

# Evaluation Developments – UPDATES January 2012

## Evaluation of the Ready, Steady, Grow Service

The evaluation of the overall success and impact of Ready, Steady, Grow – *youngballymun's* prenatal, infant, toddler, parent support service is being carried out by Dr. Orla Doyle of the UCD Geary Institute in collaboration with Dr. Suzanne Guerin in the UCD School of Psychology

*youngballymun's* Ready, Steady, Grow Service is a universal service, available to all parents of children from pre-birth to three years residing in Ballymun (A, B, C, and D). The service is being implemented in three strands; Strand I Preparing for Parenthood focuses on enhancing the quality and accessibility of antenatal and postnatal care in the community; Strand II the Parent-Child Psychological Support Programme promotes wellbeing in the parenting context and strengthening adaptive systems in children and; Strand III Infant Mental Health Promotion focuses on enhancing the social and emotional competence of infants and toddlers in the community through training and capacity-building of professionals and services that interact with new families.

There are two distinct components to the evaluation, to this end the research aims to

- To assess how and to what extent the Ready, Steady, Grow service is promoting the use of Infant Mental Health principles and practice into the existing service structures in Ballymun (including *youngballymun* services). More specifically
  - How and to what extent is the service building the capacity of the service community around the prevention of young children's health and developmental risk?
  - How and to what extent is the service working in a collaborative and integrated way with partners, services and families in the community?
  - How and to what extent is the service facilitating the early identification of and intervention with infants and toddlers exhibiting developmental challenges and infants, toddlers and families exhibiting disturbed or distressed relationships?

A complex mixed methods design will be used to address this component of the evaluation. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods will allow the evaluators to measure changes in key areas, which also gathering qualitative data to explore the ways in which the service is promoting the use of Infant Mental Health principles and practice.

- To evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the Parent-Child Psychological Support Programme. More specifically,
  - To what extent is the PCPS programme reaching its intended population?
  - What are characteristics of families not taking up the invitation to attend the service, do they differ for those who attend, and why are they not attending?
  - What is the impact of the PCPS programme on parents and children attending the service?
  - Are there some children and families for whom the intervention is more effective?
  - How do the parent outcomes and child outcomes of a sample of programme participants compare to outcomes for parents and children in a matched comparison group? To what extent is the PCPS sustainable?

Data collected during the delivery of the PCPS programme will be utilized to conduct this component of the evaluation. The causal effect of the PCPS programme on participants will be assessed by comparing the outcomes of the PCPS parents and children to a matched comparison group (the 'service as usual' comparison

group which is part of the evaluation of the Preparing for Life programme being carried out by UCD Geary Institute.)

The study commenced in July 2011 and a final evaluation report will be completed by **January 2013**.

### **Evaluation of 3, 4, 5, Learning Years Service**

The evaluation of the overall success and impact of the first five years of *youngballymun's* Learning Years (Support) Service is being carried out by SQW (with expert academic input from Dr. Christine Stephen, University of Stirling).

*youngballymun's* 3, 4, 5 Learning Years Service (i.e. an Early Years quality Coordinator and a HighScope Coordinator) delivered in partnership with Barnardos, works collaboratively with early childhood care and educational centre's/practitioners in the community to enhance the quality of service provision by supporting and facilitating the implementation of Síolta (The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education) and HighScope - an evidence-based early years curriculum.

The research aims to:

- Provide **detailed descriptions** of the organisations and settings with which the Learning Years Support team work and the families and children with whom they work
- Undertake an **operational analyses**, including an exploration of the *modus operandi* and effectiveness of the two Coordinators
- Carry out an **investigation of the impact of the service** on practitioners and on the quality of provision
- Assess the **replicability** of the Service
- Make **recommendations** for the future development of the service.

The evaluation is adopting some elements of realistic evaluation (to explore people's assumptions about what works and why – and in what circumstances) combined with in-depth interviewing and observations. The researchers are also exploring strategies that would enable longer-term monitoring of the impact of the Service over the next five years.

#### **To this end the team is;**

- Collating and reviewing numerical and documentary evidence around engagement in Síolta activities and HighScope training, including looking at data from baseline programme quality assessments
- Mapping the location of childcare settings and childcare users against the population profile, using GIS mapping tools
- Conducting qualitative interviews with staff in a range of selected childcare settings, staff in primary schools (to explore impact on transition) and with the Early Years Quality Coordinator and the HighScope Coordinator
- Conducting qualitative interviews with parents/carers in a neutral setting, adopting a realistic evaluation approach to the study of impact and outcomes.

The study commenced in November 2010 and a final evaluation report will be completed by **April 2012**.

### **Support the implementation of the whole-schools ownership of Incredible Years.**

*youngballymun* commissioned an action research study to support and co-engage with the Incredible Years Coordinator and participating schools to progress a whole-school approach to the implementation of Incredible Years and to document the learning. The study is being lead by Professor Mark Morgan.

The work is driven by the actions research model, which is guided by a number of core elements. The first of these is the rejection of the division between 'researchers' and those on whom the research is being 'carried out'. Secondly, rather than taking a neutral stance regarding the aims of the programme, the study embraces the ethos of Incredible Years with a view to enhancing the contribution it can make to pupils, teachers, and

the community. With regard to research methodology, the study adopts an eclectic approach, including interviews, observations and records of activities.

The study commenced in September 2010 and the action research process will run for the academic year 2010/11. A final Research Report will be available in **March 2012**.

### **Evaluation of the Write-Minded Service**

The evaluation of the effectiveness of Write-Minded – *youngballymun's* Literacy and Oral Language Support Service is being carried out by SQW in partnership with the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

The evaluation, which commenced in October 2010, is looking at the impact of the service on

- children's literacy and language skills,
- skills outcomes for parents
- pedagogical outcomes for teachers,
- planning and transition outcomes for schools and
- developmental outcomes for the wider community.

There is a quantitative and qualitative component to the study.

The quantitative component consists of a writing assessment (at two time periods) to be undertaken by pupils' across all 1<sup>st</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes in the 10 primary schools in the community, a pupil attitudinal questionnaire (which will include components of the PIRLS survey), and a longitudinal analysis of pupils' reading assessment data, and an oral language assessment (CELF-4).

The qualitative component of the study consists of in-depth case-studies of the 11 schools (10 Primary and 1 Post-Primary school) in the community to develop an understanding of the way in which the Write-Minded Service is being delivered on the ground as well as its impact on teaching practice, on the engagement of parents and on supporting transition between primary and secondary schools. Face-to-face interviews will be carried out with the Principal, and a sample of classroom teachers in each school. In addition, a self-assessment tool (to be completed by all teaching staff) will be used to explore teaching practice and the impact of the implementation of Write-Minded.

As the Write-Minded service is supporting children within the context of the family, schools and the wider community, the evaluation also seeks to understand what is happening beyond the immediate school environment and the extent to which the service has become embedded within the wider community. To this end the team is consulting with community organisations and statutory organisations that are involved with the Write-Minded service during the first year of the evaluation and a similar number in the second year of the evaluation. These will largely be conducted on a face-to-face basis. These interviews will be used to explore the role of partners in delivering the service, with a particular focus on the way in which community and statutory organisations are engaging with (and being helped to engage with) schools and families to support children's learning.

Parent/carer engagement is also a key component of the Write-Minded service. Through the community groups visits and via the Write-Minded Family and Community co-ordinator the evaluators will talk with parents and carers to get their feedback on the ways in which they are being helped to support their children's learning both inside and outside of school.

The study commenced in September 2010 a final evaluation report will be completed in **February 2012**.

## Evaluation of Jigsaw *youngballymun*

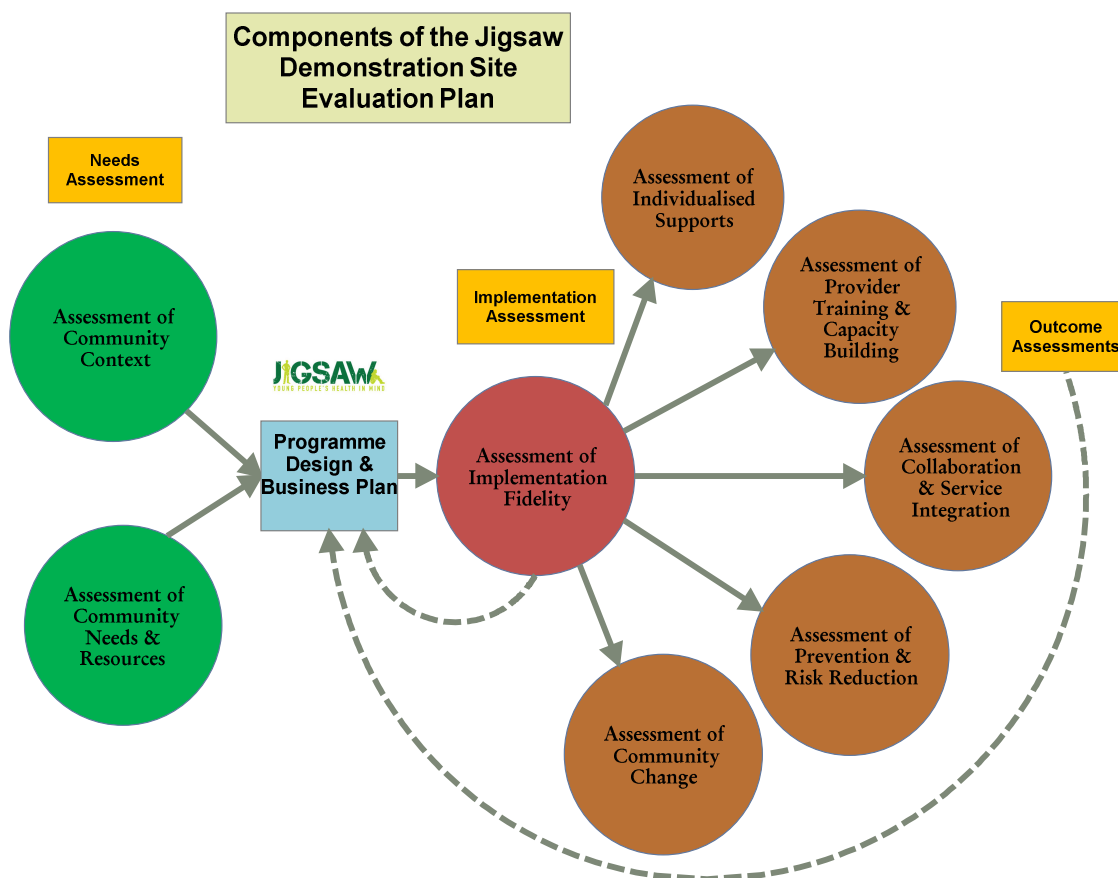
The evaluation of Jigsaw *youngballymun* is part of a national evaluation of a service development initiative by *Headstrong- The National Centre for Youth Mental Health*. Jigsaw is a program designed by Headstrong, with the express purpose of transforming Ireland's systems of care and support for young people ages 12-25. The evaluation is being led by Prof. Bob Illback, the Director of Planning and Evaluation Research for *Headstrong*.

**A multi-systemic evaluation strategy** has been designed. The methods employed for the evaluation system are both qualitative and quantitative in nature. In general, the evaluation plan contemplates information gathering about change for young people in five inter-connected systems:

- young people that receive individualised and direct mental health services and supports from the *Jigsaw youngballymun* programme;
- community providers and front-line staff that work with young people and receive support from *Jigsaw youngballymun*;
- organisations and agencies that provide services and supports to young people;
- young people in the *Ballymun* area at the population level; and,
- the community as a whole.

The *Jigsaw* evaluation encompasses three broad data-gathering strategies:

- 1) Needs Assessment,
- 2) Implementation Assessment, &
- 3) Outcome Assessment, (as shown in the figure below).



### Components of the Jigsaw Demonstration Site Evaluation Plan

**Needs Assessment:** (Assessment of Community Context & Assessment of Community Needs and Resources) Within each community, the evaluation begins with an assessment of the community context, in which evaluators meet with various constituencies and stakeholders and learn about the community's characteristics, history, needs, and strengths. This process leads to a systematic and comprehensive assessment of community needs and resources which then lead to the design of logic models, comprehensive community goals and

ultimately lay the foundations for a implementation plan. The Needs and Resource Assessment also serves as a baseline assessment of a community's system of care and support, and is repeated bi-annually as a means of assessing change.

**Implementation Assessment:** This component is conceptualised as a method to measure important "drivers of change", as opposed to merely accounting for the occurrence or non-occurrence of planned activities. It seeks to measure eight (8) domains of programme functioning deemed critical for the long-term success of *Jigsaw*. Interviews are conducted with key programme personnel every six months and coded using the Jigsaw Implementation Fidelity Scale (JIFS), yielding a profile of programme functioning that shows how the programme develops over time.

**Outcome Assessment:** *Jigsaw youngballymun* seeks to insure that young people receive accessible, individualised, and effective services and supports. To gather standardised information about service delivery, a comprehensive online data management (ODM) system has been deployed. This online system enables continuous measurement and tracking of programme activities, processes and outcomes. The primary tool for collation, synthesis, and graphic portrayal of the data is termed *Jigsaw Analytics*. This online tool accesses anonymised data and facilitates ongoing programme management and periodic evaluation. Data generated by the ODM provides a basis for describing who is served, what services are delivered, and what outcomes are associated with service delivery.

The evaluation plan also incorporates a measure of inter-organisational collaboration and social network analysis (*Jigsaw Service Network Survey*). Administered annually, it provides a means to track the community's progress toward developing better linkages, coordination, and collaboration between organisations that serve young people.

*Jigsaw youngballymun's* training evaluation focuses on questions such as the extent to which training is effective, whether what is learned is applied and supported within host organisations, and the effect its application has on young people. Training descriptions and discussions with trainers provide a framework for discerning training goals. Structured interviews of a representative sample of *Jigsaw* trainees and their supervisors are conducted annually throughout the course of the project to ascertain changes in how providers think about and conduct their work.

Other evaluation methods include: a client satisfaction measure to determine what reactions service recipients have to the services they receive; follow-up telephone interviews of service recipients; data mining on referral patterns, engagement and service delivery characteristics; social indicator analysis of health, mental health, education and related local data; and qualitative assessment of community engagement and discourse over time. A population health measure of youth risk and resilience factors, the My World survey, is under consideration for school administration.

### **Overarching evaluation of *youngballymun* – a Complex Community Change Initiative**

In September 2009, *youngballymun* commissioned an independent research team, led by Dr. Sinead McGilloway NUI Maynooth, to undertake an evaluation of the overall effectiveness of its initiative and strategy.

This overarching process evaluation of *youngballymun* is underpinned by five central objectives that form the framework of the study. These are as follows:

- To examine and provide a descriptive analysis of the structures, processes and operational activities of *youngballymun* with a view to appraising achievements and challenges in implementing the strategy.
- To assess the extent to which *youngballymun* influences/d and contributes/d to changes in both voluntary and statutory service planning and implementation for young people and their families in Ballymun; this relates in particular to the amount and nature of engagement amongst partner organisations and the identification of any facilitative and inhibitive factors in the engagement process.
- To identify the characteristics of local systems and structures with a view to assessing their capacity to engage with *youngballymun* and to subsequently adapt to its change process and its transition to an 'integrated outcomes-focused' service model.
- To explore and analyse how the wider socio-political and environmental context of Ballymun has influenced *youngballymun* since its implementation, and vice versa.
- To identify the lessons from the unique experiences of the each of the six services, to appraise their combined effect as an integrated whole and to appropriately contextualise this appraisal against the entire *youngballymun* strategy.

An important focus of the current evaluation is the extent to which the integrative features and values of youngballymun are transmitted and enacted in practice in relation to, for example, interagency working and increased community capacity.

A central goal of the overarching evaluation is to explore the extent to which the broad underlying vision of systemic change, attendant key programme features and development of a 'learning community', are all realised as part of the youngballymun initiative and, therefore, the extent to which these - plus the six services - meet their pre-determined criteria, aims and objectives. The process evaluation will also explore the extent to which youngballymun has been successful in achieving its aspirations of changing the attitudes and practices of individuals and organisations in the community and in positively influencing policy development and service delivery in Ballymun.

The evaluation is using a Theory of Change (ToC) approach, which involves eliciting and using stakeholders' 'theories' to construct a model of how and why the programme works (or does not work) as well as what should happen in an 'ideal world' and identifying the short-, medium- and long-term indicators of change. Thus, the development of theories of change involves broadly identifying and considering: the change that is desirable in the longer-term for staff, stakeholders, service users, etc; the intermediate outcomes that would indicate progress toward longer term goals; activities that would need to be undertaken, and by whom, in order to achieve interim outcomes; and contextual conditions and supports (e.g. resources, policy, protocols, etc.) required to enable these activities to be undertaken

The evaluators are integrating ToC with a Realistic Evaluation approach in order to identify, insofar as possible, the key mechanisms by which youngballymun pursues and achieves particular outcomes within specific contexts, or how programmes work within contexts that 'activate' mechanisms leading to change.

The complexity of this study and the need to account for multiple perspectives necessitates the use of a multi-layered design strategy, which captures the dynamics of inputs, activities, relationships, mechanisms and outcomes at the various micro- and macro- levels of the initiative. Therefore, the evaluators are adopting a multiple or mixed methods approach in which specific qualitative or quantitative methods are being used in the work that is currently underway and in the work that is being planned in order to address the goals, aims and objectives of the evaluation.

A final report on the overarching evaluation will be available in **July 2012**.

### Evaluation of Literacivic

The evaluation of the Literacivic bursary scheme, part of *youngballymun's* community engagement and change strategy, is being undertaken as part of the overarching evaluation. The evaluation has both a summative and formative element, in that it reflects on both the process of development and early implementation, whilst also informing the development of the scheme as it progresses during the study period.

Thus, the evaluation has been designed to explore and critically evaluate the process of design, development and implementation of Literacivic with particular reference to the extent to which the project is supporting and promoting civic literacy in Ballymun. To this end the central components of the evaluation involve;

- Exploring the process by which Literacivic has developed and evolved into its current form and examining its structures and operational activities.
- Assessing the implementation of Literacivic in relation to the extent to which it has achieved, or is working towards achieving, its stated goal 'to enable individuals, groups or organisations to develop and deliver a unique idea, event to action that demonstrates, celebrates or promote the central meaning of civic literacy.

The evaluation adopts an emergent research design and an iterative approach to data collection and analysis. The process of data collection involves a multi-method approach which draws primarily upon qualitative methods.

A final report on the overarching evaluation will be available in **July 2012**.