has been known as the "implementation deficit" (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973) or, "implementation gap" (Dunsire, 1978), while the study of implementation more generally has been termed the "missing link" of social policy analysis (Hargrove, 1975).

for participants in research studies, and what was being achieved in practice with service users, sparked a new range of research at the micro level. Built on an evidence base of what was most effective, such research occurred in a phase of “information technology and systems engineering” (Naylor, 2002), and was thus concerned with the redesign of quality service delivery systems through which evidence was disseminated and its use supported, rather than just focusing on individual practitioners alone. Such research has generally become known as *implementation Research* (Bhattacharyya, Reeves and Zwarenstein 2009).

Implementation research is thus defined as the “scientific study of methods to promote systematic uptake of research findings and other evidence-based practices into routine practice, and, hence, to improve the quality and effectiveness of health services” (Eccles and Mittman 2007, p. 1). It is concerned with identifying what is required to “transmit” proven practices to a range of services in a number of sectors (Fixsen *et al*, 2009). It is linked with quality improvement, defined as “systematic, data-guided activities designed to bring about immediate improvement” (Lynn *et al*, 2007), but is distinct in that implementation research is concerned with producing generalisable knowledge rather than locally applicable knowledge (Madon *et al*, 2007; Bhattacharyya, Reeves and Zwarenstein 2009). Such generalisable knowledge is generated through the use of experimental and other methods to study implementation processes, and their effectiveness (implementation outcomes) (Fixsen *et al*, 2005). The knowledge created has highlighted the importance of a range of factors, at different levels and in different contexts – resulting in numerous frameworks (e.g. Fixsen *et al*, 2005; 2009; Aarons *et al*, 2011; Meyers *et al*, 2012) - which require consideration so that evidence-based programmes and practices can be matched with evidence-based implementation (Foy *et al*, 2001), implemented with quality and subsequently scaled-up across a range of settings.

## MODELLING RESEARCH-POLICY RELATIONSHIPS

There has been a significant amount of scholarship in recent years which has sought to explore the relationship between research and policy (Nutley and Webb, 2000). One of the first to attempt to systematically model different forms of relationships was Weiss (1979), whose work has since influenced a number of other writers (Young *et al*, 2002; Nutley *et al*, 2007; Powell, 2011). Best and colleagues (2008; 2010) have sought to progress thinking on research-policy interaction from first (linear) and second (relationships) generation models towards a third generation (systems). Their conceptualisations, and how they map onto the previous work of Weiss, and Nutley, are outlined below.

### *First Generation: Linear Models*

In linear models evidence is understood to inform decision-making in a one way process: research is handed over. This suggests that researchers produce research that is disseminated to policy makers and then incorporated into policy. The research is seen as a product generalisable across contexts and its use depends on how it is packaged (Best *et al*, 2008, cited in Best & Holmes, 2010, p. 146). The traditional policy cycle model discussed by Nutley *et al* (2007) involves a series of four stages. It suggests that policy makers act in rational ways. At the initial stage, the main problems that need to be addressed are identified by the policy maker. Here, research can draw attention to issues and shed light on the nature of the problems. At the decision making stage research can identify actions or provide evidence on the likely outcomes of the different decisions. Subsequently policies are then implemented and research can assist policy makers in addressing any problems with this, reinforcing the contribution it made at the decision stage. Finally, implemented policies are then monitored and evaluated. Findings are then fed back into the policy process affecting existing and future policies.

Linear models largely correspond with Weiss’ (1979) models of research use as a knowledge-driven or problem-solving process. This model has been critiqued as oversimplified as the stages do not necessarily occur in succession and policy makers are constrained by more than just their own knowledge.

### *Second Generation: Relational Models*

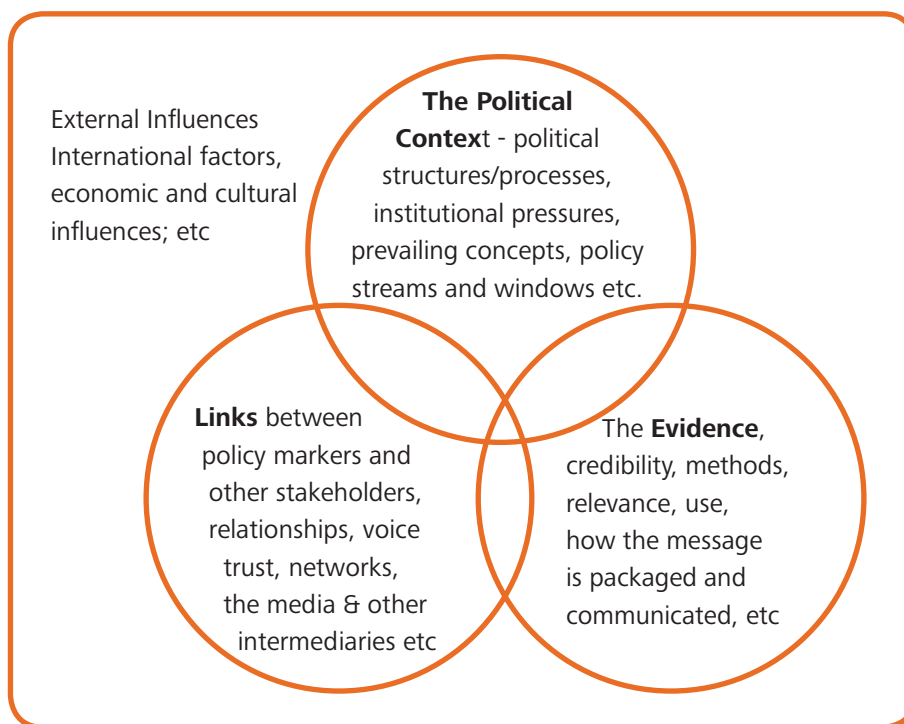
Relational models emphasise the interpersonal relationships between producers and users of evidence. Research use is dependent on the quality and function of these relationships. These models incorporate linear models’ principles for dissemination and diffusion and then focus on interactions, sharing the knowledge and developing partnerships and networks (Graham *et al*, 2006; Lomas, 2007 cited in Best & Holmes, 2010, p. 147). Policy making involves a wide range of players. The language of research use for these models is ‘knowledge exchange’ (Best *et al*, 2008 cited in Nutley *et al*, 2010). This can take place at the individual or collective level.

Lindblom (1968) suggests that the policy process involves a series of interactions where research is utilised as a bargaining tool and used by a number of players at multiple times in the process. Here, research use is restricted and is generally used for power reasons. This model reflects Weiss’ (1979) political and tactical uses of research. The ‘two communities’ thesis elaborated by Caplan (1979) suggests that the main reason for lack of research use is due to communication problems between the researchers and policy makers. Greater and diverse communication and participation is therefore the solution (Nutley *et al*, 2007).

*Third Generation: Systems Models*

Research use is a dynamic process. Systems models recognise the structures and systems that shape the interactions in the research-policy relationship. This approach acknowledges that diffusion and dissemination processes and relationships are shaped, embedded and organised through structures that influence the interactions (Best & Holmes, 2010). Lomas (1997; 2000) re-conceptualises research and policy as processes rather than products where several opportunities for mutual influence can occur and the environment and contexts also have a bearing on this (Nutley *et al*, 2007).

Similar to this systems approach, the Context, Evidence and Links model designed by Crewe & Young (2002) accentuates the importance of context, the nature of the research and the linkages between key players as the interacting functions involved in the policy uptake of research.



Source: Young, 2005.

The model proposes that policy uses of research will be shaped by the political and institutional structures of the broader policy context and by the shifting play of power among these. The quality and credibility of the research, its source, and the way it is communicated and packaged will affect its uptake by policy makers. Additionally, the use of research will be greater where researchers and policy makers forge links with important legitimate stakeholders (Nutley *et al*, 2007, p.109-111).

These third generation, or interactive, models conceptualise research use in the policy process as more than one-off events or straightforward processes. Such models offer a “more nuanced understanding of ways in which research is taken up by policy makers and practitioners” (Nutley *et al*, 2007, p. 119) and permits a broader range of knowledge (tacit and explicit) to be introduced to the exchange. In summary, the research-policy relationship models are attempts to use evidence in the policy process, each with their own characteristics, which are outlined below.

Models	Language	Key assumptions
Linear	• Dissemination	• Knowledge is a product
	• Diffusion	• The key process is a handoff from research producers to research users
	• Knowledge transfer	• Knowledge is generalisable across contexts
	• Knowledge uptake	• Degree of use is a function of effective packaging
Relationship	• Knowledge exchange	• Knowledge comes from multiple sources—research, theory, and practice
		• The key process is interpersonal, involving social relationships—networks of research producers and research consumers who collaborate throughout the knowledge production-synthesis-integration cycle
		• Degree of use is a function of effective relationships and processes
Systems	• Knowledge integration	• The knowledge cycle is tightly woven within priorities, culture, and context
		• Explicit and tacit knowledge need to be integrated to inform decision-making and policy
		• Relationships mediate throughout the cycle, and must be understood from a systems perspective, in the context of the organisation and its strategic processes
		• Degree of use is a function of effective integration with the organisation(s) and its systems

Source; Best *et al*, 2008.

## SPECIFIC MECHANISMS TO ENHANCE RESEARCH UTILISATION

Nutley *et al* (2007; 2009) refined earlier work by Walter *et al* (2003) from the ESRC-sponsored Research Unit for Research Utilisation (RURU), and developed a five-fold taxonomy of research use interventions in order to identify particular mechanisms which organisations can use when trying to ensure research use. For these authors, dissemination only forms one element of this taxonomy, with other activities being ascribed to different elements. The five elements are:

- Dissemination: circulating or presenting research findings to potential users in formats tailored to audiences;
- Interaction: developing stronger links between the research, policy and practice communities;
- Social influence: relying on influential others, like experts or peers, to inform individuals about research and to persuade them of its value;
- Facilitation: enabling the use of research through technical, financial, organisational and emotional support; and
- Incentives and reinforcements: using rewards and other forms of control to reinforce appropriate behaviour.

The table below outlines the various mechanisms under each element which can be deployed to potentially enhance the use of research evidence (Nutley *et al* 2007, pp.132-150). It should be said that the strength of evidence on the value of particular approaches is mixed.

Category	Characteristics	Mechanisms	Benefits
<b>Dissemination</b>	Assumes passive, one-way flow of information; consumers as relatively passive recipients. Closely aligned to rational-linear models of research utilisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written materials, such as reports, leaflets, guidelines, as well as audiotapes, video, interactive CD-ROMs;</li> <li>• Presentations at conferences, workshops and seminars;</li> </ul>	Dissemination alone is not effective in promoting uptake, but can increase awareness and knowledge of research. Discursive-type approaches can have more impact.
<b>Interaction</b>	Two-way flows of information between researchers and users. Better understanding, knowledge and access to research, and to users, is gained. Research is negotiated and adapted to context. Closely aligned with relationship models of research utilisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of research-user partnerships, with on-going linkages and the co-production of knowledge.</li> <li>• Research users undertaking elements of the research themselves.</li> </ul>	Gains in skills, knowledge, and understanding are reported. However, significant amounts of time, energy and finance expended.
<b>Social influence</b>	Key influencers in practice mainly, but also policy, such as colleagues, opinion leaders, role models and champions, who can convince others of the merits of research utilisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice meetings, with the chance for colleagues to discuss findings' impact for practice;</li> <li>• Interactive and participatory teaching approaches;</li> <li>• Guidance and feedback on practice development;</li> <li>• Informal learning opportunities;</li> <li>• Engaging with service users directly to influence practice (e.g. patient mediated interventions or representative associations).</li> </ul>	Show promise, in that they understand the importance of internal processes in organisations (peer-to-peer support for example).
<b>Facilitation</b>	Providing a range of supports to improve uptake of research. These supports can be technical, financial, organisational and/ or emotional. They emphasise the importance of change management processes, and align with systems models of research utilisation. More closely aligned with systems model of research utilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Development opportunities aimed at enhancing skills and motivation to access, interpret and apply research, making individuals more receptive to linear dissemination activities;</li> <li>• Educational interventions informing of new practices (e.g. local workshops, development of practice guidelines, briefs, frameworks and tools);</li> <li>• More generally, investment in training and support by organisations.</li> </ul>	Direct changes in practice have been observed as a result of some of these mechanisms; changes at the policy level have not been as widely assessed
<b>Incentives and reinforcement</b>	Strategies involving use of incentives for research utilisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit, feedback and reminders of evidence-based practice;</li> <li>• Funding incentives for organisations;</li> <li>• Making use of research explicit in job descriptions and performance management regimes;</li> </ul>	Evidence is mixed regarding the positive impact of incentive and enforcement strategies on research use.



Gough and colleagues (2011; Kenny *et al*, 2013), with support from Nutley, sought to expand this typology for their comparative analysis of research use in education policy in Europe. They expanded the work of Walters *et al* (2003b) and Nutley *et al* (2007) to develop a nine level typology of interventions to enhance research uptake, which is outlined below:

1. Accessibility: ensuring policymakers have access to research by making it more easily available and usable;
2. Relevance: ensuring there is a relevant evidence base from which to draw from;
3. Education: increasing awareness, knowledge, and skills in understanding producing, finding, communicating and using research;
4. Incentives and reinforcements: controlling external stimuli to encourage attitudinal/behavioural change to using research;
5. Social influence: relying on influential others to prompt change in attitudes to behaviour;
6. Facilitation: providing technical, financial, organisational or emotional support for research use;
7. Seek and/or interpret: seeking out and/or analysing research evidence in order to inform decision making;
8. Interaction/collaboration: enabling the two-way flow of information and knowledge between users and producers of research evidence; and
9. System focus: emphasising the strategic importance of focusing on the evidence-to-policy system as a whole.

Much has been written in the growing literature on knowledge brokering about disseminating research findings. Lomas (1997; 2007) and Ward (2009a; 2009b) have both highlighted the key characteristics of the knowledge broker in fulfilling their remit of 'pushing' evidence into policy and practice arenas. Lomas, in particular, highlights that brokers need to be: entrepreneurial, trusted, credible, clear communicators, understanding of contexts in which they seek to operate and influence assessors of relevant research in various formats, facilitators, mediators, negotiators, and understanding of the principles of adult learning. Ward has highlighted that knowledge brokers contribute to this landscape through "translating research and evidence into other vocabularies" (2009a, p. 269), framing future research questions, and organising or undertaking a range of activities such as training workshops, professional development activities, print and electronic media communication, as well as face-to-face contact. In this latter regard, they can stimulate 'linkage and exchange', through establishing contact, fostering collaboration and contributing to networks to enhance knowledge discussion. The role of knowledge brokers as personable individuals, with good contacts, is important here. Finally, knowledge brokers can also engage in capacity building activities to enhance policy makers and practitioners' engagement with evidence. Here, educating and developing the interpretive and analytical skills of users or consumers are central activities.

## FACILITATING AND CONSTRAINING FACTORS IN RESEARCH USE

A range of factors are identifiable in the literature regarding what facilitates and constrains research use in policy and practice. These factors are outlined below.

**FIT-FOR-PURPOSE STRATEGIES:** Complex approaches that combine several different mechanisms to increase use of research have too often been described as 'scattergun', where large combinations result in a lack of understanding of the mechanism or coherence (Nutley *et al*, 2007). Being cognisant of dissemination needs and undertaking appropriate planning and resourcing has been cited as an important consideration in publicising research findings (APRE, 2010; Mitton *et al*, 2007; CARE, n.d.). This calls for carefully designed strategies that reflect an understanding of the research and policy processes. The quality, user friendliness and presentation of research can impact either positively or negatively on its subsequent use. This reflects the importance of the communication mechanism and the 'fit' between evidence and the identified policy issues.

**EDUCATING PRACTITIONERS AND POLICY ACTORS:** At the individual level, the acquisition of a certain skill level can facilitate the application of research. Stevens *et al*, (2005) suggest that, in order to promote evidence based practice practitioners need to be able to frame specific and well-crafted questions (cited in Buckley & Whelan, 2009), the same rings true for policy makers. Increasing skills supports the dissemination process of research use. Offering support such as organisational, technical, financial and practical assistance can improve the uptake of research as users become more enabled in their efforts. One way of doing this is through seminars or workshops that enable some discussion with potential users and skill enhancement, or which adopt a more collaborative approach, as they seem to be the most effective methods of dissemination for both policy makers and practitioners (for example, Shanley *et al*, 1996; Bogenschneider and Corbett, 2010; Norman, 2004, cited in Nutley *et al*, 2007).

**RECOGNISING THE COSTS:** The issue of costs both in human and financial terms cannot be ignored. Building relationships, developing plans and reaching agreements imposes costs on each party (Canavan *et al*, 2009). The wealth of resources and flexibility can be a strong determining factor in an organisation/individuals capacity to engage with and use research effectively.

**INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL MINDSETS:** Mind-sets also play a role. Factors that appeared to encourage research use by individuals are personal interest and motivation, conversely, a sense that decision making is best based on individual professional judgement can also have a bearing (Hughes *et al*, 2000; Buckley & Whelan, 2009). In this case interactions can be predetermined. Where there is an opposition by vested interests or an unwillingness to change research use is severely curbed.

**TIMELY AND RELEVANT FOR POLICY MAKERS:** For research to be effective it needs to be timely and relevant (Leviton and Hughes, 1981; Innvær *et al*, 2002; Lyall *et al*, 2004; Ritter, 2009; Bogenschneider and Corbett, 2010). It needs to be in a position to anticipate what the policymakers' wants and need) as policy makers work to quite rigid timescales and need relevant information at short notice, linked to their needs and the needs of the wider population. Research should be as conclusive as is possible and recommend guidelines for applying the findings. Interviews with policy makers suggest that they would benefit from research that provided further relevant information for their decision-making, for example the context and factors that affect local applicability and information about benefits, harms/risks and the costs of the interventions (Lavis *et al*, 2005 cited in Nutley *et al*, 2007). The research must be easily accessible and at the fingertips of the policymakers.

**POWER AND POLITICS:** Research into policy conflicts shows that the strategies, bargaining power and participation of interest groups are strongly affected by their institutional context (Healy, 1998). Often, the more power a stakeholder holds the more powerful their influence. Knowledge and power are intimately co-constructed, with more powerful players better able to assert the standing and influence of their own knowledge (Polanyi, 1967; Foucault, 1977; Giddens, 1987 cited in Davies *et al*, 2008). The identification of clear objectives and roles in negotiations can assist in addressing the imbalance. This issue of power is also apparent in the national policy context and, as outlined above, while institutional and strategy developments in the children's policy arena symbolise an increased importance of research and policy development in this area, the policy process is an inherently political process, often in conflict with rational policymaking. As O'Connor (1995) states, "no matter how rigorous the scientific method, evaluative evidence will play only a limited – and sometimes unpredictable – role in determining the political fate of social programmes. In the past, decisions about community-based initiatives – or about welfare reform, for that matter – have been driven not, primarily by science but by the values, ideologies, and political interests of the major constituencies involved" (p.57-58).

**VALIDITY AND CREDIBILITY OF RESEARCH:** In line with the challenges of mainstreaming, the unit of research informing policy should rarely be the single study but should be the summary and synthesis of knowledge across the entire spectrum of stages in the process (Lomas, 2000). Thus, in approaching the policy making field, the knowledge requirements for effective social policy and effective service organisation go far wider than just 'what works' (Ebklof, 2002 cited in Davies & Powell, 2010), it benefits from a number of perspectives. Research must be set in context, verified and built on.

Nutley *et al* (2007) highlight the importance of the quality of research, the credibility of its source, and the clarity and incontestability of the quality the findings. Focusing on the way research is presented may overcome some tensions between the needs of its users. Findings need to fit with existing ways of thinking within the policy context, or else must be sufficiently challenging and convincing to be able to overturn these (Court & Young, 2003 cited in Nutley *et al*, 2007).

**LEADERSHIP:** Picciotto (2001) identified a lack of leadership as a major obstacle to mainstreaming (cited in Williams & Hawkes, 2003). Leaders provide motivation, influence, reach out and provide links. Nominating key personnel to lead, plan and implement strategies to expose research creates obligations and responsibility.

**TARGET-APPROPRIATE DISSEMINATION MECHANISMS:** There is a need to ensure that research is delivered in a credible, relevant way. Dissemination can occur in a number of formats such as written reports, articles and summaries; audio tapes and oral presentations at conferences, workshops and seminars; and visual posters and DVD's. Oral presentations have been shown to have a small additive impact on practice change in the healthcare settings (Freemantle *et al*, 2002 cited in Nutley *et al*, 2007). Walter *et al* (2004) recommend active dissemination along with enabling discussions about the meaning and application of findings (cited in Buckley & Whelan, 2009). Hence, the interpretation of research should be guided.

A key element of mainstreaming is building a common language (Gray, 2001; Scriven, 2001 cited in Williams & Hawkes, 2003). When presenting research, the use of too much jargon or technical terms can be excluding. The content, form and mode of diffusion must be adapted to its users, making research more accessible, transparent and useful to its readers thereby supporting them in integrating the results into their practices. Research must be identified as relevant and user-friendly in order to be engaging. Targeted communication to identified users is a means to increase utilisation – more general conclusions should be communicated to elected policy makers and citizens, whereas those implementing on the ground are more likely to be concerned with operative and technical matters (Valovirta, 2008).

## SUMMARY

The field of research utilisation is a complicated and ever growing one, populated by numerous actors and organisations. In addition, a variety of terms characterise it, all contested to varying degrees. There are numerous ways to conceptualise how research relates to policy and practice, and how it gets incorporated into both policy and practice. However, there are also a range of obstacles which can prevent such incorporation from happening, which require addressing evidence and knowledge is to be successfully incorporated and mainstreamed.

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## APPENDIX THREE: PRESENTATION OF DISSEMINATION DATA

Data on CDI's dissemination activities highlight the range of sectors and types of individuals which it targeted with its reports and policy briefs. Across **five service** evaluations, a total of 255 full reports and 354 policy briefs were disseminated to a range of individuals and organisations. The full breakdown per service evaluation report is outlined in Table One below:

	ECCE	Doodle Den	Mate Tricks	Healthy Schools	Speech and Language Therapy	TOTAL
Full Reports	52	84	39	38	42	255
Policy Briefs	90	73	29	81	81	354
TOTAL	142	157	68	119	123	609
Missing data	5	1	5	3	19	

CDI targeted a range of individuals and organisations in their dissemination work over the period being examined. Analysis of CDI's Communication' Plan reveals a diversified approach to disseminating learning from its evaluations. A range of different groups were identified:

- Funders and other government departments;
- Government ministers;
- Oireachtas Health and Children, and Education Committee members;
- Party spokespersons for children, health, education, justice and equality, social protection, public sector reform, and finance;
- Party advisors and directors of communications;
- Key statutory agencies with a stake in policy formulation;
- Advocacy groups;
- Third level training institutions;
- Academic and research bodies;
- Unions; and
- Media representatives.

Under each specific service in the communications plan, a number of individuals and organisations were identified as being relevant to the dissemination activities. These individuals and organisations are drawn from groups outlined in the list above. The plan also identifies particular dissemination activities. For example, under Doodle Den, making policy submissions, and formally launching the evaluation report are listed as activities, as well as seeking to provide follow-up presentations to key agencies. Similar activities are listed under other services, as well as activities specific to services, such as meetings with particular organisations and individuals in the case of Healthy Schools.

The main avenue through which CDI disseminated learning from each of its service activities was through distributing its reports and policy briefs, and hosting launches. There were 475 individuals listed across data as being targeted by the evaluation team. Once duplicates were removed, **208** individuals were identified as being targeted by CDI and forwarded either a policy brief, a copy of the full evaluation report, or both. The following sections outline the main category of recipient under each service. It should be noted that the main category across all services is "Local Politicians and Committees", accounting for 43 individuals each time. This is made up of the 39 Oireachtas members who populate the Joint Health and Joint Education Committee and four local Oireachtas members (duplicates removed), identified in the Communications Action plan.



### A Word on Categories

A broad range of categories were identified after an initial scanning of all the documents provided to the Team. Each individual listed was categorised based on their role, and the organisations they represented. Categories were then examined, with some being integrated into other categories, while others were separated out and given their own label. The main list of categories, and examples under each, is outlined below.

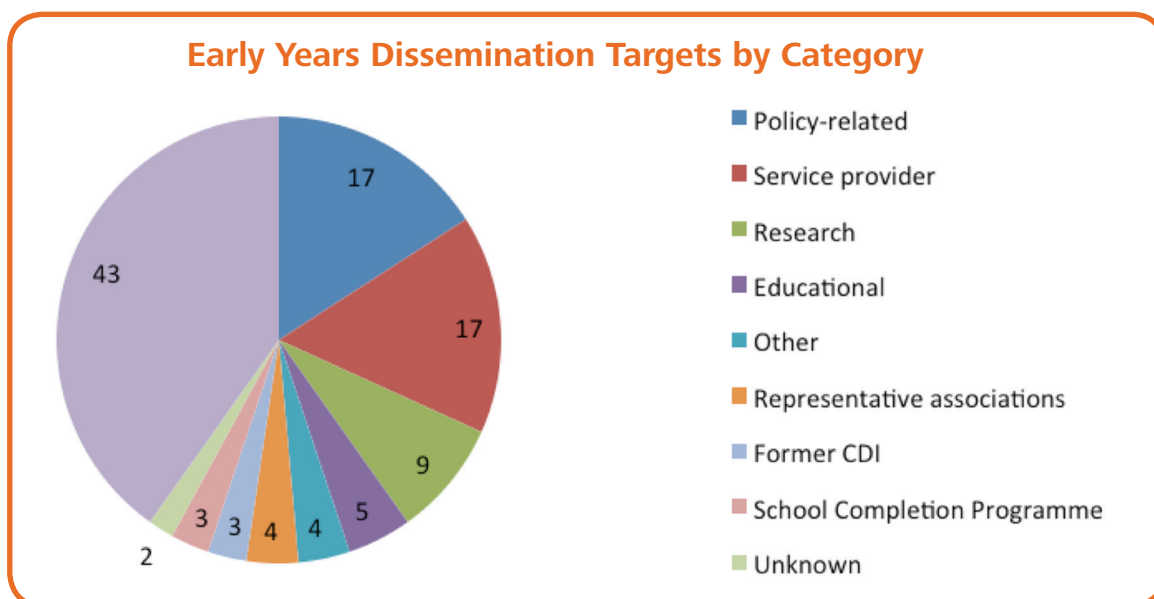
- Educational/Continuing Professional Development: e.g. education centres, teacher training institutions;
- Policy-related: government ministers, senior civil servants in government departments, high ranking officials in stage agencies (e.g. Child and Family Support Agency, NEWB, senior/national HSE staff);
- Representative associations: e.g. parents council, principal networks;
- Research: e.g. evaluation teams and other research bodies, such as ESRI;
- Service provider: those services involved directly or indirectly in the provision of CDI services, e.g. Citywise, schools;
- Local politicians and committees: a specific category defined by CDI, involving local Oireachtas members and members of Oireachtas Joint Committees on Health, and Education;
- HSE: individuals identified as local HSE personnel; and
- Other: e.g. philanthropy, funders, reading association, literacy associations.

### Service Evaluation Dissemination Data

Outlined below is dissemination data pertaining to each of CDI's service evaluation reports (at time of writing, June 2013, data had not been received on CSI or RP). It is important to note, however, that this data do not account for word of mouth dissemination which formed part of CDI's dissemination activities. For example, the evaluation team is aware that the CDI database contains names of over 600 individuals who may have been contacted about some or all of CDI's evaluation publications. In addition, relevant government ministers and junior ministers, as well as political party spokespersons would have received copies of relevant reports and/or policy briefs. Some of these individuals did not feature in data received and analysed by the evaluation team.

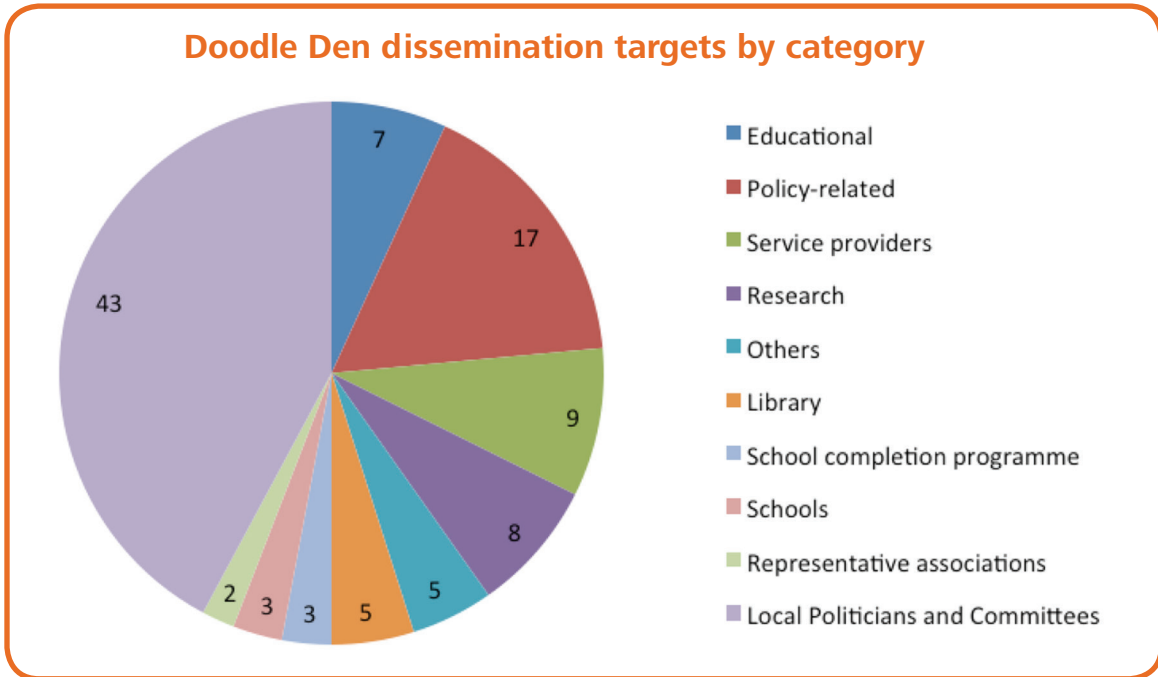
### ECCE

Reflecting the large number of service providers involved in the ECCE service between 2008-2011, as well as other early years professionals in the local community in particular being targeted, 'service provider' is the equal largest category at 17, after local politicians/committees. Highlighting the increasing emphasis on early years as a focus of policy, and in anticipation of the National Early Years Strategy forthcoming in late 2012, policy-related actors also comprise a significant category. The full distribution is outlined in the figure below.



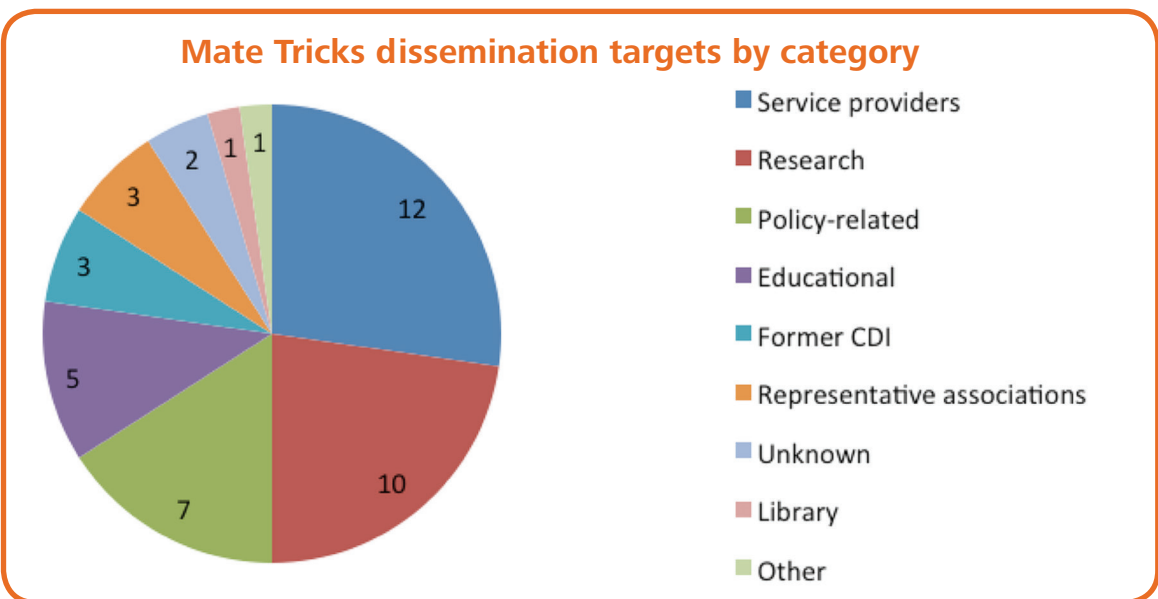
**Doodle Den**

Possibly reflecting the very positive findings of the evaluation, and the development of a Doodle Den service in Limerick, the dissemination figures for the literacy programme evaluation are the highest across the five services, at 102. Local politicians and committees account for 42% (n=43) of these figures, with policy related individuals accounting for 16.66% (n=17). The full breakdown is presented in Figure Two below. In addition, local education centres were written to about the findings of the evaluation and provided with a link to download the report.



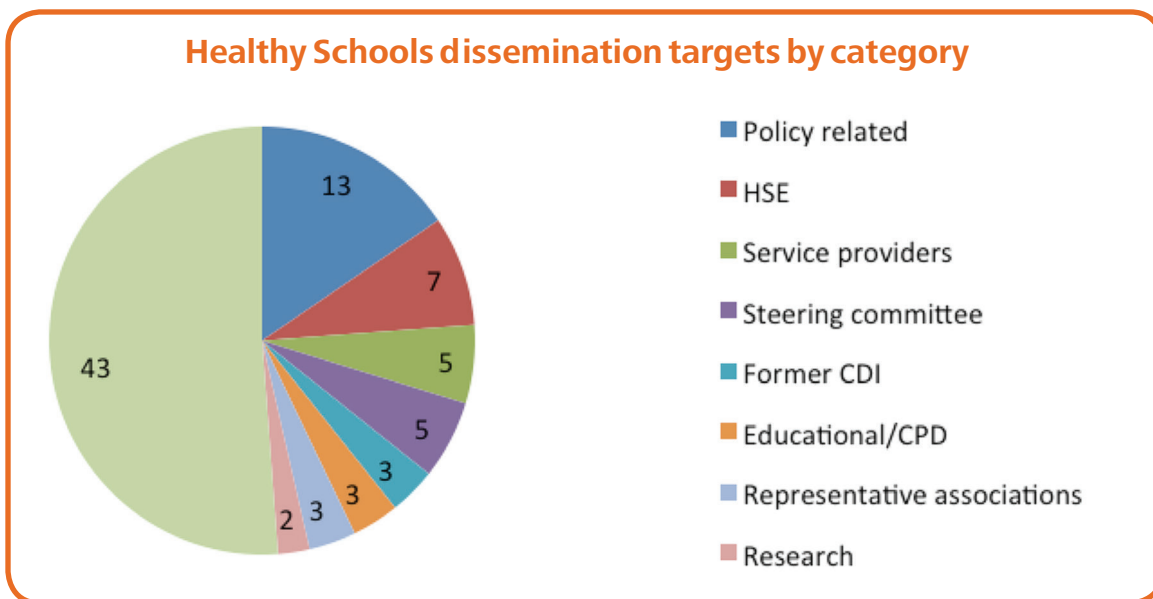
**Mate Tricks**

The dissemination figures for Mate Tricks are the lowest, at 44 in total. No local politicians or committee category members appear in these figures. 50% of the figures are taken by researchers and service providers, while policy-related individuals account for seven of the 44. The full breakdown of Mate Tricks figures is presented in the figure below.



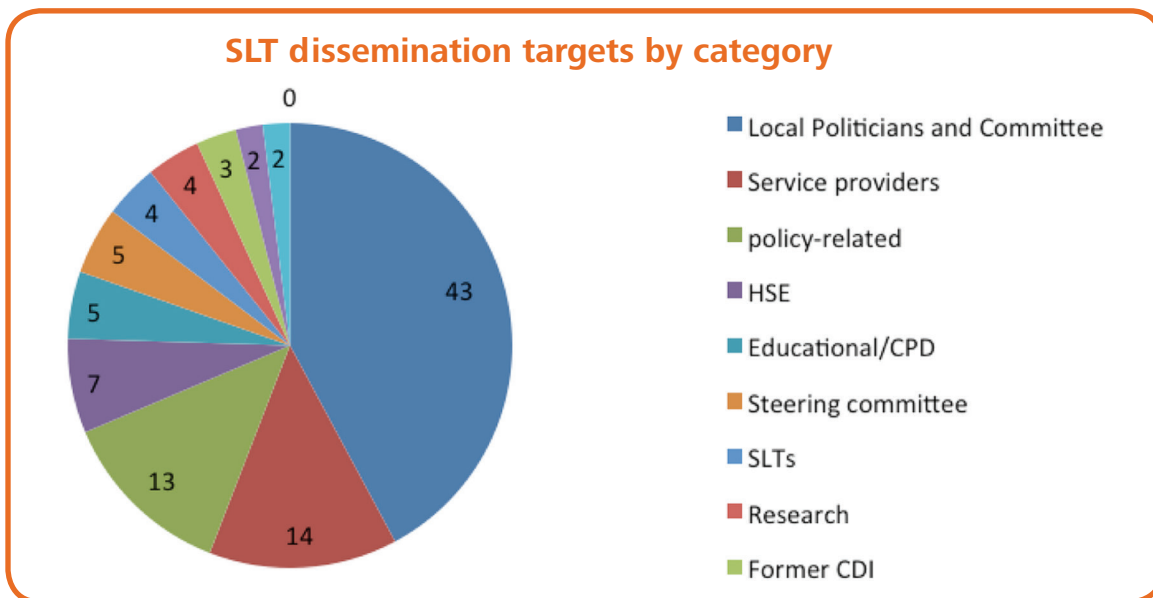
**Healthy Schools**

In total, 84 individuals received dissemination material from CDI on the Healthy Schools programme evaluation. When the 44 local politicians are set aside, policy related individuals account for the largest group at 15% (n=13), followed by HSE staff at 6% (n=5). The full range of categories is outlined in the graph below.



**Speech and Language Therapy**

Again, once the local politicians are set aside, the two largest categories of individuals which to which research findings were disseminated were service providers and policy-related actors, at 13.5% and 12.5% respectively. The full range of categories is outlined below.



## APPENDIX FOUR: CDI DOCUMENTS EXAMINED AND ANALYSED FOR REPORT

- Minutes of Board meetings;
- CEO reports to the Board;
- Minutes of Communication Working Group/Communications Sub-committee meetings;
- Minutes from Management Team meetings; Minutes from Implementation Support Group meetings; Minutes from Doodle Den, Parent/Carer Facilitator, Speech and Language Therapist Advisory Committees;
- Newsletters;
- CDI Strategy;
- Communication Strategy;
- Communications Action Plan and Dissemination Plan;
- Funding Proposal to the Atlantic Philanthropies;
- Guidelines for Feedback on Final Evaluation Reports;
- Business Plan;
- CDI Policy Briefs; and
- Annual Reports.

## APPENDIX FIVE: CDI'S COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AS DESCRIBED IN PROCESS EVALUATION REPORT 5

CDI's Communication strategy (Public Communications Centre, 2010,) draws on previous CDI experience, staff inputs and the IPA Consultation process and report. The primary objectives of the Communication Plan are to secure the support and funding for the bridging phase (2012) and secure funding for the second phase of CDI's work which focuses on mainstreaming. Its secondary objectives are to inform and engage all stakeholders, share the learning, and influence policy, curriculum and service delivery. In relation to informing and engaging the stakeholders, the communication plan stipulates that this objective will be measured by developing and delivering a programme of promotional activities and events to the target audiences, and capturing feedback and drafting regular evaluation reports. The Communication Plan identifies a number of stakeholders that are relevant to the different objectives, as well as a number of key messages. The stakeholders CDI wants to engage and inform are:

- Local councillors;
- Local TDs;
- National Politicians;
- Living Community;
- Parents;
- Residents;
- Children; and
- Services users.

To implement the Communication Strategy, CDI established a Communication Working Group. The group meets on a monthly basis and include the CEO, the Administration and Communications Coordinator, and members of Carr Communications (since January 2011). Terms of Reference indicated that their role is to:

- Develop an action plan for the implementation of a communications strategy;
- Review the action plan monthly;
- Advise on progressing the actions;
- Identify potential barriers and solutions; and
- Identify and maximise PR opportunities.

Drawing on the strategy's objectives, recommendations and key actions are identified in the communication plan. For instance, CDI organised The Story So Far conference and contracted external expertise (Insight Consultants) to support its planning and management, as well as the media coverage. Furthermore, to increase readership, CDI developed their website, newsletters, and an Annual Report Publication. The strategy also suggests developing a Media and Information Pack, as well as a set of project messages in DVD format.

CDI puts "the beneficiaries at the heart of everything we communicate" (June 2010, p. 16). The Communication Strategy highlights that CDI champions should be supported and trained so that their stories can be profiled for media. The strategy also points that to "Map the Vision and Inspire for Phase 2" a contributor could be invited to write a foreword and testimonials could be gathered for inclusion."

## APPENDIX SIX: PROCESS EVALUATION REPORT 5: COMMUNITY – PHASE TWO CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

A wide consultation was undertaken with stakeholders by the IPA from April to June 2010. The consultation aimed at guiding the Board and team in the articulation of plans for CDI's second phase. The consultation enquired about CDI's strategy to date and the stakeholders' opinion in relation to what worked well/ did not work well; the next phase of the project if further funding is obtained and what elements should be continued/discontinued/started; CDI's impact on the stakeholders' way of working; and in the case where no further funding is available, the gaps in service provision and quality of services provided. In total, seven interviews with eight participants and 11 focus groups with 81 participants were undertaken for the research. Six written submissions from 13 participants were also received. The stakeholders involved comprised:

- Funders: The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs;
- Governance structures and representative groups: Board, Implementation Support Group, Expert Advisory Committee, CDI team, Consortium, Community Safety Initiative Sub-Committee, Children Services Committee, Safe and Healthy Place Steering Committee, Healthy Schools Steering Committee;
- Service providers: Staff and managers from ECCE, Mate-Tricks and Doodle Den, Healthy Schools Coordinators, Evaluation teams, Consultants, Schools Principals;
- Service users: Parents, Community Safety Initiative Youth forum

## APPENDIX SEVEN: CDI'S FUNDING PROPOSAL TO ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES

The AP proposal comprises a bridging phase (September 2011 to August 2012) and a mainstreaming phase (September 2011 to August 2013). The bridging phase proposes a reduced level of service delivery to sustain existing services, professional expertise and relationships while receiving and interpreting the evaluation results. The mainstreaming phase focuses on "extending, through existing structures, of CDI programmes which prove effective in and beyond Tallaght West and informing policy and curriculum development and professional training" (Funding proposal to the Atlantic Philanthropies, April 2011, p.8)

As identified in CDI's strategy (2005) and Funding proposal to the Atlantic Philanthropies (2011), CDI's plan for mainstreaming involves (Funding proposal to the Atlantic Philanthropies, April 2011, p.8):

"Identifying structures, mechanisms and practice tools which enable the extended delivery of CDI programmes beyond Tallaght West, in other locations which have identified relevant needs:

- Identify potential locations for programme replication and prepare the ground
- Replicate services in new locations through existing service providers and build capacity
- Oversee, monitor and provide quality assurance support to service delivery at new locations
- Develop local expertise by developing a panel of trainers from identified organisations for each service

Maximising opportunities through which to influence and shape policy, curriculum development and professional training and support:

- Develop hubs of expertise in strategic locations, which support manual development and delivery, fidelity, reflective practice and collaborative working
- Effective dissemination of findings from evaluation reports, engaging policy makers, curriculum developers and institutions of professional training"

## APPENDIX EIGHT: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

As outlined in the Terms of References, the purpose of the Management Team is:

- To share information and updates about operational developments and issues,
- To drive the implementation of the strategic plan as documented in CDI's funding proposal,
- To lead CDI's mainstreaming strategy in terms of sustaining service provision in Tallaght West, replicating those services which are proven, and sharing the learning to enforce policy and practice
- To identify difficulties, blocks and solutions re: implementation of operational activities;
- To liaise with and support the CDI's Governance re: dissemination plan and ensure it is appropriately linked to delivery;
- To offer a space for strategic thinking and planning.
- To support engagement with the CDI team and appropriate linkages.
- To support CDI's Governance structures in fulfilling their functions.
- To support the CEO in driving the work of the organisation.



## APPENDIX NINE: CDI CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

CDI contributed to a number of high profile conferences/presentations such as:

- Bridging the Gap conference in Cork, 2007
- Presentation to the SDCC community services in December 2007 and management team, February 2008.
- The Forum on Prevention and Early Intervention for Children and Youth, hosted by the OMCYA and AP in Croke Park, May 2008
- CAAB conference Building and Sustaining Partnership, October 2008
- Psychological Society of Ireland Conference in 2008
- PEIP site presentations to DES, March 2009
- Presentation to Joint Policing Committee, May 2009
- Presentation at EECERA Conference, November 2009
- Irish Qualitative Data Archive, December 2009
- Information Sharing and Collaboration Between NGO's and Academics, with particular reference to Community Safety Engagement, June 2010
- Presentation at EECERA - Evaluating the Parental Component Of Early Childhood Care and Education Programme for Disadvantage Families and Children In Ireland, Birmingham, September 2010
- Presentation to Irish Penal Trust Reform September 2010
- Presentation to Graduate Research Education Programme, Inventing Communities: The Challenges Ahead, February 2011
- Presentation to County Development Board, February 2011
- Presentation to students of PhD programme TCD/NUIG, March 2011
- Presentation to NUIM and UCD students on Communities in Crisis, March 2011
- Presentation to Francis Fitzgerald Minister for Children, May 2011
- What's working for Children, May 2011
- Child and family Research Centre: Protecting Children through family support- NUIG, June 2011
- One Family links: Enabling Connections, Dublin Castle, June 2011
- Presentation on development of effective children's services with a multi-media presentation developed for this event, in September 2011
- Washington GIC, October 2011
- York conference, October 2011
- Presentation to DIT 3rd Year Early Years Students March 2012
- RP Conference March 2013

CDI also organised a number of big events such as the "Big Bang" launch in 2008, the How Are Our Kids in 2004, and the Story So Far event in 2010 which resulted in the production of a report and DVDs. Below is a description of two of CDI recent events and how they disseminated them.

CDI's workbook: *Quality Services, Better Outcomes, A Quality Framework for Achieving Outcomes*

The CDI team worked on disseminating the workbook to the target audiences. The dissemination involved:

- The launch of the workbook by the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton, TD, the 07th September 2011.
- Hard copies distributed in various places such as the CES
- Fliers distributed to community links, all database contacts, professional journals, and union/association publications.
- A pod-cast recorded by the CES with CDI team members talking about the Workbook

*CDI's community survey: How Are Our Families*

The dissemination of CDI's community survey has been discussed in various meetings (i.e. ISG, Board, team meeting) in relation to target audiences, key messages and language used, management of negative findings, format of presentations etc. It was for instance decided to provide an evening presentation to the community.

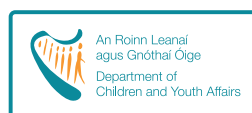
The findings were presented twice: once at the Christmas Seminar in December 2011, with invited audience including CDI's governance structures and commissioned services, and another time in January 2012 at an open seminar that targeted local practitioners and managers. The latter one was advertised by fliers distributed in An Cosan, Foróige, City Wise and Early Years services, and advert in the Echo, two messages to all on the website, texts and emails. A pre-publication copy of the report was sent to key stakeholders (e.g. SDCC; Gardai; HSE) with a comprehensive cover letter.



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