

For Practitioners



# Family Matters

Supporting an Area Based Approach  
to Prevention and Early Intervention in  
Ballyfermot, Cherry Orchard and Chapelizod



**Family Matters** is part of the national Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme. The programme invests in effective services to improve outcomes for children and families living in areas of disadvantage. The ABC Programme implements evidence-based approaches and creates learning opportunities to enhance workforce and service capacity within the prevention and early intervention, children and family sector. The ABC Programme is funded by the Department of Children, Disability, Equality, and Integration (DCDEI), delivered through the Prevention Partnership and Family Support Programme (PPFS) within Tusla – The Child and Family Agency.



## ABC Programme Vision

An Ireland where no child is impacted by poverty and all children are supported to reach their full potential.

## ABC Programme Mission

Through prevention and early intervention approaches, the Area Based Childhood Programme aims to work in partnership with families, practitioners, communities, and national stakeholders to deliver better outcomes for children and families living in areas where poverty is most deeply entrenched.

## ABC Programme Objectives

- Support children at critical stages of their development and wellbeing and through key transitions, with a particular focus on pre-birth to six years of age.
- Translate the science of early childhood development and evidence informed practice into locally appropriate programmes and approaches.
- Mitigate the impact of intergenerational poverty and improve outcomes for children and families.
- Take a progressive universal approach to addressing child poverty.
- Actively support and work in partnership with parents as the primary carers and educators in their children's lives.
- Enhance the provision of quality prevention and early intervention approaches by developing workforce capacity (education, training, coaching, mentoring and reflection) across children's services.
- Utilise and enable whole-systems, multi-stage processes to enhance children's services and practice at local and national level to improve outcomes for children.
- Use monitoring and evaluation systems to inform our practice and measure impact.
- Share the learning and work to embed effective practices in all children's services.
- Inform policy development at local and national levels where ABC areas are utilised to test, evaluate and disseminate intervention processes and outcomes).

## ABC Delivery Approaches

ABC sites operate at three levels of change:

- Frontline delivery of Prevention and Early Intervention services for children and families which support early child development.
- Workforce capacity building facilitation, and support of other service providers to implement evidence-based ways of working.
- Systems change efforts with managers and decision makers at local, regional and national level.

## ABC Programme Intervention Themes

- Pre-birth to three supports including home visiting and group-based supports for parents, care givers and families.
- Programmes to foster positive parenting and improved child and family social and emotional wellbeing.
- Supporting quality and capacity in early childhood care and education.
- Increasing knowledge and skills for early childhood development, including Infant Mental Health across child services.
- Interventions for language, literacy and numeracy development in preschools, schools and with families.
- Promoting social, emotional wellbeing and improved behaviour; youth mental health and positive relationships.



# Frontline Service Delivery

## Up to 2 Programme

The Up to 2 programme focuses on children's development. It supports parents to build healthy relationships and attachment with their child from birth through to 2 years of age, so that their child reaches their potential. There is strong focus on helping parents be informed and aware of how important play is for their child. The programmes show and encourage parents to engage in play, have fun and to dedicate quality time with their children, as evidence shows it is in this way that children learn and develop best. Family Matters in partnership with other local service staff, coordinates the delivery of standalone child and parent workshops and evidenced based parenting courses.

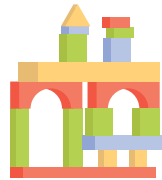
### Examples of supports for parents and children include:

- Art, Sensory and Storytime Workshops.
- Baby Weaning, Sleep and First Aid Courses.
- Parent, Baby and Toddler Groups.
- Other Bespoke Workshops.
- PEEP Parent, baby and toddler programme (parent and child attend).



### Family Matters also offers parents structured multi-session parenting courses:

- Solihull Ante Natal Parenting Programme, (parent/s and adult family member attend).
- Baby Massage (parent and baby attend).
- Incredible Years Toddler Parenting course (parent attends).
- Parents Plus Early Years (1-6 years) (parent attends).
- Circle of Security Parenting Programme (parent attends).



## Solihull Approach Ante Natal Parenting Course

The aim of this 6-week group is to provide a framework of thinking about parent/baby relationships. A good start in the relationships between babies and primary care givers, will help with brain development, cognitive development and social development. This course weaves together the information that families need about pregnancy and birth with preparation for making a relationship with the baby from the womb to birth and beyond.

## Parent Child Plus Home Visiting Programme

The ParentChild+ programme is an evidenced based, home visiting, school readiness programme. ParentChild+ is a 'learning through play experience' for parents and their children (aged fifteen months to three years).

The programme is designed to strengthen the natural bond between parents and their child and encourages a love of learning.

It encourages the parent, as the child's first and best teacher, to engage with their child through play and early years books. This programme prepares children for later success in school. BCP employs specially trained local Home Visitors, who model play, talking and listening to the child. The Home Visitor meets the parent and child twice a week, in their home, for two short half hour visits, during the (primary) school year.

The programme lasts 46 weeks. The Early Learning Initiative at the National College of Ireland and Tusla supports Family Matters in the implementation of the ParentChild+ programme. Referrals are accepted on a 'rolling basis' for the PC+ programme throughout the year on the Family Matters registration form.

## PEEP: Learning Together Programme

PEEP – Learning Together Programme is a group play based social, emotional and educational child development programme for parents and children from birth up to 5 years of age. It utilises a strengths-based approach to working with parents and is based on the principle of empowering families. It aims to raise children's outcomes by helping them through play to make the most of their opportunities and to become confident communicators and active learners.

By supporting parents/carers, the programme aims to improve children's personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, early literacy, early numeracy and health and physical development. The evidence-based Learning Together Programme values and extends what parents/carers already do already in the home. It helps strengthen adult-child relationships, building children's self-esteem and emotional self-regulation.

The programme offers key ideas and activities relating to child development that practitioners share with parents/carers and their children.

### PEEP helps parents and carers to:

- value and extend learning opportunities in everyday life;
- improve the quality of the home learning environment;
- develop secure attachment relationships with their children;
- and gain nationally-recognised units based on supporting their child's learning and development.



## Circle of Security Parenting Programme

Circle of Security is an evidence-based relational parenting programme that helps parents and caregivers connect with the children in their lives and learn how to respond to their child's needs. COSP support parents/caregivers to build positive, warm attachments with their children. Sometimes parents or children might feel anxious or unsure. Parents may also feel confused about what their child needs from them.

The Circle of Security Parenting programme can help support parents feel more confident, build secure relationships with their child and enhance the development of their child's self-esteem. This eight-session group programme is for parents/caregivers of a child aged 4 months to 7 years.

### The COSP course will help parents with:

- Understanding their children's behaviour and emotions.
- Recognising and responding to their child's cues.
- Creating a secure base from which children can explore their world safely.
- Considering their own needs when parenting.

## Parents Plus Parenting Programmes

Parents Plus Parenting Programmes are evidence-based courses promoting effective communication and positive relationships between parents, children and adolescents. We believe that all mothers and fathers, should have an opportunity to attend a free parenting course at every stage of their child's life. Courses are open to all parents of children aged 1-18 years, living in the community. A place can be reserved on a course by completing the Family Matters registration form.

### These courses run throughout the year, both mornings and evenings:

- Parents Plus Early Years (1-6 years).
- Parents Plus Children's (6-11 years).
- Parents Plus Adolescence (12-18 years).
- Parents Plus Special Needs (12-18 years).
- Parents Plus ADHD (6-12 years).

Sample of course topics covered are:

'tuning into your child', 'self-care for parents', 'support for parents around child behaviour and routines', 'supporting children's learning through play', 'supporting children's self-esteem, confidence, independence and problem solving'. Parents Plus courses in Ballyfermot are supported through funding from the HSE SLAINTE CARE and TUSLA.



## Direct Speech and Language Therapy

Two Senior Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) work with parents, families and children who have difficulties accessing statutory services. These families may be impacted by issues such as homelessness, substance misuse, mental health issues or intellectual difficulties. Speech and Language Therapy is delivered in most early years services, preschools and all primary schools in Ballyfermot. Teachers, early years educators and other professionals working with the child, such as, Public Health Nurses and Family Support Workers, make referrals to the SLTs. The Family Matters SLTs assess the child's communication skills (e.g. understanding of language, ability to express themselves, speech sounds, social interaction skills) in their early years or school setting. A child centred programme is developed to support the child and therapy is delivered onsite in the child's early years or school. The child's parents and a staff member attend the sessions to ensure the child is supported both at home and in school. If other services are required, the SLTs make appropriate onward referrals with the parent's consent and engagement.

## Speech and Language Parent Workshops

Bespoke workshops are provided to parents of children in early year's settings and primary schools depending on their training needs. Workshops delivered include: identifying speech and language needs, vocabulary development and promoting oral language.

## Botvin LifeSkills Programme

The LifeSkills Programme is an evidence-based prevention and early intervention programme, which builds overall resiliency and coping skills of children and teenagers. The programme prevents smoking, alcohol and substance use by young people. Teachers and support staff deliver LifeSkills to groups of children aged 8-14 years from 4th-6th class in primary schools in Ballyfermot as well as 1st-3rd Year in secondary schools or in the community. It targets the major social and psychological factors that promote the initiation of substance misuse and other risky behaviours.

### LifeSkills promotes:

- Personal Competence (self-management skills). This helps students with problem-solving, decision-making skills, critical thinking and how to regulate their emotions.
- Social competence. This involves teaching students how to communicate clearly, make friends and develop healthy relationships.
- Drug Resistance Training. Helps students to develop strategies for resisting peer pressure.



## Family Development Work

Two Family Development Workers, as part of the ABC Family Matters Programme, are based in Familibase and the Ballyfermot Traveller Action Project (BTAP). The Family Development strand of Family Matters is a strengths based, needs led, wrap around support programme, with parents and their young children. This programme is child centred and focuses on supporting parents/guardians in their role as primary caregivers and the child's first teacher. The work of the Family Development Workers also involves working across the strands of the Family Matters programme in an integrated fashion, such as SLT, Parenting Support and with other services in the ABC consortium. This ensures that interventions focus on the development of strong and secure child-parent relationships thus enabling positive outcomes for the child.

## Work Force Capacity Building

Family Matters capacity building facilitates and supports other service providers to implement evidence-based ways of working with children, parents and families. This involves working in partnership, providing and delivering training and building the capacity of the range of adults and services in a child and young person's life, such as Early Educators, Teachers together with staff from Tusla – The Child and Family Agency, HSE Primary Care, CAMHS and CDNT.

## Solihull Approach Foundation Training for Practitioners

The Solihull Approach promotes emotional health and well-being in children and families. The model supports practitioners to help increase parents' understanding of their child. The Solihull Approach is an evidence-based model with a strong theoretical foundation.

**This training aims to increase participant's knowledge of the underpinning evidence and theories in:**

- Baby Brain Development.
- Containment.
- Reciprocity.
- Behaviour Management.



## Learning Communities of Practice

Research tells us when staff have opportunities to reflect on their practice and learn from their peers, the outcomes for the children and parents, with whom they work, are better. Family Matters, in partnership with colleagues from other agencies, promotes and supports practitioners participation in Communities of Practice.

Family Matters facilitates Learning Communities for practitioners of the ParentChild+ and Baby Massage Programmes. It is also envisages that there will be Learning Communities facilitated for practitioners delivering the Highscope Approach and the Solihull Approach in the near future!

## The Infant Mental Health (IMH) Network

This interdisciplinary group meets on a monthly basis throughout the academic year. It is a supportive, reflective learning space for staff working with children and families. Participating in this Network educates practitioners on the principles of IMH and how to incorporate it into their professional practice with children and parents. IMH practice supports children's earliest development, enabling them to get their lives off to the best possible start.

## Screening for Communication Difficulties

The Family Matters SLTs train and coach teachers and early years educators in using 'Screeners' to identify children who may require Speech and Language Therapy. Early years and junior infants children in Ballyfermot are screened in the first quarter of the academic year. If a child shows speech or language difficulties, the school staff make onward referrals to SLT services.

## Eklan Speech and Language Support for 3-5s

This is a practical training course for early years staff to enable them to support key communication skills in all children but especially those with speech and language difficulties. The development of these skills have been proven to ensure later success in school. It can be run over 10 weeks with 2-hour sessions or over 3 full days. The course covers: communication, adult-child interactions, play and social communication, listening and attention skills, understanding language, promoting vocabulary, encouraging expressive language development, narrative development, supporting children with unclear speech and managing stammering.

## Eklan Speech and Language Support for 5-11s

This is a practical training course for staff working in primary schools to enable them to develop the speech and language skills of all children but especially those with speech and language difficulties. It can be run over 10 weeks with 2 hour sessions or over 3 full days. The course covers communication, non-verbal communication, listening and attention skills, learning, memory, promoting vocabulary development, encouraging expressive language development, promoting social communication skills, supporting children with unclear speech and the understanding the link between speech, language, and literacy.



## Early TalkBoost

Early Talk Boost is a targeted intervention for 3-4 year old children with delayed language. Early year's educators are trained and supported to deliver the programme in early years settings. The programme aims to boost children's language and communication skills by an average of 6 months, after a nine-week programme. The children are selected to take part in three sessions per week in small groups. Session activities are fun, interactive and cover attention and listening, developing vocabulary and building sentences.

## Talk Boost Key Stage 1 (KS1)

Talk Boost KSI is a targeted intervention for 4-7 year old children with delayed language. Teachers are trained and supported to deliver the programme in primary schools. It can boost children's language and communication skills by an average of 9-18 months. The children who are selected to take part attend three sessions per week for ten weeks in small groups, each lasting 30-40 minutes. Group activities are fun and interactive and cover attention and listening, vocabulary, building sentences, telling stories and conversations.

## Communication Champions

Each primary school in Ballyfermot has one or more Communication Champions. A Communication Champion is someone who supports all school staff to identify and support children with communication needs. They look for new ideas to develop children's oral language skills and ensure school staff can access speech and language resources in their school setting.



## Systems Change

The ABC programme works to ensure a more integrated service delivery across agencies and sectors working with children and families.

- Development of support and engagement pathways for parents and children from Pre-Birth onwards.
- Engaging with statutory and voluntary sector staff and services in identifying gaps in service provision and supports for parents in the early months and years of their children's lives.
- Development of pathway of engagement and support of parents' engagement in their child's learning at baby, toddler, child, adolescent and young adult stages.
- Development of capacity building and supports of early years services, primary and post primary schools in ways of engagement of parents in support of their child's learning.

### Trauma Informed Schools and Services

- We are working with local and national statutory and voluntary services to explore Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and their impact on children and families.
- We are supporting the development of trauma informed communities, schools and services through training, workshops and policy development.

### Supporting Schools in Developing Mental Health Awareness and Responses

- Support for schools: supporting schools implement the "Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice" and to develop mental health awareness programmes, with the whole school community.
- Working collectively to address gaps in the provision of universal accessible services and access to specialist services.
- Integrated Care Pathways: work towards specialist mental health services working in a more integrated and coordinated way within the community and in schools, together supporting children and young people's mental health.
- Providing mental health information and resources by local service mapping, annual awareness campaigns and the development of resource leaflets.
- Advocacy: Though representation on regional and national bodies, submissions on national policy formation and by aligning our programmes to strategies, guidelines and curricula, e.g. Healthy Ireland, the SPHE curriculum and the "Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice" in schools.

# Contact



## Family Matters ABC

Liffey Partnership  
4 Drumfinn Park, Dublin 10  
[www.liffeypartnership.ie](http://www.liffeypartnership.ie)

Telephone **01 623 5612**  
Manager **087 748 7375**

## Parenting Support

Early Years Parenting Project Workers  
**087 342 4472** or **087 104 0704**

## Intensive Family Support

Family Development Worker Familibase **083 428 3984**  
Family Development Worker Ballyfermot Traveller  
Action Project **089 204 2991**

## Oral Language Programme

Senior Speech & Language Therapist **087 117 4209**  
Senior Speech & Language Therapist **087 112 4272**

## Education

Education Officer **087 742 0455**

