

Action Plan – Goals & Actions

This Early Years plan reflects what Professionals have told us and the evidence available on how best to support the health, wellbeing and development of children under 3 in County Galway. The plan set out six goals and related actions. The six goals are in keeping with the goals of Ireland's *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* (2014) national policy framework for children and young people. Actions are grouped under each of these goals along with the key stakeholders. Whilst actions are under particular themes; there is an appreciation that many of the actions can have positive impacts on a cross section of the themes.

Goal 1 - Support Parents

1. Map, promote and develop both targeted and universal parent support groups and parent programmes for in County Galway.
2. Support and develop parents as peer support leaders for programmes such as Community Mothers¹ which promote health and wellbeing.
3. In conjunction with Local Link Galway² explore funding/ resources which could be accessed to create a transport mechanism for parents in rural areas of County Galway to access services/ supports in urban settings.
4. Support the development of Health and Wellbeing related information/ resources in multiple languages for Parents across County Galway.
5. Further develop the links between Family Support Services and Family Resource Centres as a location for the provision of Scheduled Drop in Services for Parents.
6. Map, promote and assess the need for development of 'drop in' centres/ services along with Family Resource Centre to support parents of 0-3s e.g. coffee - play area for toddlers- social support space.
7. Develop and deliver community-based workshops addressing various topics of relevance to parents.
8. Highlight the challenges of parenting and resources available through media and other sources.
9. Support the development of an accessible 'online space' for the dissemination of evidence-based material to support parents through the key stages of Perinatal health and wellbeing.
10. Deliver reflective antenatal classes in communities for expectant parents (particularly first-time parents) with an emphasis on psychological preparation for parenthood (including PHN; Physiotherapist; Psychologist).
11. Encourage and support parents to look after own health and wellbeing e.g. stress management, health lifestyle.
12. Review and update the actions in this Goal and subsequent Goals based on the findings of the County Galway. Parents Focus Group Research which is currently being compiled by Tusla.

¹ Community Mothers are volunteers who use their experiences as mothers as well as local knowledge to support and encourage new parents. All visits take place in the parent's home and the service is free.

² Local Link is a development of the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) which was launched in 2007 to build on the success of its predecessor, the Rural Transport Initiative (RTI).

Goal 2 - Early Intervention and Prevention

Breastfeeding

1. Sustain current Breastfeeding Support Groups and explore the potential for the development of further Support Groups which highlight the benefits and challenges of Breastfeeding.
2. Implement HSE Breastfeeding Policies and other initiatives to promote and support breastfeeding across all settings.

Infant and Child Nutrition

1. Develop and provide workshops for parents and professionals on evidence-based practice in infant and child feeding, including weaning, for 0-3s.
2. Review and improve antenatal and pre-pregnancy education regarding diet and nutrition.

Physical Activity and Play

1. Develop and deliver evidence-based community Physical Activity programmes and initiatives for Parent and Children aged 0-3.
2. Complete a Walkability Audit and develop accessible and safe walkways and cycle pathways.
3. Map, and increase the availability of, safe play areas and civic space for children aged 0-3 years and their families.
4. Provide training for staff in childcare services on including free play, outdoor play and physical activity as part of their programmes for children in the service aged 0-3 years.

Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs

1. Provide training for health professionals to enable them to develop knowledge and skills to address issues relating to tobacco, alcohol and drug use with parents of 0-3s.
2. Develop and promote a clear message in relation to the impact of smoking, alcohol and drug use pre and post pregnancy.
3. Support the implementation of the County Galway Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Alcohol-Related Harm.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

1. Promote and deliver training in relation to current best practice and evidence on Infant Mental Health.
2. Organise a Public Awareness Day / Conference for professionals, community workers and general public on “Perinatal and Infant Mental Health and Wellbeing”.
3. Develop a Community Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathway, which will form the basis of identifying training needs for staff, gaps in service provision, and will inform the development of an information leaflet for the public.
4. Agree on the use of an attachment screening tool which will inform the development of a therapeutic support service to improve the attachment relationship between baby and parent (e.g. the Parent-Child Psychological Support Programme, Infant Mental Health Therapeutic Support Service, Sue Gerhardt OXPIP programme).

Safety and Accident Prevention

1. Compile and communicate information on safety in the home and wider environment through online and local media campaigns.
2. Promote Paediatric First Aid Training to first-time parents.
3. Support local campaigns aimed at addressing Domestic Violence.

Early Learning and Development

1. Promote the benefits of attendance by both partners (or family member) at post-natal appointments, particularly developmental checks.
2. Foster a love of learning via play through the provision of information packs and workshops in local libraries e.g. appropriate toys and books to enhance play, interaction, listening, attention and build foundations for literacy skills.
3. Develop, distribute and promote information packs to include specific information in relation to development checks and immunisations e.g. HSE *Caring For Your Baby/Child* booklets.
4. Highlight the issues associated with excessive screen time for children aged 0-3 and the linked impacts on early learning and development.
5. Promote and support implementation of Siolta and Aistear in early childhood education settings.
6. Promote Creative Arts programmes and events aimed at Children.
7. Develop intercultural resources for children which can be used in Early Years Services.
8. Strengthen links between the Early Years Services and Early Intervention Services in County Galway.

Goal 3 - Listen to and Involve Children and Parents

1. Develop and promote service user involvement as part of the implementation of County Galway Early Years plan including a focus on groups experiencing inequalities.

Goal 4 - Ensure Quality Services

1. Promote the implementation of quality standards and the development of improvement plans for services working in early years e.g. HIQA, Siolta, Aistear.
2. Support the development of community midwifery service.
3. Support the implementation of the new child health and immunisation system.
4. Develop an acknowledgement system for restaurants/cafes as baby /child friendly places e.g. accessible for buggies, breastfeeding friendly, healthy food options.
5. Undertaken initiatives to promote health literacy for parents of 0-3s.

Goal 5 - Support Effective Transitions

1. Communicate best practice in supporting transition from home to other settings.
2. Develop information guide for parents on what to look for when choosing childcare for their baby or toddler in County Galway.

Goal 6 - Cross Government and interagency collaboration and coordination

1. Explore the feasibility of pre-existing collaborative structures within County Galway, in conjunction with the Children and Youth People's Services Committee, being utilised to support the implementation of this action plan.
2. Create mechanisms for information sharing, training and promoting best practice and evidence-based approaches in working with parents and children aged 0-3 years.
3. Map and promote community-based programmes and services with GPs, Primary Care teams and other health professionals.
4. Utilise data, research and evidence to inform the development and implementation of actions to promote the health and wellbeing of 0-3s in County Galway.
5. Ensure that the needs of groups experiencing inequalities are addressed through the implementation of the plan e.g. Travellers, Roma, minority and ethnic groups, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented, people with disabilities, people experiencing poverty.