

Commentary on the *youngballymun* model of work: Danny McCoy - CEO, IBEC

The development of a dynamic, knowledge-based economy has inherent social implications that can serve social justice and a more equal society. In a globalised world, the strength of Ireland's economy and the attractiveness of its society rests on the same foundation – the human qualities of the people who participate in them.

Scientific evidence has found that early years' interventions are key contributors to how well children learn, their readiness for formal schooling, and their future success in school, at work, and as citizens. This is why Ibec is pleased to support the *youngballymun* children services model. It provides a good example of how a well considered intervention can have positive economic and social outcomes which deliver for the individual.

The programme recognises the importance of all children achieving a basic level of literacy and numeracy. This is critical for them to fulfil their potential as workers and citizens in this information-driven technological age.

The programme also puts significant emphasis on children's mental health.

We need to maximise health, wellbeing and active participation and the foundation of that kind of development begins very early in life.

For jobs to be accessible to parents, it is vital that we have quality early care and education provision in every community that enables parents to take up employment with confidence, knowing that their child's development and learning is being supported. For example, between 2013-2015, Ibec participated in the Ballymun Youth Guarantee Project. This provided direct evidence of targeted interventions to support people into employment. It is particularly important for an accessible labour market that quality and affordable early years provision is accessible to those who may experience greater barriers to employment, including for example lone parents or parents who may have been early school leavers and whose route into employment will require return to education and training.

The *youngballymun* children services model directly addresses the national economic recovery and employment in both the short and the long term.

In the short term, it is clear that their emphasis on affordable quality early years provision in areas of socio-economic disadvantage, and the skills and confidence building impacts of their parental participation strategies make real contributions in the short term to parental access to education, training and employment opportunities.

In the medium to longer term, the emphasis in their model of work on measurably improving the social and emotional development and literacy abilities of whole communities of children means that in ten to fifteen years' time the employment prospects for these children are greatly enhanced.

Furthermore they have established data collection mechanisms to track and analyse progress, with rigorous research and analysis at every age and stage of development and at every stage of implementation of the model of work. It is also significant that the model works through capacity building with existing public services, making an important contribution to value for money from public investment and a long term return on investment to the exchequer.

For all of these reasons I see this model of work as integral to economic development and employment strategies. As one of the biggest philanthropic organisations, Atlantic Philanthropies winds down, it is essential that this model of work is invested in by Government Departments, particularly the Department of Social Protection, as part of Ireland's long term economic success and sustainability.