



WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE
Ag Obair le Chéile le haghaidh
todhchaí níos fearr

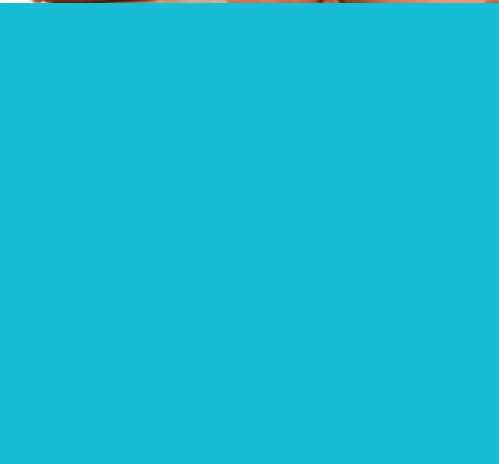
April, 2018

County Galway Early Years
Health and Wellbeing Plan
(2018-2022)



CONTENTS

■ Introduction	3
■ Policy Context	4
■ Demographic Profile	6
Areas of Disadvantage in County Galway POBAL HP Deprivation Bands	6
■ Process of Developing the Early Years Health and Wellbeing Plan	9
Research Process	9
■ Early Years (0-3) Action Plan – County Galway	12
Principles	12
World Health Organisation Principles of Health Promotion	12
■ Action Plan – Goals & Actions	14
Recommendations	21
■ Proposed Model of Implementation of the County Galway Early Years Action Plan	22



Introduction

Welcome to the County Galway Early Years Health and Wellbeing Plan. This plan was supported by the Healthy Ireland Fund and sets out the goals and related actions that together create a framework for enhancing and supporting the health and wellbeing of children during early years in County Galway. For the purposes of this plan, we are defining early years as 0 to 3 years.

The origins of this Early Years Plan stem from an Early Years Health and Wellbeing Plan which was developed for Galway City in 2016. In 2017, the Healthy Ireland Fund became available to support innovative, cross-sectoral strategies that implement Healthy Ireland and key national policies, including the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland; A Healthy Weight for Ireland Obesity Policy and Action Plan; the National Sexual Health Strategy and Tobacco Free Ireland. The fund specifically looked to support projects and programmes aimed at children, young people, families, communities and vulnerable groups most at risk of experiencing health inequalities. Under this funding structure, the Galway Children and Young People's Services Committee in collaboration with Galway City Partnership, led the development of a corresponding Early Years Health and Wellbeing Plan for County Galway.

This plan sets out the direction for the next five years in bringing a more joined up and coordinated approach to supporting children and families across the early years. The following pages describe the context, the process and the key actions that will be undertaken between 2018 and 2022. Delivering on this plan requires all of us to work more closely together with a common purpose to give every child the best possible start in life. We look forward to working with you to make this a reality.

John Donnellan
Chairperson,
Galway Children and Young People's Services Committee



Policy Context

There is a growing body of evidence which demonstrates that early intervention can reduce health inequalities and promote health in adulthood (Doyle, Fitzpatrick, Lovett and Rawdon, 2015). A number of national strategies, policy documents and initiatives have been developed which provide the wider context for the development of this Early Years Action plan:

- **Healthy Ireland** (2013) the national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland acknowledges that “Prioritising Early Intervention Child health, wellbeing, learning and development are inextricably linked, and the most effective time to intervene in terms of reducing inequalities and improving health and wellbeing outcomes is before birth and in early childhood. Giving every child the best start in life involves providing for their emotional and physical development, the acquisition of cognitive, linguistic and social skills and building their resilience which will support them through life. Intervention in the early years has been shown to be a good investment, as it provides a greater rate of return than that for later intervention”.
- **Ireland’s Better Outcomes Brighter Futures** (2014) national policy framework for children and young people states that “investment in early years care and education reaps significant dividends throughout a child’s life and to society as a result of better outcomes”. Furthermore, this framework promotes a shift in policy toward earlier intervention and to ensure the provision of quality Early Years services and interventions, aimed at promoting best outcomes for children and disrupting the emergence of poor outcomes.
- **HSE Healthy Ireland in the Health Services National Implementation Plan** (2015) identified Healthy Childhood as one of the health and wellbeing priority policy programmes.

- **The Nurture Programme** - Infant Health and Wellbeing, is designed to improve the information and professional supports that we provide to parents during pregnancy and the first three years of their baby’s life.
- **Creating a Better Future Together - National Maternity Strategy** (2016) - identifies health and wellbeing as one of its priorities to ensure that babies get the best start in life and that families are empowered and supported to improve their own health and wellbeing.
- **Siolta and Aistear** - In relation to Early Education and Care, both Siolta (National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education) and Aistear (Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, 2009) identify health and wellbeing as one of its standards and themes.
- **The Area-Based Childhood (ABC) programme** aims to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the country. The programme has a particular emphasis on improving health, educational and social outcomes for children and young people, and on improving the effectiveness of existing services for them.

All of the above confirm a cross governmental approach to improved health and wellbeing and an increased focus on prevention which provides the background to the development of this Early Years plan for County Galway.



According to the 2016 Census, the population of County Galway (excluding Galway City) is 179,048 – 89,612 males and 89,436 females – which was up 2.2% on the 175,124 from the Census in 2011. Furthermore, the number of children aged 0-3 in County Galway (excluding Galway City) is 10,161 – 5,228 males and 4,933 females.

AREAS OF DISADVANTAGE IN COUNTY GALWAY POBAL HP DEPRIVATION BANDS

County Galway has 741 small areas of which 73 are classified as disadvantaged, 11 very disadvantaged and one extremely disadvantaged according to the 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index. Using data from the 2016 Census, the Index showed that there are significant variations of affluence and deprivation throughout the county with some areas scoring below -20, thus classified as very disadvantaged. The table below outlines the deprivation/affluence score and classification of the 741 small areas in County Galway according to the 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

The 2016 Deprivation Index shows that one small area in County Galway is now classified as extremely disadvantaged, Small Area 067017010 in Ballinasloe Urban (St Grellans Terrace, St Theresa's Park, St Anne's Park), in the 2011 Index there were no small areas in this category. This would indicate that the levels of poverty and social exclusion in this area have become worse since the 2011 Census.



Table 1: 2016 Pobal HP Index deprivation/affluence score and classification of County Galway Small Areas

NUMBER OF SMALL AREAS	DEPRIVATION SCORE	CLASSIFICATION
1 small areas	-30 & below	Extremely disadvantaged
11 small areas	-20 to -30	Very disadvantaged
73 small areas	-10 to -20	Disadvantaged
274 small areas	0 to -10	Marginally below average
320 small areas	0 to 10	Marginally above average
61 small areas	10 to 20	Affluent
1 small areas	20 to 30	Very affluent
No small areas	over 30	Extremely affluent

In addition, County Galway has 73 small areas (SA) measuring between -10 to -20 on the 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index classified as disadvantaged which are located in areas furthest from the city. Clusters of very disadvantaged/disadvantaged small areas are located in the following electoral areas: Tuam Rural (2 SA very disadvantaged, 2 SA disadvantaged), Tuam Urban (1 SA very disadvantaged, 4 SA disadvantaged), Ballinasloe Urban (1 SA extremely disadvantaged, 4 SA very disadvantaged, 2 SA disadvantaged), Loughrea Urban (6 SA disadvantaged), An Turlach (1 SA very disadvantaged, 2 SA disadvantaged), Leitir Móir (4 SA disadvantaged), Garmna (1 SA very disadvantaged 4 SA disadvantaged), An Crompán (3 SA disadvantaged), Clifden (2 SA disadvantaged), Sillerna (3 SA disadvantaged), Sailearna (1 SA disadvantaged) Gort (1 SA very disadvantaged 2 SA disadvantaged), Eyrecourt (1 SA disadvantaged), Kilcummin (3 SA disadvantaged) and Bunowen (2 SA disadvantaged). Disadvantaged small areas are also located in Athenry, Portumna, Roundstone, Árainn, Kilcroan, Killeroran, Killure, and An Cnoc Buí.



Table 2 below highlights the location of the 12 small areas (including number of children and families) classified by the 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index as extremely disadvantaged and very disadvantaged.

Table 2. Location of small areas classified as very disadvantaged by the 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS	SMALL AREAS (SA) ID	LOCATIONS WITHIN THE SA
Ballinasloe Urban	067017010 (Very Disadvantaged)	St. Grellans Terrace, St. Theresa's Park, St. Anne's Park
Ballinasloe Urban	067017002	St Joseph's Place, Garbally Demesne
Ballinasloe Urban	067017020	Curragh Park, Hymany Park
Ballinasloe Urban	067017021	Hymany Park, Dunlo Hill, Harbour Rd
Ballinasloe Urban	067017023	Jubilee Street, Dunlo Street
Tuam Rural	067211004	Parkmore
Gort	067101001	Bowlands Court, Crowe Street
Garmna	067102005	Gorumna, Glentrasna
Tuam Urban	067212003	Tirboy, St. Enda's Avenue, Liam Mellows Street
Tuam Rural	067211024	Dublin Road, Dublin Rd. Estate, Athenry Road, Tober Jarlath Road
Portumna	067188008	Cedar Avenue, St. Brigid's Road, The Gables
Scainimh	067200001/067200005	Shanawirra, Glenanaun

It is important that this Action Plan prioritises areas which are in the disadvantaged, very disadvantaged and extremely disadvantaged categories¹.

¹ This Profile was developed and made available by Galway Rural Development (2017)



Following the development of the Early Years Health and Wellbeing Plan for Galway City - through the collaboration of the HSE Health Promotion & Improvement, Galway City Partnership and Galway Children and Young People's Services Committee in 2016 - it was proposed that a similar plan be developed for County Galway. This Action Plan has been developed through funding from Healthy Ireland.

A Sub-Committee comprising of representatives from Galway City Partnership, Galway City and County Childcare Committee and Galway Children and Young People's Services Committee was formed to oversee the development of this Action Plan. With a specific timeframe in place for its development, it was agreed that the Action Plan would focus on the views of the professionals working with parents and children (0-3) in County Galway. A key contributing factor to this decision was the fact the Tusla was, at that time, in the process of gathering data from parents in County Galway in relation to their needs and any further research with this sample group could have resulted in duplication and/ or over consultation.

RESEARCH PROCESS

The primary source of data for the development of the Action Plan was through:

- Reviewing the Tusla Research on Parenting in Galway (2017)
- An Online Survey aimed at professionals working with parents and children (0-3) in County Galway



- Completing a series of consultation meetings with the following services/ networks: Family Resource Centres, Family Support Services, Galway City and County Childcare Committee, Child and Family Support Networks and specific meetings of Healthy Ireland Initiatives. These consultation meetings had a dual function: 1) Identification of Needs/ Actions in relation to County Galway and 2) Promotion of the Online Survey.

TUSLA RESEARCH ON PARENTING IN GALWAY (2017)

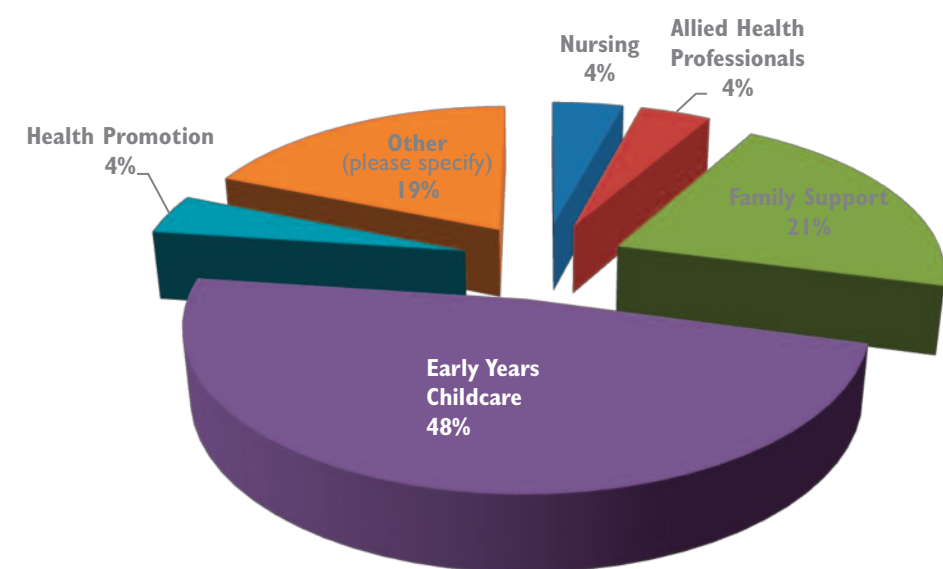
This survey was distributed, through a link to Survey Monkey, to all parents of children in the county of Galway (including Galway City) between February and May 2017. Respondents were asked, as parents, what supports and services they would like in their community, what supports and services they are aware of or have accessed, and the best methods for contacting them and disseminating information, to inform future planning by Tusla in delivering parenting support over the next five years. The survey received 723 responses and while there was a limited number of responses which specifically related to the 0-3 age group (23), many of the themes which emerged from the survey were relevant to this Action Plan.

Through an open-ended question, respondents were asked for any other suggestions or supports that could help them as parents in their community. The most common responses which related to the 0-3 age group, overlapping with examples offered to earlier open-ended questions, concerned more access to information on mental health, nutrition and anxiety. Many parents mentioned at some point the need for more opportunities to network with other parents providing both a support and social network, as well as a recurring request for more information evenings.

ONLINE SURVEY

The content of the online survey was informed by the actions included in the Galway City Early Years Health and Wellbeing Plan (2016). The online survey consisted of 10 questions, seven of which focused on proposed actions for inclusion in the plan and the respondents were asked for their views in relation to the relevance of each action. Furthermore, the survey provided an opportunity for the respondents to identify further gaps/ actions which were not addressed within the prescribed actions. The feedback received from these questions has contributed to the key actions developed within this document. The profile of the respondents to the online survey is as follows:

Overview of Respondants



- The other respondents (19%) included:
- Family Resource Centres
- An Garda Síochána
- Community Based Health Project
- Volunteer parent-to-parents support Project
- Child and Family Support Network Co-ordinator
- Community Development Worker



Principles

This five year plan has been developed to maximise health and wellbeing during early years. It is informed by the consultation process and current policy and practice and is underpinned by the following principles.

World Health Organisation Principles of Health Promotion

- **Empowerment** - a way of working to enable people to gain greater control over decisions and actions affecting their health.
- Participative - where people take an active part in planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Holistic - taking account of the separate influences on health and the interaction of these dimensions.
- Equitable - ensuring fairness of outcomes for service users.
- Intersectoral - working in partnership with other relevant agencies/organisations.
- Sustainable - ensuring that the outcomes of health promotion activities are sustainable in the long term.



- Multi Strategy - working on a number of approaches in combination with one another e.g. programmes, policy, organisational change, community development, advocacy, communication and education.

Expected Outcomes of the Action Plan

The anticipated effect of implementing this action plan over 2018-2022 is the following

- Improved health and wellbeing for parents and children (0-3) in County Galway
- Increased support for parents/guardians of 0-3s
- Increased engagement and active participation of parents/families
- Increased early development and education within early years
- Enhanced collaboration and integration across services and professionals working with parents and children (0-3) in County Galway.



Action Plan

GOALS & ACTIONS

This Early Years Action Plan reflects what professionals working with parents and children (0-3) in County Galway have identified as 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 in County Galway.
- 2 Support and develop parents as peer support leaders for programmes such as Community Mothers² which promote health and wellbeing.
- 3 In conjunction with TCU (Bealach na Gaillimhe Teo) and Local Link Galway 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.

GOAL 1 - CONTINUED

- 5 Map, promote and assess the need for development of 'drop in' centres/ services along with Family Resource Centres to support parents of 0-3s e.g. coffee - play area for toddlers- social support space.
- 6 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.
- 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.

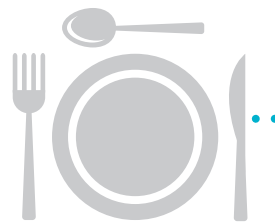
² Community Mothers are volunteers who use their experiences as mothers as well as local knowledge to support and encourage new parents. All visits take place in the parent's home and the service is free.

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.



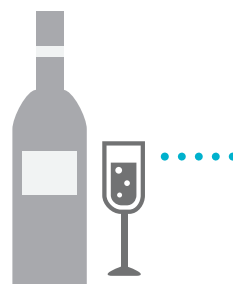
INFANT & CHILD NUTRITION

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



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & 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 implementation of relevant national and local strategies e.g. Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025 and the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force Strategic Plan 2017-2020.

GOAL 2 - CONTINUED



MENTAL HEALTH & 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 & 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 & 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.

GOAL 2 - CONTINUED



EARLY LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

- 5 Promote and support implementation of Siolta and Aistear in early childhood education settings.
- 6 Promote and support local innovative practices which exist in County Galway such as the Therapeutic Learning Centre.
- 7 Promote Creative Arts programmes and events aimed at Children.
- 8 Develop intercultural resources for children which can be used in Early Years Services.
- 9 Strengthen links between the Early Years Services and Early Intervention Services in County Galway.

GOAL 3 - LISTEN TO AND INVOLVE CHILDREN AND PARENTS

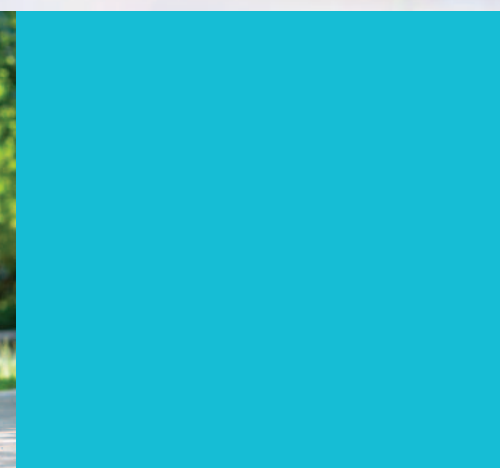
- 1 Develop and promote service user involvement as part of the implementation of County Galway Early Years plan including a focus on groups experiencing inequalities.

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 Through Galway Children and Young People's Services Committee, explore the feasibility of using pre-existing collaborative structures within County Galway 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 Support the implementation of relevant local strategies such as the Health and Wellbeing Actions of the Galway County Local Economic and Community Plan.
- 4 Map and promote community-based programmes and services with GPs, Primary Care teams and other health professionals.
- 5 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.
- 6 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, the undocumented, people with disabilities, people experiencing poverty..

KEY STAKEHOLDERS POSITIONED TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACTION PLAN³

Tusla • HSE - Public Health Nurses • Health Promotion and Improvement
Community Nutrition and Dietetic Service (CNDS) • Midwives • CAMHS
Community Psychology for Children & Adolescents • GPs • Community Medical Dept.,
Local Hospitals • Early Intervention Services • Galway Children and Young People's Services
Committee • Galway City and County Childcare Committee • Early Childhood Ireland
Local Hospitals • Midwives • Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board
Galway Chamber of Commerce • Local Library Services • Galway Traveller Movement
Relevant Local Networks and Forums • Western Region Drugs and Alcohol Task Force
Galway County Council • Galway Sports Partnership • Local Development Companies
An Garda Síochána • Family Resource Centres and relevant Non-Governmental
Organisations e.g. La Leche, Cuidiú.

³ These key stakeholders have been identified as being well positioned to support the Implementation of this Action Plan. However, this list is by no means exhaustive and we welcome others to join with us in implementation of this Action Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The action identified and outlined within this action plan will be implemented between 2018 and 2022. The actions will be addressed through the proposed Model of Implementation. The implementation structure will:

- Act as a forum to drive forward the priorities within County Galway Early Years Health and Wellbeing Plan.
- Facilitate the development of an integrated and coordinated approach to the implementation of the plan.
- Offer advice, information, and recommendations in relation to implementation of actions within the County Galway Early Years Health and Wellbeing Plan.





Proposed Model GOALS & ACTIONS

The key to advancing this Action Plan will be the development of an effective implementation model and to this end the advancement of Goal 6.1 of this Action Plan will be our starting point. In doing so, the role of Galway Children and Young People's Services Committee is envisaged as supporting the implementation of the County Galway Early Years Action Plan through:

- Explicitly referencing the goals and actions of the County Galway Early Years Action Plan in the Galway Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2021 and subsequent committee plans
- Promoting the County Galway Early Years Action Plan among relevant service providers
- Actively supporting collaboration among relevant service providers to implement actions listed within the County Galway Early Years Action Plan

- Prioritising actions for support under any funding streams directed at the early years that may be administered through the Children and Young People's Services Committee
- Reviewing implementation of the County Galway Early Years Action Plan
- Reporting on implementation of the County Galway Early Years Action Plan.

In its efforts to actively support collaboration among relevant service providers to implement actions, the Galway Children and Young People's Services Committee will follow a three phase implementation process: Phase One – Action Prioritisation, Phase Two – Action Implementation, Phase Three – Action Review. Responsibility for implementing the County Galway Early Years Health and Wellbeing Plan will be shared by all statutory, community and voluntary organisations delivering services to children in their early years and their families across the county.

Acknowledgments

Galway Children & Young People's Services Committee would like to thank Galway City Partnership for their contribution to the development of this Action Plan. Furthermore, Galway Children & Young People's Services Committee would like to put forward a special word of thanks to the following for their participation:

- All of the Services, Groups and Agencies who took part in the consultation process and the online surveys.
- All of those who provided feedback on the draft Action Plan.



